

Political Philosophy I at Stockholms Universitet

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1 Key concepts 1

- **power:** X has power over Y if X can compel Y to perform some action. X's power over Y gives Y a reason to obey but it does not create an obligation
- **authority:** X has authority over Y if X occupies a social role from which they can provide reasons for Y to act in certain ways. X's authority gives Y a reason to obey but it does not create an obligation
- **political authority:** X has political authority over Y iff the fact that X requires Y to perform some action p gives Y a reason to perform p, regardless of what p is and this reason purports to override all (or nearly all) reasons Y may have not to perform p
- **preemptive (or exclusionary) reasons:** commands issued by political authority provide reasons that *preempt* or **override** other reasons. Political authority requires surrender of judgement
- **natural subordination theory:** some creatures instinctively submit to others whose nature makes them fit for rule, dominance and power. Natural subordination theories can be further divided between *natural roles* argument (e.g. Aristotle's natural domination of men over women) and *consequentialist* argument (e.g. Mill's enlightened colonialism)
- **divine authority theory:** ruler's political authority comes from God, either the ruler is (related to) God (Egyptian pharaohs, Dalai Lamas, some Roman emperors, Japanese emperors) or was granted the authority by God (Adam was given authority to rule the Earth by God and kings are his first-in-line descendants)
- **natural duty accounts of political obligation:** there is a general non-voluntary obligation to maintain and promote just institutions
- **associative accounts of political obligation:** there are special, non-voluntary obligations towards one's own political institutions created by social roles or identities (e.g. obligation from gratitude)
- **transactional accounts of political obligation:** there are special, non-voluntary obligations towards political institutions based on the requirement of reciprocity
- **social contract theories of political authority:** political obligations arise from voluntary acts (consent) either explicitly or implicitly
- **political legitimacy:** justified entitlement to rule. Two different views how it relates to political authority: 1) political authority presupposes legitimacy (only legitimate govern-

ments have political authority, illegitimate governments only have power), 2) the two are distinct

- **philosophical anarchism:** there are no preemptive reasons and therefore no political authority. The authority of the state is not unique, it may have authority but not political authority

2 Key concepts 2

- **state of nature:** the pre-political state characterized by no social contract, no property laws etc. In Hobbes' state of nature, life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.
- **doctrine of equality:** differences between people are insufficient to lead to power imbalances. Consistent with Darwin's self-domestication hypothesis
- **competition, diffidence, desire for glory:** the 3 principal cause of quarrel. Competition arises from scarcity. Diffidence is a feeling of insecurity about the future, since no one is able to defend themselves with certainty. The desire for glory is to increase one's security by developing a reputation for strength.
- **laws of nature:**
 1. everyone should strive for peace as long as it is obtainable
 2. for the sake of peace, one should lay down their rights and be satisfied with as only much liberty as he would allow be exercised against him
 3. men perform their covenants
- **Prisoner's dilemma:** a game in which defection is always better for each player, regardless what other players do, but if everyone cooperates it gives better outcomes for everyone than if everyone defects. Related to Braess paradox and tragedy of the commons.
- **Hobbes' conception of justice:** justice arises from the third law of nature, because injustice is just non-compliance to the covenants or to social contract.
- **the Sovereign (sovereignty):** a person, or group of persons, to which everyone alienates their rights
- **alienation social contract:** it is not possible to revoke the contract. People alienate all their rights, except the right to self-defense which cannot be revoked.
- **bootstrapping problem:** how can social contract arise from the state of nature in which nobody can be trusted to comply with contracts or covenants

- **fear and liberty:** for Hobbes there is no violation of liberty if citizens act only out of fear of the Sovereign
- **the problem of rebellion:** the right of self-defense is not given up, so people can rebel against the Sovereign if they feel threatened by it. Therefore people do not really alienate their rights.

3 Key concepts 3

- **Filmer's theory:** *Partiarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings*. Since no one can dispose over their life (suicide is sin) but rules have the rights to dispose lives of people, political authority cannot come from people. Hence authorization must come from God (through Adam, Noah and their descendants).
- **the law of nature:** (Locke) preservation of all mankind, everyone is created by God and everyone is equal, everyone is bound by self-preservation and should recognize everyone's self-preservation as equally important. Execution of this law is everyone's duty in the state of nature.
- **state of war:** everyone has the right to defend themselves. A threat – intention of harming another – puts the parties in the state of war. Slavery is also the state of war.
- **the problem of irrationality and the assurance problem:** in transgressing the law of nature, the offender declares himself to be living by another rule than that of reason and common equity
- **natural vs civil liberty:** natural liberty is to be under no restraint other than the law of nature. Civil liberty consists in rule of law that applies to everyone equally, laws that are created by representative government, liberty in those things which are not governed by law, freedom from the arbitrary will of another man.
- **civil society vs commonwealth:** in civil society, people put their powers together, in commonwealth they place their powers in the government (by agency or alienation, for Locke it's agency).
- **alienation social contract vs agency social contract:** in alienation (Hobbes) people hand over their rights to the sovereign and cannot get them back, in agency (Locke), the sovereign is there to *serve* the people. In alienation, there is no limit on the political authority of the Sovereign. In agency, people put these limits on the government.
- **actual vs tacit consent:** explicit vs implicit consent
- **rule of law:** applies equally to all, regulates the liberty of man under government
- **self-ownership:** Locke's starting point to the theory of property. Everyone has property rights in their own person (their body, mind and labor). The right to life and liberty is therefore a *property right*. The source of property rights is not the Sovereign. Property rights are prior to political society for Locke.
- **mixing labor theory:** the original claim to property is

based on adding labor to resources. The justification of property comes from the additional value created by labor.

- **the Lockean proviso:** the appropriation of property is justified iff "enough and just as good" is left. That is, a person gets property rights only over resources which she actually uses.

4 Key concepts 4

- **popular sovereignty:** (the general will) is concerned with general matters (making laws)
- **self-sufficiency (state of nature):** for Rousseau, people in the state of nature are self-sufficient: there is no community between them
- **natural versus political rights:** natural rights are norms of reason that specify the general preconditions for human existence and survival, they conform to human nature. Political rights are particular social rules, laws and relations, arising from power relations
- **pity** (empathy) the ability to refrain from harming others
- **perfectibility of humans:** psychological adaptability
- **amour propre:** as humans emerge from the state of nature (through more frequent human contact), their self-love develops into amour propre: a form of love of self that is the function of one's esteem by others, determined by pride, envy, jealousy, greed
- **general will:** it is always right, it "wills" the general good, the common will of citizens concerned not with pursuing their own interests but with the well-being of society. Example is building a dam.
- **will of all:** what the majority of people want, it may be irrational and fail to recognize the general will
- **obeying the general will is "forced to be free":** total alienation of rights and powers to become the part of the Sovereign, where the Sovereign represents the general will which is perfectly aligned with everyone with every citizen concerned with the well-being of the society
- **direct democracy:** danger of interference from popular sovereignty
- **totalitarianism:** (Rousseau's totalitarianism) when entering civil society, a second psychological transformation takes place and people's will never conflicts with the general will. People's "real" interests and freedom is in the following the general will, even if they need to be coerced.

5 Key concepts 5

- **the individualism objection:** liberalism leads to individualism, atomism and the destruction of traditional social structures
- **Liberty principle (harm principle):** the only purpose for exercising power against liberty of any member of society is to prevent harm for others

- **paternalism:** soft paternalism is interference with a person's liberty for the sake of that person's good when the person is irrational, uninformed or incompetent in some way. Hard paternalism is interference with a person's liberty for the sake of that person's good when the person is fully informed and competent.
- **utilitarianism:** utility is the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions
- **utility:** for Mill it consists in happiness and happiness consists in pleasure
- **classical (total) and average (modern) utilitarianism:** classical sums up all utilities of all members of societies, modern averages them.
- **Mill's theory of well-being and happiness:** at the center of Mill's conception of well-being is the capacity for self-development according to one's own direction and plan for life
- **higher and lower pleasures:** according to Mill the principle of utility should recognize the fact that pleasures differ not only in quantity but also in quality
- **competent judges test:** only someone who experienced both higher and lower pleasure can reliably say which one is better.
- **Socrates and the fool example:** it's better to be a sad Socrates than a happy fool, because then you know both sides of the question, a fool only knows his own side.
- **indirect pursuit of happiness:** only those are happy who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness, for example on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, on some art or pursuit
- **self-development (humans as progressive beings):** social institutions should enable self-development and thereby human flourishing
- **experiments in living:** the free development of individuality
- **the argument for liberalism:**
 1. the best institutions are those under which people are happiest
 2. a precondition of happiness is self-development
 3. self-development requires free individual experimentation in living
 4. the states that best permit and promote free individual experimentation are liberal states
 5. therefore people will be happiest under liberal states
 6. therefore liberal states provide best institutions

6 Key concepts 6

- **natural law, natural rights, civil rights:** natural rights are those which have source not in politics but in human nature (or God). Natural law tradition says that human rights

are the natural rights. Civil rights are those which appertain to main right of being a member of society.

- **moral rights and human rights:** moral rights, unlike human rights, may not be codified in law
- **features of human rights:**
 - unconditional
 - inalienable
 - universal
 - prepolitical
 - institutional
- **human rights and obligations:** the obligation holder for human rights is political authority: violations of human rights are acts committed in an official capacity
- **human rights and political authority:** you can only be autonomous moral subject (and therefore the political authority can demand obedience from you) if you have basic rights, only then can it present itself as morally justified towards its subject

7 Key concepts 7

- **Pareto optimality, Pareto improvement, Pareto efficiency:** Pareto improvement improves one or more dimensions without degrading any dimension. Pareto optimality is when no further Pareto improvement is possible. Pareto efficiency is the same as Pareto optimality.
- **original position:** state of nature for Rawls
- **veil of ignorance:** a situation where we have to design a just social system without knowing our place in that system (not even our talents, health etc.)
- **moral person:** rational, neither risk-averse nor risk-seeking person with a sense of justice, able to act in accordance to her own conception of the good, not influenced by envy, has a life plan, able to assess her goals from a moral point of view
- **impartiality:** for Rawls it is realized through the veil of ignorance framework
- **primary goods (natural and social):** natural primary are health, speed, intelligence, imagination etc. Social primary goods are rights, liberties and opportunities, power, income, wealth, (the social bases of) self-respect.
- **circumstances of justice:** people are physically close, they are roughly equal, and their psychological and intellectual abilities are finite. Goods are only moderately available but not extremely scarce. People are only moderately other-regarding.
- **constraints on the concept of right:** only conceptions of justice worth considering must conform to the conditions of: generality, universality, publicity, ordering, finality
- **maximin rule:** choose the conception of justice which maximizes the outcome for the least principled member

- **total and average utilitarianism:** same as classical and modern
- **Principle of Liberty:** each person has an equal right to the most extensive schemes of basic liberties that is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others
- **Principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity:** social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are attached to positions and offices open to all
- **fair versus formal equality of opportunity:** fair equality of opportunity is more demanding than formal because it also takes into account (besides talent) socioeconomical standings etc.
- **Difference Principle:** social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage
- **lexicographic ordering:** first of the two principles (that is, the Principle of Liberty) takes priority

8 Key concepts 8

- **the individualism objection:** liberalism leads to individualism, atomism and the destruction of traditional social structures
- **the idea of the end of history:** liberal democracy may be the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and as such considered the end of history
- **Lockean vs Rawlsian liberal tradition:** Locke focuses on the danger to liberty from government, Rawls also on equality. Locke advocates a minimal small government, Rawls typically advocates an active welfare state. Locke emphasizes the rights and liberties of citizens, Rawls' two principles are an attempt to unify liberty and equality by prioritizing liberty but heavily considering distributive organization of society too.
- **perfectionist liberalism:** (Mill) the fundamental values of liberal theory are matters of moral truth, liberalism is justified because it is morally the best
- **political liberalism:** (Rawls) the theory has no commitments regarding the moral truth of its fundamental values. Liberalism is justified because it embodies the shared values ("public reason") of citizens
- **the principle of state neutrality:** political institutions must have neutral justifications (that is, independent from any conception of the good)
- **main features of communitarian theories:** people cannot be conceived as presocial because their identities are determined by the community to which they belong. Societies are based on established and fixed identities. Liberals build upon an implausible and incoherent concept of the person. Human beings are inherently social and political theorizing must take this into account.
- **liberal responses to the communitarian challenge:** liberalism does not deny the social structure and embeddedness

of human beings. It does insist that moral justification is owed to every member of society. Social circumstances do not fully determine the identity of human beings. Communitarians cannot critical distance from the institutions and practices by which they evaluate them. Communitarian ideas might be unjust or morally objectionable.

- **fallibilism:** we can never have certainty about empirical facts, we can only falsify but not prove theories
- **open and closed societies:** closed societies are authoritarian and use tradition or future utopian vision as justification. Civil liberties and civil society are limited, knowledge is political. Little or no freedom of thought and expression. Open societies are the opposite, they allow to have a critical attitude towards authority and tradition. The distinction is epistemological rather than political. Open societies accept that all knowledge is provisional.