

## A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ISAIAH BERLIN'S POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE DIMENSION OF LIBERTY

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### **Abstract**

*Man's existence and, in some ways, his nature depend on his ability to exercise his right to liberty. This inalienability was succinctly encapsulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted. However, Isaiah Berlin distinguished between positive and negative liberty in his 1958 lectures, which form the core of this work, and offered a full assessment of this essential function of liberty. Isaiah Berlin's beliefs on liberty are subjected to an explanatory approach and a critical analysis in this essay. The results of the study demonstrate how a democratic government's laws and policies define and safeguard an individual's civil liberties. Prerogative orders allow anyone to seek redress when their rights are violated resulting from this. In this way, a media organization assists and counsels those whose rights have been violated on how to pursue the proper legal action and seek redress. All of these actions uphold, defend, and ensure the security of fundamental human rights, which are the methods by which liberty or freedom are eaten. Human liberty shouldn't be mistakenly seen as working against the rule of law, but rather as a supplement to it, according to the text, because a democratic society promotes the welfare of its inhabitants. According to Isaiah Berlin, it would be erroneous to isolate human liberty from law and the constitution in this manner.*

**Keywords:** Isaac Berlin, Liberty, Positive, Negative Liberty

### **Introduction**

The philosophy of Isaiah Berlin is the primary focus of this essay. In Isaiah Berlin's philosophy, "liberty" and "freedom" have positive as well as negative implications, just like any big words filled with philosophical meanings. These ideas are logically related since liberty and law, liberty and justice, and the nature of the word "liberty" all have intertwined meanings that are inextricably determined by human personality as a moral personality. Isaiah Berlin's contention, which primarily focuses on the political context of liberty, categorically contrasts positive and negative liberty: "Whatever their common ground may be and whatever is subject to greater distortion, my fundamental

goal is to demonstrate that negative and positive liberty are not synonymous” (Berlin, 1958:130).

In order to make the following assertions, Jacques Maritain must have been similarly awakened by the dangers posing a threat to the issue of liberty or freedom in modern society and overwhelming it with grave errors and crises: The foundation for a person's supreme dignity is naturally provided by the capacity for human beings to know the truth. Finding out what the human person's freedom consists of and what the personality itself involves is also crucial. In America, there may still be time for humanity to make amends for its errors by engaging in an innovative act of knowledge and liberty as opposed to yielding to the forces of death (Maritain, 1940:7-8). This is followed by an explanation of Isaiah Berlin's theory of how he processes both positive and negative liberty and the guarantees they entail in the widespread dissemination of that goodness, which is the rightful savor of political individuality.

### **Isaiah Berlin's View of Positive Liberty**

The distinction between positive and negative liberty and freedom amply demonstrates perplexity, which sits on a line of significance between the two sorts of freedom. On the surface, it may appear that the freedom that consists in being one's own master and the freedom that consists in not having others limit my power to choose are only two different ways of expressing the same idea. In contrast, Isaiah Berlin says the following in order to convey the uncertainty and disorientation between the two perspectives on freedom or liberty, “historically, the "positive" and "negative" conceptions of freedom have traveled down separate roads and occasionally veered from accepted reasoning until they have come to a blatant polarization (Berlin, 1969: 8).

However, Isaiah Berlin thought that we should be appropriately worried about how well we currently understand the core of the positive concept of liberty or freedom. Positive liberty is largely defined by freedom of choice or free will, according to Isaiah Berlin. He believed that the ability to desire is a fundamental aspect of human nature and the basis for both freedom of choice and free will. As a result, desire is a strong force that resides in a man's logical nature and is strongly intended to gravitate toward pleasant things that may be identified outside of the senses.

Positive liberty refers to this power of want (choice), which is founded on sensible hunger and sensory awareness. The idea of "liberty" has a "positive" meaning since it appeals to people's desire to be their own masters. The most important thing I want is to understand who I am as thinking, willing, and active being who can use my own ideas and objectives to support the decisions I make. When I am taught to believe that something is false, I feel shackled; when I am led to believe that something is real, I feel free.

In spite of the fact that "I am my own master" and "I am not a slave to anyone," may I not also be a slave to nature, as certain Platonists or Hegelians tend to claim? Possibly even to my own irrational passions? .... Once I have established this point of view, I am free to ignore what men or societies actually desire and to bully, oppress, and torture them in the name of their "real" selves, knowing with certainty that whatever the true goal of man is (happiness, duty performance, wisdom, a just society, self-fulfillment), it must be identical with his freedom- the free choice of his "true," albeit frequently hidden and inarticulate self. (Berlin, 1969:8-9).

Given that positive liberty, which is concerned with the power of desire or freedom of choice, is rooted in the freedom of the human will with regard to all the things we may desire in life as the objects of our free will, it follows that positive liberty must have an operation that is inescapably produced by choice. In light of positive liberty, there is something that the human will must aspire to or decide upon. The divine good is mentioned by St. Thomas Aquinas as the purpose of the exercise of free will. Therefore, it is important to note that we have the power of desire or freedom of choice, which allows us to reject a free alternative.

As a result, an intelligent philosopher will quickly realize that positive liberty is like the substructure of negative liberty, which is like its superstructure; "we first make assertions of desire or choice (rational freedom of the will) before we can exercise negative liberty." In this sense, positive liberty acts as the driving force behind negative liberty since without "desire" or "choice," freedom or liberty cannot be activated and is, thus, restrained. Here, an attempt was made to demonstrate the universal applicability of Isaiah Berlin's idea of positive liberty, which is embodied in the capacity of desire or freedom of choice.

This idea is similar to those of those who, like Kant, hold that freedom is not genuinely attained via the suppression of desires but rather through resistance to and mastery over them. Nothing is worse than treating individuals as though they lack autonomy and are instead passive, easily influenced objects or creatures whose decisions may be swayed by their masters by threats of violence or financial incentives. (Berlin, 1969:11).

### **Isaiah Berlin's Idea of Negative Liberty**

Isaiah Berlin states in the opening paragraph of his book on negative liberty, "I propose to examine no more than two of these senses, but those central ones, with a great deal of human history behind them and, I dare say, still to come." The response to the inquiry, "What is the area within which the subject- a person or group of persons- is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be without interference by other persons?" The first of these political interpretations of freedom or liberty, which I will refer to as the "negative" sense (Berlin, 1969:3), is discussed. In keeping with his previous statement, he continues:

I'm often saddened by my independence when no man, or group of men, stands in my way. Simply said, political liberty in this context refers to the area that an individual is free to occupy without outside influence. If someone else limits what I could otherwise accomplish, then I am, in a sense, not free. It can be claimed that I am compelled or, in some situations, enslaved if another man expands this region past a certain point (Berlin, 1969:3). Assuming Isaiah Berlin's perspective, we can examine his core concept of "negative" liberty, which he defines as freedom from constraints and boundaries. For instance, every philosopher agrees that a Newtonian apple would fall to the earth if nothing prevents it from obeying the gravitational rule, which is a law that exists in nature and has predetermined qualities. Isaiah Berlin contends that man's nature, which is characterized as negative liberty, was bestowed upon him at birth by a supreme entity. We now get directly into his main concept of negative liberty, which endows the human personality with dignity. Negative liberty consequently changes into freedom of independence at this precise moment because man, as a rational creature equipped with free will, takes control of his human acts and deeds.

The rule of law is designed to give the governed negative liberty because slavery is the condition of individuals who are ruled tyrannically or illegally. This

suggests that government actions should not restrict individual freedom. In light of this, Isaiah Berlin informs us: Meanwhile, the word "coercion" disqualifies all forms of disability. If I stated that I couldn't read because I was blind, that I couldn't jump higher than ten feet, or that I couldn't comprehend the most difficult passages of Hegel, it would be ludicrous to assert that I am in that way enslaved or oppressed. Coercion implies the deliberate incursion of other individuals into my personal space.

Political liberty and freedom are only absent when human beings obstruct the achievement of a purpose. (Berlin, 1969:3). According to this claim, the traditional questions of liberty are supposed to be grounded in the fundamental notion that, for example, Hegel stated: "The history of the world is nothing other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom." (Hutchins, 1955: 991). The dignity of this awareness of freedom or liberty in Isaiah Berlin sees man as free to determine his own course in life and views the major challenges and opportunities of civilization as turning points where man, endowed with free will, is free to exercise a free liberty for better or worse.

As a result, the more freedom or liberty I exercise in any of my actions, the less interference there is; in contrast, Isaiah Berlin senses increased interference the more freedom I exercise. The extent to which I believe others have thwarted my desires- directly or indirectly, with or without their knowledge- is, in my opinion, a sign of tyranny. I refer to being free from outside disturbance in this situation. My independence increases with the size of the non-interference zone (Berlin, 1969:3). In an effort to clarify himself, Isaiah Berlin dissociated himself from the idea of individual anarchism, stating: "This is what the old English political philosophers meant when they used this word.

How much of the area has to be divided They considered that in the current state of affairs, it was impossible for it to be unlimited because, if it were, it would lead to a society where all men may connect with one another without boundaries, which would bring societal upheaval. (Berlin declared, "It follows that a distinction between the domain of private life and that of political authority must be made. The appropriate place to draw the line is a matter of discussion and perhaps negotiation. We understand that Isaiah Berlin's fundamental concept of "negative liberty" is based on the unique connotation of the word "independence," which denotes freedom from restriction or restraint,

freedom from being subject to another's determination, freedom from certain restraints or undesirable political conditions. We arrive at this conclusion after applying what we've learned from watching him manage the problems related to how an individual should relate to the state and to his fellow citizens. Therefore, the liberty he describes as being negative is the freedom that each man has to exercise his own free will in order to safeguard his own nature and way of life. (Berlin, 1969:5).

With regard to this perspective, Isaiah Berlin's idea of negative liberty naturally accepts no political superiority above itself, but rather serves as a necessary separation between the realm of private life and that of public power in order to avert anarchist chaos. Even John Locke concurred that one's natural liberty is the right to behave however they like without interference or restraint. As a result, this clarification of Isaiah Berlin's key concept of negative liberty raises questions about political liberty, particularly those pertaining to whether or not the spheres of law and liberty can be distinct from one another or even conflict.

When viewed from a particular angle, we can see that political liberty is not constrained by the letter or the spirit of the law; even while it may be acceptable to break the law, this does not automatically imply freedom. This sobering perspective encouraged Isaiah Berlin to support the thesis that as the severity of the law lessens the scope of negative liberty increases.

### **Liberty and a Democratic State**

The basic principle of liberty implies, according to the philosophical logic of substantiation, that a democratic state should respect its citizens as rational beings capable of reasoned decision-making, independent action, and the full realization of their potential under the right circumstances. That citizens are responsible for their actions, behavior, and misbehavior is a democratic indication (Eke, 2010:151). In order to exercise their freedom, each citizen of a democratic nation must be willing to pay a price.

This reveals the truth that a person's freedom is limited and qualified by the need for freedom for other people and the state as a whole, as these are controlled and limited by the democratic constitution. For instance, restrictions on the police's ability to put an end to such protests safeguard and protect the freedom of an individual or group to hold peaceful protests (Eke, 2010:151). I should also

mention that no one would believe it if they didn't know how much more influence animals who live under human control have in democracies than in any other state. Socrates was arguing in favor of the necessity of constitutional restrictions on freedom.

### **State Protection and Individual Liberty**

According to a saying, "The she dogs are as good as their mistress, and the horses and asses have a way of matching with all the rights and dignities of free men, and they will run at anybody who comes in their way if he does not leave the road clear for them; and all things are just ready to burst with liberty" (Hutchins, 1955:412). Any idea of limitless freedom encourages terrorism and anarchy. Liberty must be subject to some limitations set by law and the constitution for the benefit of the common good. Provisions of the law and the constitution, for example, limit speech in respect to libel, slander, and sedition to prevent persons from incurring injury to their reputation and character, which would happen if freedom of expression were to be unrestrained (Eke, 2010:154).

Individual rights are defined and upheld by the 1950 Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Liberty, which many people also see as freedom in general, is closely related with the constitution (relating to the democratic government). A.V. Dicey contends in his book "Law of the Constitution" that the Rule of Law exists to safeguard individual liberty from the abuse of capricious authority (Dicey, 1897). He emphasized the importance of three important principles- equality before the law, and fundamental human rights- that are codified in the constitution as civil liberties for safeguarding personal freedoms.

Even the punishment of offenders must be carried out in line with the criteria of the law for all state activities, which expresses the idea that there shouldn't be an arbitrary government (Dicey, 1897). The second proves that everyone is on an equal footing with the law. In our equal-opportunity society, an accused person is deemed innocent unless and unless a court of law deems them guilty. Therefore, everyone shall be tried under the same criminal provision of the constitution in order to protect liberty, from the person in the highest office to the last person on the street (Dicey, 1897). The third, which addresses civil liberties, is very explicit when it asserts that certain freedoms and conditions are necessary

for every person to live a happy life. The constitution refers to these rights as essential freedoms and conditions for citizens, both collectively and individually.

### **Philosophical Perspective on Liberty**

It's not new to think about what "liberty" or "freedom" means in relation to human existence. Ancient philosophers engaged their intellects more than two thousand years ago by proving that the dignity of the human being consists in or is concealed in liberty, which is freedom. It is wise to secure the truth embodied in Rudolf Harvey's famous quote: "To speak of man even tentatively as an emotional animal without free will or as a series of conditioned reflexes without intellect is to discuss an impossible hypothesis" (Harvey, 1960:145).

A sinner like Augustine, for example, turned to God and atoned for his sins. This took place as a result of his human dignity being placed on liberty. This fact demonstrates that man is logical and free since he possesses the ability to make choices that enable him to improve his situation. As a result, because man is a free, rational entity with the ability to make choices, he is not held captive by the commands of God, which he is free to embrace or reject. Actually, we now know that God did not create a valley that is not between two elevations because of what we have learnt from the philosophical canon.

Deductively, this means that God did not create a robot when He created man, but a rational and moral being. And because he is rational and moral, he is also necessarily endowed with liberty; otherwise, he cannot be said to be rational and moral, but a robot, since he is not free to make decisions or choose between circle and square based on the fact of liberty. Due to this fact, participation in liberty is a requirement for being a really logical and moral human. By taking part, man cultivates and uses his creativity, his life of reason, and his scientific engagement to transform the forces of nature's free flow into tools and a means of achieving his freedom.

### **Socrates' Expression of Liberty**

It is important to mention that neither Marxism nor Machiavellianism is accepted concepts in the existential philosophy of human liberty since they are seen by most people as excessively chaotic illumination. Therefore, it is intended that my literature research shall peruse the minds of the following authorities, who are



also interested in the foundational elements and framework of liberty as freedom.

Therefore, it seems likely that this will be the fairest of states, being like an embroidered robe that is spangled with every kind of flower. Socrates is quoted in Plato's Republic extolling liberty as an ultimate value, both for the individual and for the democratic state. And just as women and children find a variety of colors to be among the most attractive things, there are many men who will find this state, which is adorned with human manners and personalities, to be the fairest of all states. Yes... And there will not be a better time to look for governance, my good man. Because of the freedom that prevails there, in fact (Plato, 1955:412).

Despite this, in a most dramatic circumstance, Socrates disagreed with other classical philosophers in favoring political control over the arts and criticizing democracy's ethos due to its unquenchable thirst for freedom: The truth is that excessive increase of anything frequently causes a reaction in the opposite direction, and this is true not only in the seasons, in vegetables, and in animal life, but especially in forms of government. Oligarchy is the ruin of democracy, and the disease that destroys oligarchy is the disease that destroys democracy, magnified and intensified by liberty.

The overabundance of liberty, whether in states or individuals, tends to only lead to the overabundance of enslavement. As a result, tyranny inevitably develops from democracy, and the worst kinds of tyranny and enslavement develop from the most extreme forms of liberty (Plato, 1955:413). Simply put, Socrates believes that the concept of liberty must necessarily be viewed from the perspective of virtue (Plato, 1955:413). Our efforts will make it abundantly evident that Isaiah Berlin's vision of liberty in general does not conflict with the conventional philosophical interpretation of Socrates.

### **Kant's Notion of Liberty**

According to Kant's supposition on liberty, "Freedom is independence from the compulsory will of another; and in so far as it can coexist with the freedom of all pursuant to a universal law, it is the one sole, original inborn right belonging to every man in virtue of his humanity" (Hutchins, 1955:997). Kant proposes every man has an inherent right to equality, which is expressed in his right to liberty,

unrestricted by the restrictions and obligations of others. The Kantian idea so implicitly assumes that everyone has an equal right to freedom. In Kant's view, this equal right is based on the inherent willpower that all persons possess.

A theory of negative liberty that acknowledges there are essential spheres in which each individual human person must be free from state intrusion if they are to lead really rational lives is inherently conceived by this Kantian paradigm. Although proponents like Kant recognized the acknowledgement of fundamental regions (which equate to negative liberty) of freedom from coercion or restraint, Isaiah Berlin did not call for a state of individual anarchism. At this point, it should be reminded that Berlin has digested his thoughts on both positive and negative liberty and is primarily interested in the political context of liberty.

Kant additionally suggests three distinct characteristics of citizenship in a similar vein: Constitutional freedom is the right of every citizen to only be bound by laws that have received their permission or assent. Civil equality is the right of every citizen to not see any other person as being superior to him in terms of social standing, unless that other person is subject to his moral authority to impose obligations, in the same way that he is. Political autonomy is the ability to owe one's continued existence in society not to the capricious will of another but rather to one's own rights and powers as a member of a commonwealth, and as a result, the possession of a civil personality that can only be represented by oneself (Hutchins, 1955:998). The third Kantian characteristic heavily evaluates Berlin in terms of political liberty, as it is primarily concerned with the problem of negative liberty.

### **Hegelian View of Liberty**

Hegel refused to view liberty or freedom as that which is free (or divorced) from law and maintained it as "nothing but the recognition and adoption of such universal substantial objects as right and law," according to Hutchins (1955:995). Hegel defined liberty or freedom as "nothing but the adoption of such universal substantial objects as right and law." According to Hegel's theoretical framework, only the criminal is restricted or coerced by just or good rules; a just man is not forced to do what he would not willingly want to do.

In relation to the Hegelian viewpoint, it would be denying the distinction between liberty and license if it were claimed that the imposition of legislation on behavior kills liberty or freedom. However, Hegel's concept illustrates the notion of Berlin's negative liberty because, in Hegel's view, this liberty can be curtailed by the law when a good man is discovered to be living under an unjust law, as such denotes tyrannical interference with liberty (as when governments order acts contrary to the free choice of a good man).

### **J. S. Mill Concept of Liberty**

J.S. Mill's concept of individual liberty is typically seen as being negative (i.e., being free from coercive measures or restrictions imposed by other forces). As a result, J.S. Mill supports constitutional governance and representative institutions as fundamentally essential bodies to the conditions of individual human people' political liberty. He promoted universal suffrage because he believed that everyone should have the same freedom and that representative government and democratic suffrage are insufficient to ensure a person's liberty, including their right to free speech and the ability to pursue their own interests.

The following standard for social control and security over individual liberty is proposed by J.S. Mill: Self-protection is the only reason humanity has, individually or collectively, for interfering with anyone else's right to pursue their own course of action. Only those aspects of a person's behavior that affect other people are subject to social norms. His independence is, of course, total in the aspect that only concerns himself. Individuals are sovereign over themselves, their own bodies and minds (Hutchins, 1955:999). J.S. Mill developed this idea as a way to protect individual liberty from the tyranny of the constitutional government and representative people. He said, "Therefore, it is desirable that individuality should assert itself in things that do not primarily concern others." As long as we don't try to deprive others of theirs or obstruct their efforts to get it, the only freedom that is deserving of the name is the freedom to pursue our own good in our own way. Since each person's capacity for individual growth increases, they are able to become more important to others as well as themselves.

His individual existence is more fully conscious, and when the units are more alive, so is the mass that is made up of them (Hutchins, 1955:999). We read Isaiah Berlin arguing that it is highly likely for a person's "higher self" to identify with

society, the state, or a philosopher's logical interpretation of life and humanity throughout the history of political thought. In this situation, liberty or freedom is viewed as compliance to the state's will or constitution, adherence to a philosopher's method, or behaviour and hypothesis.

### **Jacques Maritain's Premises of Freedom**

Based on the Thomist concept, Jacques Maritain examined two different types of freedom. His justification for freedom or liberty is thus founded on: By carefully evaluating this range of meanings, two directions, and two main lines of significance, we can narrow our focus to the essentials. One of them is the idea of freedom as the absence of restraint; for example, just because a bird is free when it's not in a cage doesn't mean it has free choice.

The second is about freedom as the absence of necessity or necessitation, which is exactly the case with free will. When Samuel Adams decided to throw tea from the East India Company into Boston Harbor, it was not only a spontaneous act, one that was unrestrained, but it was also an act that was not necessarily determined by either inner or outer circumstances, motives, impulses, inclinations, etc. He could have made a different choice. He acted freely; neither an external nor internal necessity led him to do what he did (Maritain, 1989:117).

The justification offered by Jacques Maritain begins to mirror the moral circle of Isaiah Berlin's interpretation of liberty. In contrast to Maritain's concept of freedom as the absence of constraint, which specifically refers to liberty without restraint (constraint), Isaiah Berlin argued for negative liberty, which is defined as freedom from restraints. As a result, Maritain's concepts of "freedom as absence of constraint" (negative liberty) and "freedom as absence of necessity or necessitation" (positive liberty), which in Isaiah Berlin refers to the freedom to pursue and achieve one's happiness, are rationally consistent with the negative and positive liberty of Isaiah Berlin. We can see that Berlin and Maritain's thoughts were not muddled in any confusion by the fact that their notion of liberty as freedom was obvious and distinct in this review.

This coherence is further developed in Maritain's concepts of choice freedom as the lack of necessity (which is coherent with Berlin's idea of positive liberty) and spontaneity freedom as the absence of restriction (which is coherent with Berlin's

idea of negative freedom). It is appropriate that we note what Jacques Maritain pointed out:

While the average person is more interested in the other kind of freedom, the freedom of spontaneity in its highest forms, where it means emancipation and personal independence (in this case, we'll call it freedom of autonomy and freedom of exaltation), and this interest arises from the fact that this kind of freedom must be expensively and laboriously acquired and because it is elusive, the average man is more interested in free will, about which he worries himself very little because he knows he possesses it (Maritain, 1989:119).

The political context of liberty or freedom is Isaiah Berlin's primary concern, so he made a similar distinction: "What I am mainly concerned to establish is that, whatever may be the common ground between them and whatever is liable to graver distortion, negative and positive liberty are not the same thing" (Berlin, 1958:3). In regard to this viewpoint, liberty is rooted in a person's knowledge and intellect, which provide him the understanding of what is really right and fitting for his being. As a result of his knowledge and intellect, man is essentially different from irrational creatures in that he has the ability to make choices (liberty or freedom).

### **Conclusion**

In its totality, every aspect of this study has gone well. To protect the rights, and other liberties of the citizens, the principle of action that the law and constitution will be interpreted in favor of freedom so as not to interfere with the rights (whether the right depends on positive or negative liberty or freedom). Therefore, it is imperative that the legal basis for any restriction of freedom- even those imposed by the government- be made abundantly apparent in both the law and the constitution. Ultimately, knowing that the democratic constitution tries to serve its constituents, our freedom ought not to be understood as being at odds with the democratic rule of law (since that would result in anarchy), but rather as something that coexists with it. Isaiah Berlin did not make the error of tending to separate liberty from the rule of law and the constitution.

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