

ESSAY #4 INDIVIDUALISM

Individualism is the idea that individuals should be viewed as more important than society as a whole.

Para 1 – the type of individualism which is desirable

Classical Liberals:

- Egotistical individualism – individuals should be self-reliant
 - Individuals are rational beings and therefore are capable of making decisions in their own interest
 - Belief in negative freedom (articulated and clarified by John Mill) – individuals are free if there are the minimum amount of laws and social pressures controlling their choices. Therefore, egotistical individualism is the best way for individuals to be able to exercise freedom, which, for liberals, is the primary political value

Modern liberals:

- Developmental individualism – where individuals are encouraged to flourish so that they can reach their potential
 - Belief in positive freedom – state needs to take an active role in enabling individuals to use their agency
 - Some materialism -> inequality of opportunity

Para 2 – The role of the state in ensuring individualism

All Liberals:

- John Locke's social contract state is based on the agreement of the people, who choose to give up some freedom in return for security
 - Limited Gov – so state can't infringe on rights of ppl
- Therefore, agreement that there needs to be a state to enable individuals to have agency
 - This is the case for both types as state clearly needed to facilitate both

Modern Liberals:

- State needs to expand to encourage individuals to flourish and reach their potential (developmental individualism)
 - Inequality of opportunity -> some people don't have as much freedom as others and therefore the state needs to narrow this gap
 - John Rawls, a 19th Century modern liberal thinker, describes this increased role of the state as qualified intervention, because the state only intervenes to the extent necessary to ensure positive freedom and no more

ESSAY #6 EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Equality is the idea that people in society are equal and should have equal rights.

Para 1 – Extent of formal equality

All Liberals:

- Foundational Equality – legal and political rights
 - Whilst everyone has innate difference, they must be considered equal in value by the state

Classical Liberals:

- Classical Liberal thinkers have advocated Virtual Representation
 - Those who are less rational can have their legal and political rights represented by others who are rational
 - John Locke - Women, viewed as less rational, had their right to property represented by their husbands
 - However, in reality this view of virtual representation is not consistent with Classical Liberal ideology which stresses that all individuals are important and rational and also highlights the need for toleration. Therefore, this view, particularly with respect to women, seems to have been influenced by the time period the early classical liberal thinkers were living in. Consequently, it might be more accurate to say that that classical liberal ideology really believes in universal representation.
- Mary Wollstonecraft in reality had the most classical liberal view on this, arguing that women are rational beings capable of reason. John Mill also well known for his ideas on tolerance which in his view was fundamentally differences as a result of the innate difference between individuals

Modern liberals:

- Universalist
 - All individuals important and rational
 - People with less rights do not have the same freedom, and therefore the state needs to ensure that everyone has the same legal and political rights and actively intervene to achieve this (positive freedom)
- Virtual Representation for groups unable to look after themselves
 - Children
 - Disabled

Overall – in reality modern liberals and classical liberals largely agree that everyone should have the same legal and political rights. Whilst the views of early classical liberal thinkers seem to go against this narrative, when understanding what the ideology actually stands for it is clear that classical liberals are also universalist in their view on foundational equality.