SELF discipline

Do we lack it... or do we needed more than ever?

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Since the Enlightenment era, the field of Political Philosophy defined freedom in the Kantian framework (universal, humanist, state-centred), which allows us to determine the extent of exercised freedom by individuals. However, the omitted question is: what is the definition of freedom? My research aims to investigate the challenge proposed by Max Stirner, 19th century German Anarchist, and Michel Foucault, 20th century French Activist, to the Kantian freedom. Stirner and Foucault propose the need for self-disciplined individual, who takes responsibility for their impact on themselves, others and the society they belong to; this becomes relevant in our globalised, fast-moving world. In this research, the methodology undertaken is the examination of primary texts of Stirner (*The Ego and Its Own*, 1844) and Foucault and the secondary literature. Whilst both thinkers think that we should be more brave in expressing our individuality and will to live. Stirner points that we should remove ourselves from all social ties, whereas Foucault sees impossibility to this end, we are more involved in society than ever before by constantly creating and dismantling its structures.

Intro

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

exercising freedom (a *categorical* imperative)

- when an individual uses reason and this is grounded:

• universality; • *a rational outcome*;

• the individual's independent morality is governed by a certain teleological *outcome* (Newman,2003).

Therefore, 'free choice' is to follow these moral 'truths'. Hence, freedom and *categorical imperative* are interdependent rather than contentious notions (Kant,1963:59).

Stirner and Foucault: POWER

Both thinkers:

What is power?

What the Enlightenment means?

What human nature or Humanism means?

What is the role of the state?

These questions are not easy to answer, but I found that the definition of power is most fundamental to understand each thinkers' radical notion freedom.

"What is freedom? To have the will to be responsible for one's self." Max Stirner, 1844

K → ← S Like Kant, Stirner understands power as oppressive as commonly understood in the 19th century, where the egoistic individual is given choice to either be part of the system or being excluded.

← K → S Unlike Kant, Stirner defends dialectic egoism by rejection of all forms of the societal constraints, including moral codes. This rejection is conscious rebellion against the state which has a monopoly to how exercise our freedom and thought, what Foucault called *power/knowledge*.

← F → S Whilst Foucault's conception of power is *positive* defined as self-constitution. Similar to Stirner, Foucault conceptualises *power* as intertwined with *knowledge* and is held by the state (*power/knowledge*) which underpins how it is implemented on the multi-dimensional societal levels from prisons to schools and families.

← F → S Therefore, unlike Stirner, Foucault explicitly analysis power as "not evil" (1997:298).

Interesting

Enlightenment - we did not intellectually progressed, but…

Stirner: the moderns are no different to the ancients, they simply love the development of rational, universal freedom throughout the history of mankind (the *Spirit*). Therefore, the advocacy for *spiritual freedom* only prolongs domination and alienation of individuals from her concrete *self*.

Foucault agrees with Stirner: we need to reject Kantian universalism. Unlike Stirner, Foucault sees Kant's philosophy as embracing the critical stance towards socio-historical context. This allows to see that, "Illegitimate uses of reason are what give rise to dogmatism and heteronomy" (Foucault,2000:308).

Talking about human nature is non-sense!

Both thinkers reject the philosophical enquiry regarding *nature of man*, which observes human being as supreme to the nature. For Stirner, moderns just *improve* the ancients' understanding of the world, from *God* to supreme *Humanity*. This alienates the egoist and judges her conduct in the society by her social *duty*. Whereas, Foucault criticises *Humanism* for actively contributing to a competition to 'emancipate' individuals to become 'true self'. Therefore, both thinkers accept that politics of no-ideal-man will allow the individual to self-constitute.

The state is more intrusive than ever before

Both thinkers see the state-as-institution as the final enemy to the individual. In Stirner's reading, the liberal state reduces the individual to her rights as well as interestingly the individual is self-oppressing. This second discovery is important, because the state depends on my support, without it the state will eventually collapse. Foucault argues that the liberal state is less sophisticated than neoliberal state, which reduces the individual to "entrepreneur of himself", *homo economicus* (Foucault,2008:226). Now the individual can express her *economic freedom* even *contra* the neo-liberal regime. Like Stirner, Foucault finds that now *economic* individuality is reduced only to my attributes.

Conclusion

'I' is not free by my morally good actions, as Kant argued, instead 'I' is limited to 'my' definition of who I am. Therefore, Stirner and Foucault develop theories which allow the individual understands her freedom as *self-definition of and by the individual* by resisting against the given socio-historical context, institutions, and ideologies.

Therefore, freedom requires self-discipline.

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