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Parts Of The Specification This Lesson Covers

Core Political Ideas

3 Liberal thinkers and their ideas

The key ideas of the following thinkers to exemplify the content from areas 1 and 2:

John Locke (1632-1704)

- Social contract theory – society, state and government are based on a theoretical voluntary agreement.
- Limited government – that government should be limited and based on consent from below.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97)

- Reason – women are rational and independent beings capable of reason.
- Formal equality – in order to be free, women should enjoy full civil liberties and be allowed to have a career.

John Stuart Mill (1806-73)

- Harm principle – that individuals should be free to do anything except harm other individuals.
- Tolerance – belief that the popularity of a view does not necessarily make it correct.

John Rawls (1921-2002)

- Theory of justice – opinion that society must be just and guarantee each citizen a life worth living.
- The veil of ignorance – a hypothetical scenario where individuals agree on the type of society they want from a position where they lack knowledge of their own position in society.

Betty Friedan (1921-2006)

- Legal equality – women are as capable as men and that oppressive laws and social views must be overturned.
- Equal opportunity – women are being held back from their potential because of the limited number of jobs that are 'acceptable' for women.

? Potential Essay Questions ?

These below past/possible questions cover the whole of the liberalism topic. These aren't the only questions that could come up, but if you know these well, you should be able to adapt to answer any question.

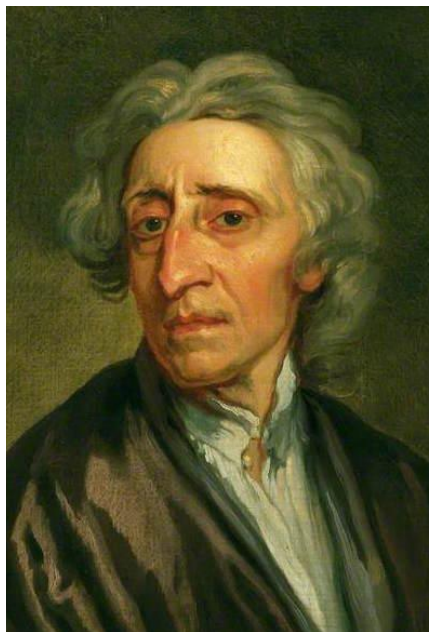
- To what extent do liberals agree? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in relation to the role of the state? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on the economy? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on society? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on human nature? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on freedom/liberty? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on equality/social justice? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on individualism? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on democracy? (24)
- To what extent do liberals agree in their views on rationalism? (24)

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Thinkers Names In The Specification

The below 5 thinkers named in the specification are the main thinkers you should use to support the arguments you're making when explaining and comparing the strands in essays. You should definitely mention at least 3 of them in each essay and aim for mentioning 4 or 5 of them

John Locke (1632-1704)



Strand: *Classical Liberalism*

Importance: *Very Important. Should be mentioned in every essay.*

John Locke, an English philosopher and physician, is often hailed as a founding figure of liberal thought. During the late 17th century, Locke's theories emerged in support of the Enlightenment ideals of liberty, government by consent, and the natural rights of individuals. In doing so, he established the principles of liberalism. He strongly supported the freedom of individuals and limited government, as articulated in his seminal work 'Two Treatises of Government.' His idea of a social contract and the government as a protector of individual rights laid the foundations for modern democracy.

Natural Rights Social Contract Theory

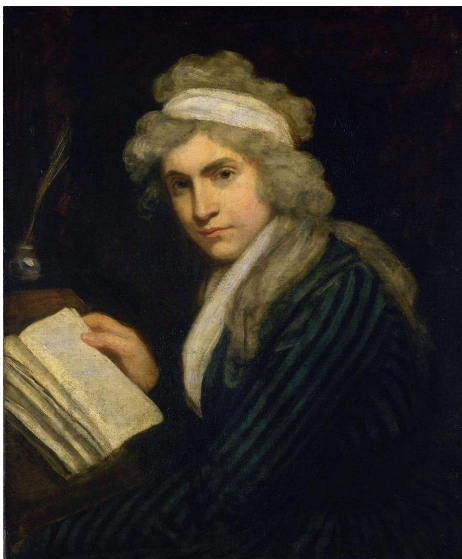
- Locke argued that in the state of nature there were natural societies in which individuals enjoyed natural rights and freedoms. In this context, he presented the state as a threat to these freedoms and rights and suggested that it should be limited to ensure freedom and individualism.
- Rather than being based on divine right and acting arbitrarily, the state should be based on the consent of the governed.
 - Locke's social contract theory suggested that individuals form societies and governments through an implicit agreement to ensure the protection of their natural rights, such as life, liberty, and property. This theory asserts that the legitimacy of a government stems from the consent of the governed, and its authority is conditional upon its ability to safeguard these rights effectively.
 - Locke wrote in his Second Treatise on Government "The constitution of the legislative is the first and fundamental act of society, whereby provision is made for the continuation of their union, under the direction of persons, and bonds of laws, made by persons authorized thereunto, by the consent and appointment of the people."
 - If those in power don't protect individual rights effectively, they have broken the contract and the people have the right to remove them from power.
- This was an extremely radical view at the time, moving away from divine right and laying the groundwork for democracy. However, Locke's concept of consent did not equate to universal suffrage or democracy as we understand it today.
 - Locke's vision was more about the consent of property owners rather than a broad-based democratic participation. This reflected the fact that at the time when speaking of rights and society, he and others (from this group themselves) were only really referring to a small group of privileged, white and wealthy men.

- Locke wrote in his Second Treatise on Government "The supreme power cannot take from any man any part of his property without his own consent."

Limited Government

- Locke's belief in government by consent and protecting the freedom of individuals led to his support for limited government.
 - He argued that the scope of government should be restricted to the powers willingly entrusted to it by the people, and its functions should be confined to the administration of laws, enforcing of contracts and protection of the rights of individuals against external and internal threats.
 - Locke wrote in his Second Treatise on Government "The power of the legislature, being derived from the people by a positive voluntary grant and institution, can be no other than what that positive grant conveyed"
 - He also wrote "Government has no other end, but the preservation of property."
- Anything more than this risked becoming arbitrary and would threaten the rights and freedoms of individuals.
- Locke also emphasised the importance of the separation of powers within government to prevent any single entity from accumulating too much control, which could lead to tyranny.
 - This framework for government, which includes checks and balances, is designed to ensure that the government remains a servant of the people, not their master, thereby securing freedom and safeguarding individual rights while preventing the overreach of governmental power.
 - Locke wrote in his Second Treatise on Government "In well-ordered commonwealths, where the good of the whole is so considered, as it ought, the legislative power is put into the hands of divers persons"

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97)



Strand: Classical Liberalism

Importance: Important, particularly in relation to equality and human nature.

Mary Wollstonecraft, an English writer and philosopher, was a pioneering figure in feminist thought. During the late 18th century, her writings emerged as a profound advocacy for women's rights and equality. She aligned with the liberal ideals of reason, equality, and individualism and argued that women were equally rational and should have the same fundamental rights as men.. Through her influential works, notably 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' Wollstonecraft laid the foundational principles of feminism by arguing that women are not naturally inferior to men but appear so only due to a lack of education.

Women Are Rational and Independent Beings Capable Of Reason

- Wollstonecraft challenged the prevailing societal beliefs of her time, which depicted women as inherently inferior than men in intellect and agency, and argued that women are inherently rational beings, fully capable of reason and deserving of the same educational opportunities as men.

- She asserted that any perceived inferiority of women was not the result of natural differences but of inadequate and unequal education, which stifled their intellectual development and confined them to subordinate roles in society.
- She wrote "The divine right of husbands, like the divine right of kings, may, it is hoped, in this enlightened age, be contested without danger." and "I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves."
- Wollstonecraft advocated for a change in the way society views and educates women, emphasising that with proper education, women could make decisions independently and contribute equally to society.
 - She wrote in 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman': "Let woman share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated."

Formal Equality

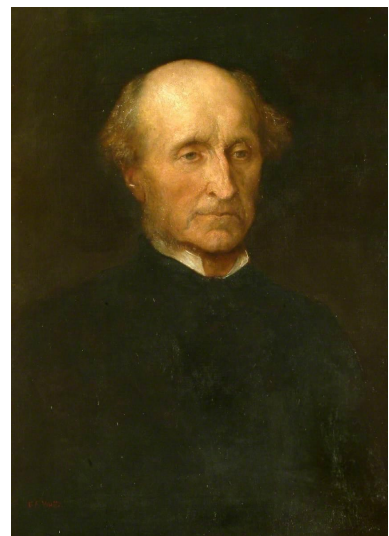
- Mary Wollstonecraft made the case for formal equality under the law and equal rights for women, arguing that the liberal principles of individual rights and freedoms should not be confined just to men.
 - Wollstonecraft's advocacy extended beyond just education; she called for equal rights under the law, including voting rights, property rights, and equal opportunities in employment.
 - She wrote in 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' "Women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government."
- She argued that the treatment of women was against reason and that they should be treated as rational individuals and given the freedom and rights and education to develop their individual potential just as men were.
 - Not only would this enable women to be free and therefore fulfil the principles of liberalism, it would also benefit society and the economy as a whole, as their individual pursuit of progress would benefit the whole of society.

John Stuart Mill (1806-73)

Strand: *Classical Liberalism (though he developed classical liberal thought significantly and can therefore also be considered a 'transitional liberal' that laid the groundwork for modern liberalism).*

Importance: *Important. Can be brought into most essays.*

John Stuart Mill, a British philosopher and economist, is regarded as one of the most influential thinkers of the 19th century. His writings championed individual liberty, freedom of expression, and the pursuit of personal autonomy, in the context of industrialisation and significant social change. In works like 'On Liberty' and 'The Subjection of Women' Mill argued passionately for the rights of individuals, regardless of gender or social status. He advocated for the expansion of suffrage, the promotion of education, and the removal of barriers that hindered personal development. Through his prolific writings and advocacy, Mill laid the groundwork for modern liberalism and the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.



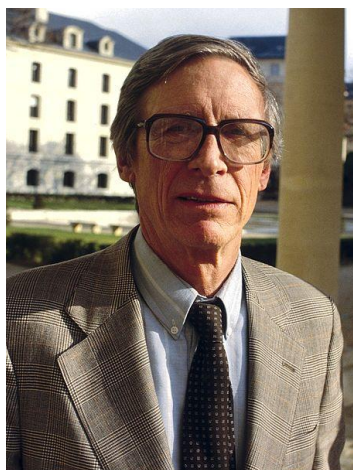
Harm Principle and Tolerance

- John Stuart Mill built upon and expanded key classical liberal principles in the 19th century, particularly those related to freedom and individualism.
- His famous harm principle, articulated in 'On Liberty' provided further justification for individual freedom, stating that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against their will, is to prevent harm to others.
 - This principle reinforced the liberal emphasis on personal autonomy and the limits of state intervention.
 - In 'On Liberty', Mill wrote "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."
- Mill also strongly supported tolerance of diverse viewpoints. He argued that individuals, no matter how certain they may be of their beliefs, could still be wrong. Individuals should therefore be able to freely express themselves and hold different views, as long as they didn't harm others.
 - In the context he was writing, he importantly applied this to religious reviews and opposed coercive measures against religious minorities which stifled individual liberty and hindered societal progress.
 - In 'On Liberty', Mill wrote "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

Representative Democracy and Developmental Individualism

- As calls for universal suffrage grew, Mill updated John Locke's notion of government by consent by advocating for representative democracy. He saw it as a means to reconcile individual liberty with collective decision-making.
 - While supportive of broader democratic participation, Mill was also deeply worried about the dangers of tyranny of the majority. He argued for a system of representation where elected officials were not mere delegates of the popular will but were independent thinkers who could exercise their own judgment and represent a diversity of views, aiming to balance majority rule with the protection of minority rights.
- Mill also advanced the concept of developmental individualism. He believed that for individuals to truly be free, they needed not only rights but also the ability to effectively use those rights.
 - Education was, for Mill, a crucial tool in realising this vision. He saw it as essential for helping individuals reach their potential and for the proper functioning of society and democracy.
 - Mill even suggested a plural voting system, where more educated individuals would have more votes, reflecting his belief that an educated electorate was crucial for informed decision-making in a democratic society.

John Rawls (1921-2002)



Strand: Modern Liberalism

Importance: Very Important. Should be mentioned in every essay.

John Rawls, an American, is one of the most important political philosophers of the 20th century. His landmark work 'A Theory of Justice' presented a new approach to understanding, and justification for, justice and fairness. Rawls's theory aimed to reconcile individual liberty with social equality, developing liberal principles such as liberty, individualism to meet the needs of all in society. He is a central figure in advocacy for modern liberalism.

Theory Of Justice and Enabling State

- John Rawls provided a detailed justification and defence of modern liberalism in his seminal work 'A Theory of Justice'. He argued that modern liberalism and an enabling state was key to achieving justice and fairness in the 20th century.
- He developed the concept and liberal justification for an enabling state that used progressive taxation and substantial public spending to establish a robust safety net. This framework was designed to facilitate true positive freedom for all individuals, ensuring not just negative freedom from interference but also the capacity to utilise one's freedom effectively.
 - In 'A Theory of Justice' he justified this, writing "It may be expedient but it is not just that some should have less in order that others may prosper."
- In defending this modern liberal approach, Rawls emphasised that it was not a 'surrender to socialism.' Instead, he argued that redistributing wealth within a capitalist framework and creating a society where the poor and disadvantaged are supported was both rational and consistent with liberal values.
 - For Rawls, such a society enables all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status, to exercise their individualism and enjoy genuine freedom.

Veil Of Ignorance

- Rawls justified his support for modern liberalism and an enabling state through his 'veil of ignorance' thought experiment that asks individuals to design a society without any knowledge of their own position within it (from the 'original position').
 - Rawls theorised that under this veil of ignorance, rational individuals would create a society that safeguards the least well-off, ensuring a fair distribution of resources and opportunities.
- He therefore sought to demonstrate that an enabling state and the pursuit of positive liberty was not only fair, but entirely consistent with liberalism and its emphasis on rationality.
 - In 'A Theory of Justice', he wrote "The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance."

Betty Friedan (1921-2006)

Strand: Modern Liberalism.

Importance: Important. Can be brought into most essays.

Betty Friedan, an American writer and feminist activist, emerged as a central figure in the second-wave feminist movement of the 20th century. Amidst the social turbulence of the post-World War II era, Friedan's groundbreaking work 'The Feminine Mystique' ignited a revolution in feminist thought and advocacy. Published in 1963, the book challenged the prevailing notion of women's fulfillment solely through domestic roles and motherhood, sparking a national conversation about gender roles and women's rights.



Friedan articulated the frustrations and aspirations of millions of women who yearned for greater opportunities and freedom beyond the confines of traditional gender roles. She called for women's participation in the public sphere, advocating for equal rights, education, and employment opportunities. She ultimately argued that women were not free in society and that guaranteeing their freedom and true equality required greater state involvement.

Legal Equality

- Friedan challenged oppressive laws and societal norms that limited women's roles, continuing Wollstonecraft's fight for women's rights. She was a key figure in advocating for the Equal Rights Amendment in the US, which was aimed at guaranteeing equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex.
 - She was successful in campaigning for the passage of the Equal Pay Act (1963) which outlawed discrimination in terms of sex when paying wages.
- Friedan played a pivotal role in establishing the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, an influential group in the women's rights movement that focused on advocating for legal and societal changes to achieve gender equality, such as combating workplace discrimination and advocating for reproductive rights.

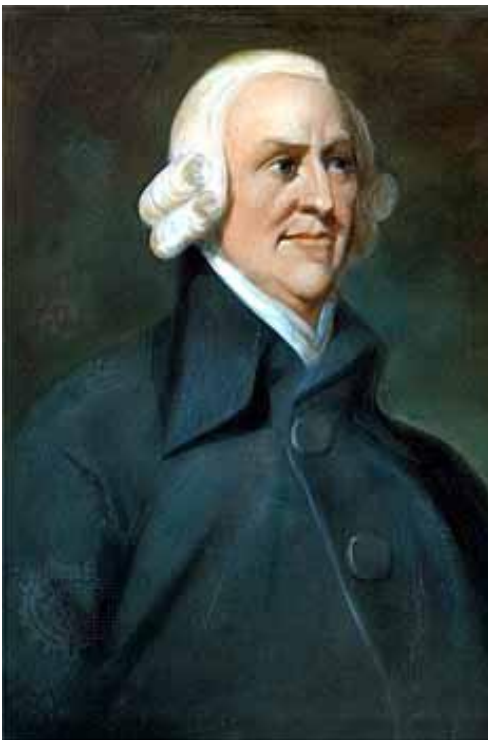
Equal Opportunity

- Importantly, Friedan explained how women were restrained not only by a lack of formal equality but also by pervasive societal attitudes that undermined their rationality and autonomy.
 - She wrote in 'The Feminine Mystique' "The problem that has no name — which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities — is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease."
- Friedan argued that these societal attitudes that the primary role of women was that of the wife and mother confined them to the domestic sphere, rather than being able to pursue their goals and careers. She called these attitudes the "feminine mystique", which suggested that women could find complete fulfillment and identity exclusively through domestic life.

- She highlighted how these prejudices were perpetuated through cultural norms and practices, effectively denying women the true freedom and potential for self-realisation that liberalism believed was innate to all humans.
 - Friedan wrote "We need to see men and women as equal partners, but it's hard to think of movies that treat women as full human beings."
- Friedan, embodying the principles of social liberalism, called for state intervention to dismantle these barriers. She advocated for the enactment of laws to prohibit discrimination based on gender, and supported measures such as affirmative action to ensure that women had not only equal rights on paper but also genuine equality of opportunity to succeed.
 - She wrote in 'The Feminine Mystique' "Who knows what women can be when they are finally free to become themselves?"
- Friedan therefore recognised that formal equality/legal equality wasn't enough, true equal opportunity was also necessary for women to be truly free.

Extra Thinkers You Can Also Use

Adam Smith (1723-1790)



Strand: *Classical Liberalism.*

Importance: *Very useful to bring in when writing about classical liberal views on the economy.*

Adam Smith, a Scottish economist and philosopher, is often hailed as the father of modern economics and a key figure in the Enlightenment movement. In the 18th century, Smith's seminal work, 'The Wealth of Nations' revolutionised economic thought and laid the groundwork for classical economics. Through his writings, Smith articulated the principles of free-market capitalism, emphasising the importance of individual self-interest, competition, and the invisible hand of the market in promoting economic prosperity and social harmony. He advocated for limited government intervention in the economy, arguing that laissez-faire policies would lead to greater efficiency and wealth creation. He was therefore important to developing liberal economic thought.

Laissez-Faire Capitalism

- Smith's advocacy for laissez-faire capitalism was deeply rooted in his belief that individual freedom in economic pursuits leads to the most efficient allocation of resources and the greatest increase in national wealth.
- He argued that economic prosperity and societal well-being are best achieved through minimal governmental intervention in the marketplace. He posited that individuals pursuing their own self-interest, in a free market, would naturally act in ways that, though unintended, allocate resources effectively and serve the broader good of society.
 - Smith called this phenomenon the 'invisible hand' of the market and argued as a result that government intervention should be limited, as excessive intervention distorts the market mechanisms, leads to inefficiencies, and stifles growth.

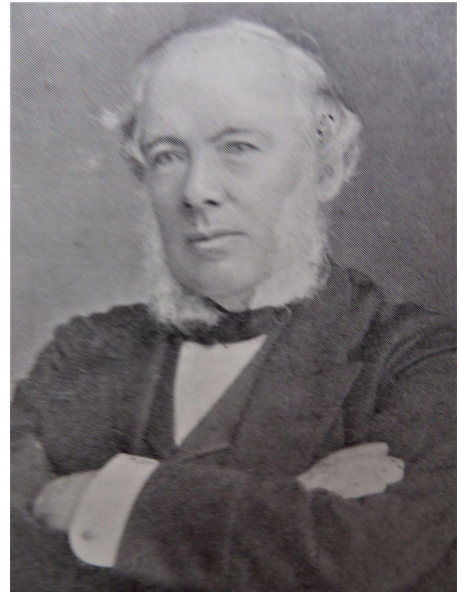
- He argued the government should take a hands-off approach in economic matters, intervening only to maintain law and order, protect property rights, and provide certain public goods that the market cannot efficiently supply.
 - He wrote in 'Wealth of Nations' "According to the system of natural liberty, the sovereign has only three duties to attend to... first, the duty of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it... thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions..."

Samuel Smiles (1812-1904)

Strand: Classical Liberalism.

Importance: Not necessary, but useful to bring in as an example of a restatement of classical liberalism in the context of industrialisation and social change.

Samuel Smiles emerged as a prominent figure in the self-help movement during the 19th century. Through his influential work 'Self-Help', Smiles advocated for individual self-improvement and personal responsibility as the keys to success and social progress. He emphasised the importance of hard work, thrift, and perseverance in achieving one's goals, arguing that individuals have the power to shape their own destinies through diligence and determination. His ideas are an example of a continued commitment to classical liberalism during a time of rapid industrialisation and social change, when others began to move towards modern liberalism.



Self-Help

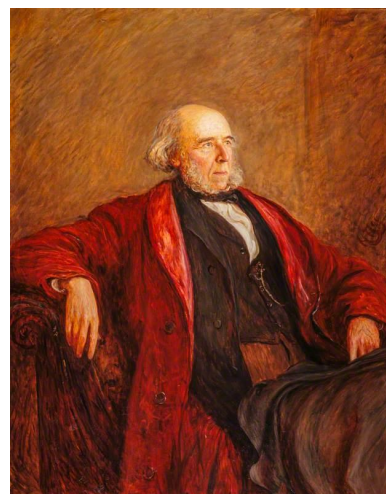
- Smiles' concept of self-help argued that individuals could and should take personal responsibility for improving their own lives through hard work and perseverance.
- He argued that in the midst of the vast economic transformations and opportunities brought about by industrialisation, personal initiative was the key to capitalising on new possibilities.
 - Smiles believed that the self-made man was the ideal product of the era, and his ideas were a reaction against the growing calls for state intervention and aid for the working class, which were becoming prominent due to the social upheavals and inequalities brought about by industrialisation.
 - He wrote in 'Self-Help' "Men who are resolved to find a way for themselves will always find opportunities enough; and if they do not find them, they will make them."
- This concept resonated with the liberal idea of meritocracy by suggesting that regardless of one's social class or circumstances, success was accessible through self-improvement and diligent effort.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

Strand: Classical Liberalism.

Importance: Not necessary, but useful to bring in as an example of a restatement of classical liberalism in the context of industrialisation and social change.

Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher and sociologist, played a key role in the development of Social Darwinism in the 19th century. Spencer's work applied Darwinian principles of evolution to human society and restated the classical liberal commitment to individualism and limited state intervention despite the inequalities created by industrialisation.



Social Darwinism

- Herbert Spencer applied the concept of social Darwinism to society, advocating for the idea that, like in nature, only the 'fittest' should survive in an economic context. He promoted a laissez-faire approach, arguing that minimal government intervention allows for natural competition and societal evolution, leading to stronger economies and overall progress.
 - In 'Social Statics' Spencer wrote "If they are sufficiently complete to live, they do live, and it is well they should live. If they are not sufficiently complete to live, they die, and it is best they should die."
- Spencer's views justified limited state aid and regulation, despite the context of increasing inequality and poverty in industrialised society.
 - This aligned with classical liberalism's emphasis on individual responsibility, but was also highly controversial due to its justification of inequality and poverty.

T.H. Green (1836-1882)



Strand: Modern Liberalism.

Importance: Not necessary, but useful to bring in when writing about positive liberty.

Thomas Hill Green, an American philosopher and economist, made important contributions to the development of modern liberalism in the late 19th century. Green critiqued classical economic theories, particularly the emphasis on individual self-interest and laissez-faire capitalism, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of economic behavior and a recognition of the government's role in regulating markets. His most important contribution to liberalism was his critique of negative liberty and support for positive liberty.

Positive Liberty

- T. H. Green articulated a version of liberty that diverged from the classical liberal notion of 'negative liberty,' which saw freedom simply as an absence of external constraints.
- For Green, true liberty meant the capacity of individuals to realise their own true nature and potential through personal development and moral self-determination. This was only achievable within a social framework where institutions and conditions support, rather than constrain, personal growth.

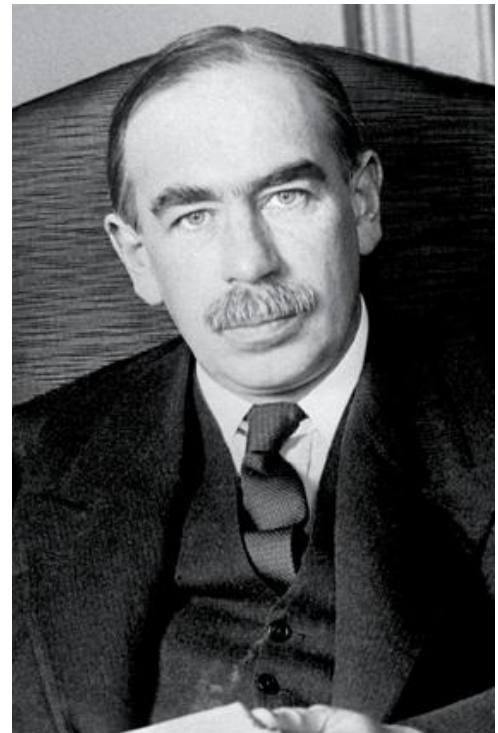
- He argued that the state has a crucial role in fostering an environment where educational and social resources are made available to all, thus enabling individuals to achieve their fullest potential.
- His emphasis was not merely on freedom from interference but on creating the conditions necessary for individuals to act autonomously and live fulfilling lives.
 - He wrote "when we speak of freedom ... we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing".
- This interpretation of liberty argued for a proactive role of the state in enhancing individual capacities, a significant departure from classical liberalism's emphasis on negative liberty and a key articulation of the modern liberal principle that would come to be known as 'positive liberty'.

John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946)

Strand: Modern Liberalism.

Importance: Very useful to bring in when writing about modern liberal views on the economy.

John Maynard Keynes, a British economist, was a pivotal figure in the 20th century, profoundly influencing economic theory and policy. His ideas, articulated in works like 'The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money' revolutionised the understanding of macroeconomics and paved the way for modern economic interventionism by the government (Keynesianism). Keynes challenged the classical view of markets as self-regulating, advocating instead for active government intervention to manage demand and stabilize economies, particularly during periods of recession. Keynesian economics became the dominant approach in the mid-20th century, guiding policy responses to economic crises and shaping the welfare state. Keynes's legacy continues to influence debates on fiscal and monetary policy, particularly in times of economic uncertainty.



Keynesianism

- Keynes advocated for what would become to be known as Keynesian economics in response to the shortcomings of free market, laissez-faire capitalism, particularly during periods of economic downturn such as the Great Depression.
- Keynes argued that during times of economic crisis, private sector demand could be insufficient to maintain full employment, and thus it was necessary for the government to step in and stimulate demand through public spending.
 - Keynes believed that by injecting money into the economy, particularly through government-funded projects and programs, demand would increase, thereby spurring production and employment.
 - He believed that such intervention was crucial not only to alleviate short-term economic distress but also to stabilise the economy in the long run.
- Keynes' advocacy for active government intervention marked a profound shift from the classical laissez-faire approach, emphasising the need for government intervention to mitigate economic fluctuations and ensure sustained economic growth.
 - This resonated with and influenced modern liberal thought.

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