

Two Concepts of Liberty

Some answers on the two concepts of liberty

1. Do people always need negative freedom before they can enjoy positive freedom, for example, gun ownership (a question from Joe)?
 - a. Take the example of gun ownership, negative freedom may mean people can own guns, and positive freedom may mean that people are entitled to have guns. Then in order for people to be entitled to have guns, they must have the freedom to own guns in the first place. However, this example cannot be generalised that for positive freedom to exist, there must be negative freedom.
 - b. Take the case of a person with no food. The person needs some food in order to be free from hunger before the person can enjoy moving around. In this case, for the person to enjoy negative freedom, they require positive freedom first.
 - c. Parents make a child attend school so they can't play as much. The child's negative freedom is restricted. As the child grows up, they have more positive freedom to be successful. So in this case, less negative freedom leads to more positive freedom.
2. Are positive and negative freedom often in conflict or in tension? How do they interact with each other?
 - a. Gun ownership
 - i. NF. Free to own guns. Free from regulations.
 - ii. PF. Free to move around. Free from being shot at.
 - b. Education
 - i. NF. Private schooling. Free from paying tax for basic education.
 - ii. PF. Public school. Free to have basic education.
 - c. Discrimination
 - i. NF. Free to discriminate, free from government interference.
 - ii. PF. Free from discrimination, free to work, study etc.
 - d. Welfare
 - i. NF. Free from paying tax for social welfare
 - ii. PF. Free to live with basic standards.
3. Is negative freedom and positive freedom a continuum (a question from Dr Wei)?
 - a. Negative and positive freedom could be a continuum. A person may have options A, B, C, D...etc. The person then chooses an option, say option A and strives to achieve excellence or other advancements within option A. The type of options could be sports, professions, religions etc. These examples may demonstrate the continuum of negative and positive freedom.
4. What could be some problems with negative freedom?
 - a. Problems include discrimination, inequality, continuation of harmful practices etc.
5. What could be some problems with positive freedom?

- a. Problems include the possibility of welfare traps, lack of incentive to work, protectionism, authoritarianism etc.
- 6. Why do some people favour negative freedom? What are the values involved?
 - a. The values involved other than negative freedom itself could be achievements, wealth, power, pleasure, conservatism, competition, excellence etc.
- 7. Why do some people favour positive freedom? What are the values involved?
 - a. The values involved other than positive freedom itself could be achievements, wealth, pleasure, power, equality, compassion, justice etc.