

Role of the State

According to Green's line of argument, **human consciousness postulates liberty; liberty involves rights; rights demand the state. The state is, therefore, an instrument of perfection as the liberal theory holds; it is not an embodiment of perfection**—as the idealist theory claims. The **state owes its origin to the social nature of men. Genuine human personality is essentially a social phenomenon.** It is inconceivable that **an isolated natural man should be a moral agent. He exercises his moral freedom within the social organization, for which he needs rights.** But rights are maintained by the state; hence the state serves as an essential base for moral freedom.

In other words, **the function of government is to maintain conditions of life in which morality shall be possible.** Morality consists in the disinterested performance of self-imposed duties, not in obeying the commands of the state.

Harold J. Laski:

He **sought to achieve the socialist goal through the mechanism of liberal democracy.** He was so critical of the capitalist system and its underlying principles that at times he advocated the abolition of the right to property which was the mainstay of the capitalist system. But he was so deeply attached to liberal democratic values that ultimately he compromised in favour of making necessary changes in the capitalist system so as to make it an instrument of securing social justice.

Laski, however, **did not approve of doctrinaire communism or the repetition of the Russian Revolution for the emancipation of mankind.** He insisted on the **unity of the working class, but hoped that they could achieve their goal within the framework of a liberal democracy.** In fact he saw no inherent contradiction between the goals of Marxian socialism and the method of political democracy. Laski, therefore, proceeded to identify certain **positive characteristics and tendencies of the 'modern state' which held some promise for the underprivileged sections.**

Laski is so deeply impressed by this softening attitude of the liberal state that **he refuses the Marxist interpretation of the state as a class-instrument.** Laski remarks: **"The State is the keystone of the social arch. It moulds the form and substance of the myriad human lives with whose destinies it is charged."** As a true liberal, however, **Laski does not take the state as such to be an embodiment of perfection,** as the idealist theory of Hegel had held.

In short, **Laski seeks to transform the capitalist state by the democratization of economic power, that is, by ensuring larger public control over vital instruments of production and distribution, reducing enormous economic disparities by a progressive system of taxation and establishing a democratic state increasingly concerned with the welfare of its citizens.**

Robert M. MacIver:

Men seek to serve their varied interests through several associations. **The state is only one of such associations.**