Marxism

Lecture 7 – Liberalism
John Filling
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Overview

1. What is liberalism?
2. Liberalism and socialism
3. Critique (I): normative
4. Critique (II): political
5. Critique (III): economic
6. Summing-up
Four liberal commitments

1. Individualism
   - (a) Individuals *alone* have (ultimate) value
   - (b) Individuals *and* collectivities have value

2. Freedom
   - (a) Negative liberty/self-direction
   - (b) Positive liberty/self-development

3. Toleration

4. Limits on public power
Debates within the liberalism (I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market economy</th>
<th>In favour of state intervention</th>
<th>Against (extensive) state intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Egalitarians</strong> (Mill, Hobhouse, Rawls)</td>
<td><strong>Libertarians</strong> (Locke, Hayek, Nozick)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural practices (e.g. education, religion, Yoder)</td>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong> (Mill?, Rawls)</td>
<td><strong>Diversity</strong> (Mill?, Berlin)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Debates within the liberalism (II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The rights of each</th>
<th>The good of all</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legitimating power</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contractarianism</strong> (Locke, Kant, Rawls)</td>
<td><strong>Utilitarianism</strong> (Bentham, Mill, Hobhouse)</td>
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<td><strong>Limiting power</strong></td>
<td><strong>Democratic</strong> (Locke, Rawls)</td>
<td><strong>Elitist</strong> (Hegel, Tocqueville, Mill, Berlin)</td>
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Socialism and/or/as liberalism

1. **Incorporation**
   - Socialism as part of liberalism

2. **Overlap**
   - Parts of socialism as parts of liberalism

3. **Extension**
   - Socialism as going beyond liberalism

4. **Antagonism**
   - Socialism as going against liberalism
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‘Hitherto, the philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it.’

– Marx, Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach
Normative critique

1. **Individualism**
   - Liberals focus on the good of the atomised individual, not the good of the ‘social individual’ (*Grundrisse*), or of the community.

2. **Egalitarianism**
   - Liberals focus on “moral” goods (equality, justice, human rights), but neglect “non-moral” goods (welfare, freedom, self-development).

3. **Moralism**
   - Liberals focus on moral principles (equality) rather than on social processes (power).
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Equality of primary social goods

Equality of resources

Equality of access to advantage
‘The concept of a socialist society as a realm of equality is a one-sided French concept deriving from the old “liberty, equality, fraternity”, a concept which was justified in that, in its own time and place, it signified a phase of development, but which, like all the one-sided ideas of earlier socialist schools, ought now to be superseded, since they produce nothing but mental confusion’

– Engels to August Bebel (18-28 March 1875), MECW, vol. 45, p. 64
Equality

‘General envy ... is the disguise in which greed re-establishes itself ... the urge to reduce things to a common level ... Crude communism is only the culmination of this envy and of this leveling-down proceeding from the preconceived minimum. ... [It is] the regression to the unnatural simplicity of the poor and crude man who has few needs and who has not only failed to go beyond private property, but has not yet even reached it.’

– Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844), in MECW, vol. 3, pp. 294-95
Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism

Basic
= equal and ultimate worth

Substantive
= equal treatment

Distributive
e.g. Dworkin, Roemer, Cohen

Non-distributive (relational)
e.g. Anderson, Scheffler, Young
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Question
Which form of egalitarianism, if any, should Marxists reject?
Basic equality

‘the life of a single human being is worth a million times more than all the property of the richest man on earth’

– Ernesto Che Guevara, ‘On Revolutionary Medicine’
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Political critique

1. **Statism**
   - Liberals rely on, and have (in one sense) complacent attitude towards, the state (= protector of human rights)

2. **Formalism**
   - Liberals focus on formal equality (human rights), but neglect underlying inequality (economic power)

3. **Anti-structuralism**
   - Liberals focus on limiting the power of individuals/institutions (protecting human rights), but neglect the systematic and cumulative effects of social structures
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Political critique

1. Statism
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2. Formalism
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Elitist (Hegel, Tocqueville, Mill, Berlin)

‘No government by a democracy ... ever did or could rise above mediocrity, except insofar as the sovereign Many have let themselves be guided ... [by] a more highly gifted and instructed One or Few. ... The honour and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following’

– Mill, On Liberty
Objections to ‘bourgeois’ democracy

1. Separation of powers
2. Centralisation
3. Beaucratisation/militarisation
4. Representation
Objections to 'bourgeois' democracy

1. Separation of powers
2. Centralisation
3. Beaucratisation/militarisation
4. Representation

‘To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament – this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism.’

– Lenin, The State and Revolution

‘Free election of masters does not abolish the master or the slaves.’

– Marcuse, One-dimensional Man
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‘If the existence of millionaires on the one hand and of paupers on the other is just, it must be because such contrasts are the result of an economic system which upon the whole works out for the common good, the good of the pauper being included therein as well as the good of the millionaire .... [T]his is the position which according to the organic or harmonic [i.e. liberal] view of society must be made good by any rational defence of grave inequality in the distribution of wealth’

– Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, ch. 6
Property-owning democracy

‘property-owning democracy ... disperse[s] the ownership of wealth and capital, and thus ... prevent[s] a small part of society from controlling the economy, and indirectly, political life as well. By contrast, welfare-state capitalism permits a small class to have a near monopoly of the means of production.’

– Rawls, Justice as Fairness, p. 139
### Property-owning democracy

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## Looking ahead

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Chapters in <em>Capital</em></th>
<th>Pages in Penguin edn.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2: History</td>
<td>Part 8 (chs. 26-33)</td>
<td>873-943 (= 70pp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3: Ideology</td>
<td>Chs. 1-2</td>
<td>125-188 (= 63pp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4: Alienation</td>
<td>Chs. 3-7</td>
<td>188-307 (= 119pp.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5: Exploitation</td>
<td>Chs. 8-12</td>
<td>307-429 (= 122pp.)</td>
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<td>Week 6: Domination</td>
<td>Chs. 13-15</td>
<td>429-643 (= 214pp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7: Liberalism</td>
<td>Chs. 16-24</td>
<td>643-762 (= 119pp.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: Feminism</td>
<td>Ch. 25</td>
<td>762-873 (= 111pp.)</td>
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Summing-up

Normative critique
- Individualism, egalitarianism, moralism

Political critique
- Statism, formalism, structuralism

Economic critique
- Property-owning democracy v. socialism

Either/or?
- Socialism as going beyond or going against liberalism?