

BMAT ESSAY

2018, Q1



TIMING ⌚ 30m

LIBERTY IN DOING WHAT ONE DESIRES

‘Liberty consists in doing what one desires.’ (John Stuart Mill)

Explain the reasoning behind the statement. Present a counter-argument. To what extent do you agree that freedom is doing what you want?



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EXPLAIN THE REASONING BEHIND THE STATEMENT

- The whole aim of liberty is that people should have autonomy on what they want to do and unrestricted freedom
- Mill could be arguing against the ‘nanny state’ - he could be stressing the importance of the individual and the need for government to not restrain these liberties through paternalistic means
- He is suggesting that whatever may make somebody happy is what they should be allowed to do, as long as it does not infringe on anybody else's rights in the process of practicing



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COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- Not everyone should be given autonomy on doing what they want. Those who lack capacity cannot make decisions because they have an impairment of mind and this impairment prevents them from being able to make a decision. Without the right mental capacity it is wrong for patients to be given freedom to make decisions when the decisions they are making may not be the ones they would otherwise want.
- The same goes for children - children are not thought to be competent to make decisions in particular when it comes to life-saving treatments. A child who has appendicitis might not want an operation because they think it will hurt them but do not fully understand the consequences
- If everyone did what they desired it would endanger society - laws and regulations are present to ensure freedom of individuals is not restricted
- Liberty can be defined in many ways - state of being free within society from oppressive restriction. Arguable that at least in the UK there are no oppressive restrictions.



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TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE?

- Patient autonomy - patients should be given the choice with every medical decision. This can't always be achieved e.g. end-of life care but we should try and maximise it as possible
- Being under oppression can constitute a lack of liberty. Important that these go hand in hand
- Harm Principle - A person should be lawfully allowed to do literally anything that they see fit, as long as it does not affect anybody else negatively.
- For example a law that punishes people who don't recycle with a fine - is this fair? Should people be allowed to choose whether they recycle or not? This does affect people negatively so can use the harm principle
- Not everyone can do what they desire - someone who is visually impaired cannot fly a plane and this can be justified because they are putting their own life and other peoples' lives at risk. Does it mean they can't be in the aerospace industry?



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2017

LEARNED TO OBEY/
COMMANDER



‘He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander’.

(Aristotle)

Explain what you understand by this statement. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you agree that someone cannot be a good leader without learning how to follow?

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE?

- By learning obedience, tempered with compassion and empathy, a good commander is able to transmit these virtues to the people he is placed over.
- He knows how to do this by virtue of having been on the receiving end.
- A person who has never learned the rudiments of obedient behavior will not be able to expect those subordinate to him to follow his leadership. He is, almost unconsciously projecting his contempt for obedience by his past behavior.
- A person who has never made a mistake, or failed to do something perfectly, will never tolerate mistakes or failure in those subordinate to him. This rigid system of little margin for error makes for very bad leaders, and even worse followers.

