

An office is defined or constituted by a certain imperative, and thus by certain responsibilities and rights.

The responsibilities in question are all by way of fulfilling the imperative, while the rights in question are all areas of freedom required to fulfill the responsibilities.

Thus, in the case of the general office of being a human being, the office is defined or constituted by the imperative to live a rational life, so that one would stand justified under rational criticism. And corresponding to the responsibilities of living such a life are certain natural or human rights, certain areas of freedom that a human being is entitled to and has to have if she or he is to have the opportunity to fulfill the responsibility of her or his general office as a human being.

This means that freedom is not a matter of being able to do what one wants to do, nor a matter of having what one wants or even needs, but rather a matter of being able to exercise without interference the rights belonging to the office of a human being in one's efforts to fulfill the responsibilities of that office.

The proper function of government, accordingly, is to be the agency of ethics in society, clearly defining how the a priori principles of ethics apply to the conditions of the particular society and refereeing the activities of individuals and institutions in such a way as to guarantee freedom for all to live under their own direction within the limits of the basic ethical norms.

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