

# Liberty

The idea of liberty encapsulates a link among three parameters: it refers to a person X's freedom to do B in the absence of a barrier A. In layman's terms, person X is not constrained by A from performing B, or person X is free to do B in the absence of constraint A. This understanding of the term "Liberty" was provided by Gerald MacCallum. In the field of Political Science, there's a further division of the idea of Liberty which are "Positive Liberty" and "Negative Liberty". Proponents of each forms use differing real case scenarios to extend their hypothesis.

For example, A few theorists extended Marx's critique that capitalist liberty is based on the lack of liberty of the working and middle class to propose that throughout the human history, the liberty of some has necessitated the dominance of others: the liberty of male Greek and Americans was dependent upon the lack of liberty of slaves, the freedom of men is based on the dominance of women, and the liberties enjoyed by populaces of the richer Northern countries are based on their authority over poorer southern countries. It's worth noting here that if liberty means being free to oppress others, then it has no normative merit.

## Negative Liberty

There have been many defences of this idea of Liberty, below are the three major proponents of the concept of negative liberty:

### Isaiah Berlin

Isaiah Berlin's '*Two Concepts of Liberty*,' initially published in 1958, is the fundamental explanation of negative liberty. Berlin termed "being free" as "Not being interfered with by others", "*the wider the area of non-interference, the wider my freedom.*" This concept harkens back to Hobbes' depiction of liberty in the Leviathan, in which he defined liberty as the elimination of "*external barriers*".

### Thomas Hobbes

According to Hobbes, "*a free man, is he, that in those things, which he by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has a will to*". These impediments, according to Hobbes, comprised of sovereign laws enacted after the social contract had established civil society, because liberty was dependent on the "*silence of the law*". The lack of civil rules in nature should've just meant more autonomy for its inhabitants, but in its absence, each individual functioned as an external constraint to another's liberty of activity. The sovereign guaranteed that his subjects were safe from one another's meddling through his laws.

Hobbes differentiated between liberty and capacity when describing the concept of freedom: "*But when the impediment of motion is in the constitution of the thing itself, we cannot say, it wants the Liberty, but the Power to move; as when a stone lies still, or a man is fastened to his bed by sickness*". In the instance of humans, unable to fly due to the absence of wings is a straightforward example of a lack of capacity, not of being unfree. But when a man who is unable to buy something on which there is no lawful prohibition - a piece of bread, a round-the-world trip, given a social theory wherein poverty is the product of other people making arrangements whereby some men lack financial means while others

have plenty, is the case where the poor man should be defined as "unfree to purchase bread" rather than "unable to buy bread".

## John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill, another renowned political philosopher and theorist in favour of "Negative Liberty" writes "...the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection...the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant...The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute." in his essay "On Liberty" in the year of 1859.

Mill contended that the concept of liberty forbade any intervention with one's self-regarding activity, despite the fact that there is a thin border separating self-regarding from other-regarding activity. Mill asserted that humanity really has no other rationale for meddling with the person's liberty unless it was to avoid 'direct material harm' to others.

## Positive Liberty

Negative liberty proponents aim to safeguard at least certain areas whereby an individual is free to do as he desires, whereas positive liberty proponents aim to expand this sphere of self-determined activity as much as possible. For instance, their definition of restrictions to action includes internal restraints as well. In the theory of positive liberty, democratic procedures of shared decision making expand the area of self-determined activity. The focus is on making sure that one has a say in formulating all of the regulations one lives under, rather than on leaving as much of one's life as possible unencumbered by laws. Since liberty is differentiated from licence and described as living under the ambit of self-made laws, the main focus is on making sure that one has a say in framing all of the legislation one lives under.

## Jean-Jacques Rousseau

For example, Rousseau considered becoming a slave to one's impulses or desires as the polar opposite of freedom. Our needs are heterogamous; they arise as a result of our upbringing and/or the environment in which we live. Giving in to our aspirations, according to Rousseau, is fundamentally comparable to giving in to the wants of others. We must choose to satisfy our desires intentionally and logically, that is, those aspirations that we regard as truly our own and representative of our self. "*The impulse of mere appetite is slavery, while obedience to a self-prescribed law is liberty*", he writes in '*The Social Contract*'.

As per Rousseau, the notion of liberty requires us to not only decide our own desires, but also to create the rules that govern our lives. Rousseau famously argued there's no other kind of governance that is consistent with liberty as much as democracy. How can we be claimed to be self-determined if we don't have a voice in the laws that govern our behaviour? This is Rousseau's idea of civic liberty, as opposed to moral liberty, which keeps us from becoming slaves to our cravings.

Rousseau viewed the laws created collaboratively by the populace when they keep the common interest at the forefront (by the general consent) as a method of each person having power over his or her wishes. Instead of a person's feeble will, these rules, in the making of which everyone takes part,

make sure that one lives a life that one chooses. Whereas in Hobbes' scenario, the imposition of rules strengthened one's freedom by keeping others from meddling with one's actions, in Rousseau's perspectives, the imposition of collectively formed laws becomes a sort of freedom.

## Immanuel Kant

Similar to that of Rousseau Kant argues - how could one's liberty be evinced in behaviours that are the result of raw environment acting through one, stimulating urges that one blindly accepts. To be considered free, one must determine or choose among one's preferences based on some reasonable concept that one has approved.

## Thomas Hill Green

Green wrote in his 1881 essay "Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract": "We shall probably all agree that freedom, rightly understood, is the greatest of blessings; that its attainment is the true end of all our effort as citizens. But when we thus speak of freedom, we should consider carefully what we mean by it. We do not mean merely freedom from restraint or compulsion. We do not mean merely freedom to do as we like irrespectively of what it is we like. We do not mean a freedom that can be enjoyed by one man or one set of men as the cost of a loss of freedom to others. When we speak of freedom...we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others...the ideal of true freedom is the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves..."

## Liberty and Feminism

Women were the very first slaves in Greece during the primitive state building era in the late 9th and early 8th centuries B.C. Male prisoners of war were slaughtered during the continual battle between the aristocratic factions of the time, whereas women were enslaved. Women, as the very first slaves in early Greek civilisation, both those that were really slaves and those that lived in fear of being captured and enslaved, considered and prized the condition diametrically opposed to slavery: liberty. The notion of personal freedom which evolved in the psyche of ancient Greek women, differs from the notion of negative freedom presently common in the West. Early women weren't really happy with a merely negative conception of personal liberty, not just because they saw its tendency for nihilism as well as moral vacuousness, but also because they saw how a disempowered negative liberty effortlessly sublated into liberty as authority over others.

## Liberty and Ethics

The concept of liberty as a right for everyone is undoubtedly a gift of modernism, no matter how distant from realisation it may well be. The link connecting personal freedom and our social interdependence has been a topic of current liberty debates. We may develop an acceptable vision of individual liberty by embracing, not denying, this social interconnectedness.