Government and Liberty.

Authorities:
Essay: Mills.
Social Statics: Spencer.
The State: Wilson.
Political Science: Woolsey.
Contemporary Socialism: Rue.

The nineteenth century has been characterized by two antagonistic tendencies: the one being toward greater freedom of individual action; the other toward vesting more power in government, thereby eventually placing greater restrictions upon individual liberty. These opposing tendencies have been largely fostered by two schools of political thought equally extreme in their views. The Spencerian school holds that the State is a voluntary association of individuals for mutual protection, from which the individual may with withdrawal of pleasure, that government is a necessary evil, and it looks with extreme jealousy on every act of government that is not an act of police. The socialistic school, on the other hand, holds that the Government should not protect society against crime, and foreign and domestic danger but also
also that it should overcome, control and even own the industries of the people regardless of individual rights.

Happily, these tendencies have been neutralized by the conservative wisdom of statesmen and by the good sense of the people themselves, thus forming a middle ground of political belief. In this Essay I will endeavor to keep within the borders of this middle ground, believing it to be the only one upon which Society can safely depend for highest development.

If men were perfect, if they had complete control over their passions and appetites, there would be little need of government. But men are far from being perfect. From their very nature they are selfish and credulous, and being left free from control other than their own, the strong would prey upon the weak, and liberty to all would exist only for those who could do so by force. In order then to control the selfishness of men, to protect the weak against the strong, and to advance itself in civilization, Society has constituted Government as its instrument of execution by which only can it reach its highest development - the true liberty full Government can have no other object than this, and its end is fully accomplished when it has secured to each individual the best means for greatest self-development. In order to secure these means and to perpetuate itself Government must often restrict the actions of men, even
To taking away their liberty, or going still further, it may even take their lives in order to save the lives of others, or to protect itself in some great emergency. But presumption lies always with individual liberty and government cannot justify restricting or take it away without first determining if such restriction will result in the good of society.

But these are certain particular rights that concern the individual almost entirely, on whose protection by the government depends the enjoyment of a peace and welfare of all. Of these the right of privacy, self-defense is one of the greatest importance. It lies at the foundation of all other rights; for property liberty and right to life would be at the constant mercy of robbers were men not permitted to act according to this fundamental law of nature. The right of free speech, next to that of self-defense, is of great importance. Without it, efficient communication would be well-nigh impossible, and the range of human development would be much limited. Moreover, the teaching of history is, that free speech is the corner stone of free government, and that those people who enjoy it in the greatest degree are the most prosperous and the happiest. Hence, government should not interfere with speech and public gatherings, unless there is much danger of it.
Even then it is better simply to strengthen the police force than to interfere with so sacred a right. Inseparably associated with free speech is freedom of conscience, liberty to worship, freedom of speech, when, and how, one pleases. The only ground upon which government can interfere is when the religious doctrines are immoral in their nature, or when their exercise conflicts with the peace and safety of individuals.

Duty of government is not only the duty, but also very much the interest of government, to protect men in the enjoyment of these rights; for a government that limits the free expression of thought, that cannot stand criticism, that interferes with religious matters, that is constantly meddling with private affairs, is either an over-reach government or a very despotic one. It is no longer free. As I have said, those rights very largely concern the individual. But all rights, no matter how private, may be abused, and government limited in men, for its own protection and that of society, may abolish their enjoyment. While in his "Essay on Liberty" denies this. He says that the individual should have complete control over those affairs that concern himself alone, that around his private habits, as drinking intoxicants and
indulging in other vices should not be interfered with even if they result in great injury to him. But the individual is born in Society. Almost every act of his influences those around him for good or for evil. His indulgence in evil habits affects those around him in Society in two ways: first, by setting a bad example, thus exerting an immoral influence whose power for evil can not be estimated. Second, by injuring himself physically and mentally, for it is impossible for one to injure himself without causing loss and injury to society. Each man owes to Society a certain amount of labor. If by any habit or fault of his own he becomes unable to perform his part, Society must bear the burden for him. For this reason government has the right to interfere with the enjoyment of any private right whenever it believes that the exercise thereof is injurious to the welfare of society.

The right to hold property is justly considered to be a sacred one to the individual, and property. It has been shown that its protection by government is one of the mainstays of Society. Hence the individual should have the greatest possible freedom to follow his own choice of
occupation and to manage the details of his business after his own manner. But if the business is such as to be injurious to the health, moral, or other interests of society, government may limit or even abolish the exercise of the right.

The right to hold property and to conduct enterprises has connected with it a very important corollary—the right of association. There are many enterprises that require such large capital to be raised or extend over so great a territory that individuals cannot undertake them separately. In order to accomplish such far-reaching results, association is necessary. The submarine cables and the vast railroad system, if left to individual or governmental enterprise, would have waited long before reaching completion, and possibly would never have been carried out at all. But vast power is often placed in the hands of such combinations, and they are justly looked upon with dread lest they absorb individual action, oppress weaker competitors, or even exercise their powerful influence to the injury of government itself. Government, therefore, must have some control over their action by means of equitable laws of inspection and regulation.

One of the common expressions found in
"Spencerian writings is, "Free Labor." By this they mean that competition should be absolutely free, in other being only under the such restrictions as are placed upon it in the natural intercourse of commerce that legislatures have no right whatever to impose upon it regulations of any kind for the good of the employees or for the of the employers, to note. But history teaches again and again that labor needs the oversight of law; that the natural restrictions upon labor placed there by custom, prejudice, and selfish interest must be removed by counter restrictions of government. The purpose of labor, as they use the term is the acquisition of wealth. In the pursuit of that object, stimulated by the ever-growing demands and needs of society, everything else is disregarded. The employer and employee are alike bound down by natural iron laws over which they have no control. The one becomes insensitive to the evils around him, hard hearted, and selfish, the discontented, ignorant and degraded. But the mental and moral freedom of labor is of more importance to the welfare of society than the mere acquisition of wealth. If ignorance, degradation, and physical degeneracy are dangerous to the social and political prosperity, then these cannot be left to the instincts of individuals. The State must
ever be ready to protect the true freedom of labor by the strong arm of the law.

From this brief discussion we perceive that individuals and government have reciprocal rights and duties. That individuals, in order to secure the peace and welfare of the community, must surrender a part of their liberty, that it is the duty of government to secure individuals in the enjoyment of their rights, to adjusting them as to prevent unnecessary conflict, and that it is the right of government to use all proper means to this end, insuring each full opportunity for highest self-development. But this self-development can be reached only through self-exertion. The individual, therefore, should allow the greatest possible freedom compatible with the public welfare. The government should have no end of its own and should do nothing that would in any way hinder him in his endeavor to better himself; on the other hand, it should do everything in its power to aid and stimulate him to greater exertion and self-dependence.

Above all it should provide every means that will enable him to throw off the yoke of ignorance, prejudice, and superstition, and that
will strengthen him and in plans of ambition, that will broaden him physically, mentally and morally. Only when man is freed from mental and moral bondage can he be said to have reached the highest liberty—the truest individuality.

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