

Chapter 1 Best Possible Political Philosophy

Forgive me for being able to think only one-sidedly, and as some may want to call it, purpose-driven logic. I have looked through the works done by others on the topic of political philosophy, and they all baffle me. Mostly because, I don't know what they are doing. Is criticizing each other, society and history really what we need? Is sitting in an armchair, analyzing justice, rights, liberty, democracy and tyranny really what we need? I want to say no. I think before we make any claim, before we examine anything, before we do anything, we need to find out our aim. Which way are we heading?

Because I cannot just go, without a clear description of where to go. I cannot just think, without a clear aim as to what my thinking is supposed to accomplish. Exactly, what is our aim? What are we trying to achieve with this political philosophy? What kind of conclusion do you want? Humanity is evil? The species deserves extinction? Everything we have been doing wrong? We are dumb animals and we should be happy about it? I shall argue that those are not the sort of conclusion we seek.

We know the light bulb is not working right. We know it has been like that for some time. We know that all the technicians who have come here did not really fix anything. And I am, personally, sick of hearing theories of why the bulb does not work, or even mere exclamation of what a terrible bulb it is.

I want it to light up! That is the function of the bulb—to light up!

Okay. Now tell me, what is the function of this political philosophy? What are we trying to do with it? Sadly, I cannot find a unifying answer to this rarely-brought up question, so we have to discuss each scenario. Let me make a list, just to put the ducks in a row before they bite us in the neck as we chase other ducks.

(Well, now some may say, “We knew the aim! We want a perfect society, but we cannot have that, can we?” I would like to respond by pointing out that the word “perfect” has a million meanings in a million people under a million different situations. So that has to be discussed as we are doing right now. As to the pragmatic value of the theories should not be part of the concern as we construct the theory. We should find the theory we all agree with (or at least find out such a theory is impossible), then we negotiate with reality and try to make compromises. I shall definitely go into the messy and juicy details of how theories should be implemented in real life once we find them. The point here is that constructing a theory by starting with reality brings nothing but frustration and emptiness.)

I will make a list of all the possible aims that present itself.

1. The stability of power and sustainability of the powerful
2. The Darwinian Success of the community
3. The will of the community
4. The happiness of community
5. The will of the majority
6. The will of the powerful
7. The happiness of the powerful
8. The basic rights of each individual member of the community

First I will define terms.

[The Powerful]

The powerful here refers to a group of people, or an individual that has power.

Power here simply means the ability to make others follow their lead by any means possible, charisma, weaponry, religion, etc.. In ancient days, this typically refers to the King/Queen who has the military power and general authority to control troops and coerce his/her subject. It is entirely possible that more than one powerful group or individual exists in a given society, we will address when we get to the specifics.

[Darwinian Success]

The success of species defined by evolution, which simply means continue to exist. If ranked, the one with a better chance of survival would be considered as more successful. Exactly how it translates into real life measurable criteria shall be addressed later.

[Will]

To make understanding easy, the will of A means what A wants right now at this moment under this situation. The will of anyone, or any collective is ever changing and difficult to pin down or explain, but the will we are talking about here, is the will of the moment, which has no conflict with the will of the last moment or the next. Those simply do not concern us or the will of the moment.

[Happiness]

The word here will be used interchangeably with pleasure in a physiological sense. In a subjective context, we call it happiness, which is defined entirely by the subject. In an objective sense, under situations where we are forced to measure it, it is defined by physical cues as specified in medical books. If necessary, we may need to develop a whole new area of study solely devoted to how to measure pleasure as accurately and precisely as possible.

[Community]

Community, in a theoretical sense (as the sense adopted here), means whoever that one concerns to be in one's community, or as one's own kind. I personally believe that means the entire species. Some may narrow it to their own family, nation or race; Some may expand it to animals, life in the universe or beings in general. Here, it is only a subjective definition, but it may be pinned down once we wander into reality.

[Majority]

The word majority only has meaning when it comes to decision-making. Those who has the same point of view (or similar) are classified as the Majority in this particular situation.

[Basic Rights]

I hope my reader finds this term interesting and baffling as I do. We must admit this term was invented fairly recently and deserves a lot of digging. Everyone I read and meet has a different theory about what it means and what it ought to mean. The definition of the meaning of this word will be part of the discussion of #8. Here I am pointing out that no one should take their understanding of this funny word for granted. All should be held up to scrutiny.

1.1 Something to be Made Clear Now

The first point I must address is the difference between will and happiness. Before that, let us talk about happiness. Is there a difference between happiness and pleasure? I shall argue no. This involves a whole discussion that takes us way beyond political philosophy. Unless you want to just accept my claim, please bear with me as I take you on a bizarre yet compelling reasoning that shall raise your mind and sink

your heart.

The argument is that we are our consciousness. We are not our body, our brain or our memory or intellect. Consciousness is our subjectivity, the only thing that makes one a “one”. When you are sleeping without dreaming, or are you there? Of course not, or why would you ever let anyone put a scalpel on you as you are under anesthesia? You would never let yourself go through that kind of suffering! When you are in your mom’s womb but your brain is hardly a brain, are you there? No. You are there as much as you are when you die and your brain decays so much that it is no longer a home for your consciousness. The non-existence before birth feels exactly like the non-existence after death. You weren’t there. You are there. You weren’t there again. It happens in your lifetime and in your day and night.

You, this person, this self, this soul, this subjectivity is tied solely to your senses. When you are “conscious”, or something (with sensory input) or yourself (with memory/past sensory input).

Now the question is: What is the role of consciousness? A machine without feeling can do exactly what we do, right? Did this little feature of ours escape the test of evolution? There are two possibilities. For one possibility, the argument is that consciousness is a side-effect of the brain and has completely no bearing on anything whatsoever. Our consciousness does absolutely nothing. It is just there, like an audience to a movie called life. It does nothing, but everything happens, happens to it. You are here to witness and experience everything but do nothing. It is even worse than pessimism, fatalism or the loss of free will. Your role as an agent was denied from the beginning. The agent is your body, is evolution, is physical laws, is everything, but not you. This theory I call the “Aching Souls”. As poetic as it is negative.

For the other possibility, consciousness does do something. It means you have free will. You are an agent and you are in control of your body. Now inside your mind there is a battlefield, one corner we have you, another corner we have evolution. Why? Because your existence (our existence as a piece) means we comply with the rules of evolution. Now we are in control, we are also taking the responsibility of doing what evolution wants. But we are “intelligent beings” with free will, why do I want to follow the rules that govern apes and bacteria? Here is where happiness comes to our story. We are slaves to happiness. Evolution forces us into doing things with the indigenous reward system hard-wired into our brain. It is a powerful system, so powerful that it makes you believe its desires are actually your desires. It gives you everything. It gives you motivation to wake up, to eat, to find mates, and to live. The meaning of life is not supposed to be a question, which is why we prescribe antidepressants to those who ask that. We do not know how to live without it. Pleasure gives our life meaning.

Now is time to address some counter arguments. The most classic one: people do xyz, and they are not doing it for pleasure! The indigenous reward system is not in control (of everything). Double-check our claim: everything we do, we do it for pleasure. Now launch the attack. Start with a close one. Why am I typing right now? Because I am writing something. Why am I writing? Because I want to convince people, maybe. Why do you want to convince people? Because it gives me a sense of achievement, or I just love to see myself as influential. Why is that? It makes me feel good. Why do you want to feel good? Because... because I want to be happy.

I can go over more examples, but I hope this is enough. There are, certainly, harder examples to analyze than others, but I argue that all of them will reach the same ending. If you ever encounter one that you believe can disprove this theory, send

me an email. Let it be a wager, and the stake is a philosophy book of the other person's choosing.

Now let us discuss the difference between will and happiness. Coming back to something that is relevant to political philosophy. Well, if what we want is happiness, then isn't will and happiness the same thing? That is a very tempting claim, indeed. But the brilliant counter example that will disprove it is even more tempting. Everything we do for pleasure is not logically equivalent to everything we want will give us pleasure (i.e. everything is done for pleasure, but not everything will lead to pleasure). Why? Poor judgment. The beautiful counterexample is mankind. If we go along the argument that what we will do is pleasure, then what we will do the most is obviously the most pleasurable. And what is that? Let's forget about money, houses, fame, truth, the Nobel or soulmate. Let us get down to the basics. The brain is chemical, so it can be tricked by chemicals. Therefore, without doubt, drugs are the most pleasurable. (Legal issue does not enter our scope of concern because we are restructuring the society here.) Ok, then the inevitable outcome following this argument should be that everyone on earth is (or should be) doing drugs. Why are we not? I call this beloved counter-example the drug paradox.

The solution is simple: We do not know how good it is. Or we forget about (or being suppressed) how good it is. Or even simpler, the drugs on the market are not designed to make you feel good, they are designed to get you hooked. Built for addiction, not for pleasure. For money, of course. Applying it to people today facing a pleasure they do not know (no direct knowledge, that is, memory and hearsay do not meet the standards) is simply wrong. The theoretical ideal is a person with direct

contact of a drug that elicits physiologically maximum possible pleasure (exactly how should be left to other fields to figure out), and direct contact of some other pleasurable thing that does not stimulate the pleasure center directly. The theory predicts the choice being the drug with no hesitation or exception.

I dislike this paradox and its solution. I certainly love that they are elegant and amusing, what I hate is what it reveals us to be. Simple animals struggling to fulfill the requirement of evolution while actively patching up lies about freedom and superiority, during which also being biologically limited to achieve the destination, but in a lifetime of longing and striving.

What is relevant to political philosophy in this discussion of happiness, pleasure and will is that happiness and pleasure is identical, and they do not always converge with will. So people may not want what can make them happy, or will make them happy, or seems to make them happy. The exact means of measurement will be an important topic later.

1.2 Explanation of Possible Aim

The thing to bear in mind is that here we are merely explaining what the aim is, not how they should be implemented, or how they should be justified, etc.. This is an explanation. We will keep it simple as that before we go in too deep and confuse ourselves.

#1 The stability of power and sustainability of the powerful

The aim is to make sure that whoever (a collective or an individual) is in charge to continue to be in charge. The aim is to make sure that no matter how much power one

(a collective or an individual) has, one would have more or equal amount (if it already reaches a maximum) of power in the future.

An example of this would be an emperor. Emperors typically do these two things: making sure all that threatens his throne are taken care of, and strengthening his empire by passing new laws or expanding territory. In this case, he is making decisions for all. His aim is society's. He is the society. Everyone else are merely cogs in the mechanism of his society. Another example is the politicians today. What is the primary aim of a politician in a first-world democratic society? Get elected. Or reelected. Seize the power, sustain the power and expand the power. Everything he does as a politician can be traced back to those three aims. But he is certainly not the society, like in the emperor's case. There are other politicians around, and his power originates from the diluted power of each individual voter. So his personal aim is not the society's. A society of monarchy is very messy, mostly because the monarch is incompetent in pursuing his aim, partly because his power is incomplete. But a democratic society is far more chaotic and messy than a monarchic society, because the power is far more incomplete.

(A perfect example does not exist since we are currently at a theoretical level. One does not expect a Math teacher to present one a real life circle in a geometry class, does one?)

#2 The Darwinian Success of the community

The aim is to strive for the Darwinian Success of the community. That is, view the community as a species in the evolutionary framework, and do whatever is necessary to ensure the continuation and prosperity of the species. This can be divided into two parts on an individual level: continue this life or the creation of a new life.

There is no real life example that ever comes close enough to this aim in the human world. There are too many layers of lies and sophistication between us and evolution. I will take an example from the animal kingdom. An ant colony. The collective aim of an ant colony is to survive. The queen can be replaced when necessary. The workers will consume the Queen's body when a new Queen is born. Each ant will fulfill their duty in the colony to ensure the survival of the colony by feeding themselves and the next generation of ants.

#3 The will of the community

The aim is to fulfill the will of the community as much as possible. It is not simply to do what the majority wants, because here we do not simply ignore the minority's wishes. Democracy is an arrangement of who should be in charge, i.e., how the political decisions should be made. The fact that it results in the tyranny of the majority is a feature of its implementation, not rooted in the idea itself. We should let the people make political decisions, which does not indicate we should follow the will of the majority. The key is that democracy can be implemented in a way that does not result in the tyranny of the majority. For instance, if 99 people want A, and 1 person wants B, we can have A for 99 days, and B for 1 day, which constitutes a 100 days cycle, instead of having A for 100 days, everyday. The fact that many countries who adopted democracy found themselves in a tyranny of the majority is simply because this is a convenient way of doing things. The discussion shall not be carried any further as we are still at the theoretical level.

There is still no good enough real life example for this aim. The real life examples either do not even come near it, or are too messy to be considered.

#4 The happiness of the community

The aim is to maximize the happiness of the community. This is identical with the idea proposed by Bentham. As I recall, they were trying to solve this optimization problem with rigorous Mathematics. But that's not the problem here as we are solely focused on clarifying what the aim is.

#5 The will of the majority

The aim is to achieve whatever the majority wants. Further clarification can be found in the previous explanation of terms, "the Majority" and "Will". #6 The will of the powerful

The aim is to fulfill as many wills of the powerful as possible. The powerful can be an individual or a collective. I have been repeating this point because it grows in importance as our discussion develops. The key here is that we are maximizing it, not fulfilling all the wills at once, which will make the aim unattainable theoretically.

#7 The happiness of the powerful

This aim is similar to the first aim, except this time we have happiness. The aim is to maximize the happiness of the powerful.

#8 The basic rights of each individual member of the community

This aim is to ensure the basic rights of each individual member of the community is not violated. The aim may be reduced to minimize violation instead of eliminate violation. The change depends on how basic rights are defined and the aim is implemented.

Now is the time to discuss the identities of these basic rights. What do the basic rights serve? Like we would rather jump into the ocean than to live in a society without these basic rights granted? No. We are all much stronger than we thought. We can survive conditions way more than we care to imagine. Basic rights are nothing

compared to survival. Human dignity is really a modern luxury. But shouldn't we, as a part of this brilliant species, share some of its accomplishments? Possibly, if we want to use that term. This is a very complicated topic to be discussed here. It deserves its own chapter. We will get back to it.

1.3 Aims that do not Theoretically Exist

There are two aims that have entered my consideration but both proved to be impossible to exist, not by reality, but by logic. These two are:

- The will of each individual member of the community
- The happiness of each individual member of the community

If I substitute happiness and will for a variable A, then we can discuss the two situations at once and find out why they are impossible, as they are for the same reason. The premise of the argument is that the A of each individual member of the community does not always converge. Therefore, they cannot be satisfied simultaneously, which means the aim can never be achieved by logic. A quick counterargument that can be made here is that we do not need to satisfy all of them at once, we can maximize the number of A we can realize. That is a fair point, except then these two aim would be identical with aim #3 and #4.

1.4 Which Aim to Pursue?

There are eight aims listed above, and in this section, we shall figure out which aim we should pursue, or, why we cannot figure it out.

I think this book should probably end here if I do not have a lot to say about reality in the rest of the book. The simple fact is that I do not know which aim shall we pursue. If I am being entirely honest, I would pick #7 The happiness of the

powerful when I am the powerful. But if I do not get to be the powerful, I would pick #4 the happiness of the community or #8 the basic rights of the individual members of the community, depending on what the basic rights are.

What I am supposed to do in this section (or in the rest of this book) is to reason myself into an aim, and then talk you guys into the same aim. But I am stuck here, because our universal language, logic, only shows but does not say (Wittenstein). I must have a good enough premise to push the logic into a conclusion. I do not have any premise of such nature. I want to be happy, and I just explained the whole befuddling and troublesome background of a naive wish of this sort.

Anyway, my personal aim is my happiness. So that eliminates all will-related aim (#3, #5 and #6). And it looks like I am not the one in charge here, and that eliminates all that only looks after the interest of the powerful (#1 and #7). I do not want to be a slave, so screw Darwin (eliminates #2). Sure enough, that left us with #4 and #8. But in reality, both of these two can go really, really wrong. In comparison, #4 has the tendency to get worse than #7. Defining happiness is a lot easier than defining human rights, but when actual human beings are put in charge of such tasks, I think it has #4 has the potential to go far worse than #8. So I would prefer #8.

(This section is now officially, which aim I will pursue.)

I have no idea how much that line of reasoning convinced you. I guess this question is simply impossible to resolve on a theoretical level. This is pathetic. It means I am going back on what I said in the beginning of this chapter. I said we need an aim. I said we need a purpose to steer our reasoning in the right direction. I said we need to start at the theoretical level and then, when we are equipped with sophisticated

and logically-sound theory, we will try to come to an agreement with reality. That is our best possible political philosophy.

It turns out that it is the very logic that we need to construct the aim with, that shatters the possibility of any such aim. This problem is simply impossible to solve. My dream of the best possible political philosophy now declared bankruptcy. But the book is not over yet.