

LIBERALISM

Subject:-Philosophy And Current Issues (UHS1022)

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What is Liberalism?

It is a political and moral philosophical idea based on liberty / human rights.

It is a foundation basically to give civil rights

History / background of liberalism

Here in this section we are going to discuss about the epistemology basis of liberalism and its history. Now the question arises what is epistemology?. Epistemology is a theory that defines how we make sense of this world. Now when we discuss about the epistemology basis we are going to unearth the first principle of liberalism or so to say on what foundation does liberalism stand on.

The Beginning of Liberalism was out of England in the mid 17th century when English Civil War was occurring, and then became a well known tradition in the 18th century. Around 1689 a Bill of Rights was passed questioning at what extent should Government's power be limited. So John Locke who died at 1706 had a massive contribution to this issue. So lot of his liberal ideas was incorporated on those bills.

And later on a lot of his and other peoples ideas was incorporated in USA-Founding Fathers- Documents in the 1776. So now at this point of time this ideological thinking has started to take a turning point by institutionalizing it.

THEORIES

- *Hedonistic principle*

John Locke was what you can say is the founding father of liberalism and all the way down to **John Rawls** who was recognized as the last major contributor of this ideology. What you can notice about them that they have common belief of platform that is called the **Hedonistic Principle**.

Now Hedonistic principle is a simple theory which basically refers to pain and pleasure. It was their philosophical idea that a moral law should always be aligned with these two subjects, pain and pleasure.

- *Utilitarianism*

And the idea was that you should maximize as much pleasure as you can and you should minimize as much pain as possible. And this is the idea that is called **Utilitarianism** which was extended from the hedonistic principle.

Individulism

This idea promotes a large part of liberalism. Individualism is the idea that each and every human beings know what's best for them. His country or social circle could judge what's best for him.

Communitarianism

Now communitarianism people like Michael Sandell one of the biggest scholar in the western world wants to say that communities are more effective than individuals in terms of social organization

Impact On Political and Social System

A major book written by John Locke is "Two treatises of Government". In a situation he was writing it to someone called Robert Filmer and arguing with reference to Bible. A lot of the assumptions or ideas of liberalism are backed up by a theological idea as John Locke did.

The fact that the phrase "We are created equal" was taken from John Locke which many of the constitutions use including atheist. John Locke was theist. But what we can see now that in western countries there is a rising of atheist politicians who use the same terminology. But the question arises that on what basis do they justify the terminology?. John Locke had Bible which he repeatedly refers to but as an atheist on what foundation can they prove that this particular statement is true. In fact they believe in Naturalism. But even if we look deeply into Naturalism everyone is not born equally for example some maybe taller than the other etc.

John Stuart Mill who died in 1873 is an important figure in liberalism. And most of the dominant ethics we have today is based on his ideas. The most important philosophy today one can notice is the "**Harm Principle**" which was imposed by Stuart Mill. Because this is the principle most of the liberals now use it today to justify most of the morals. This principle was to make utilitarianism updated. So in society there are scenarios like rape which he may use utilitarianism for his advantage as he is focused on maximizing his pleasure. And that was the problem with utilitarianism. So John Stuart Mill came along with the Harm principle proving that there was something wrong with utilitarianism. So basically what the Harm principle defines is you can do whatever you want to do as long as you don't harm anyone.

This Harm Principle excuse can be heard from people who are involved in non-normative sexual practice for example homosexuality. Any liberal would say that as long as they don't harm anyone they can be homosexuals. That's the ethic that made a huge contribution in the growth of homosexuals in western societies.

Reference

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UBnfGfWq48>
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3. <http://phrontistery.info/isms.html>