

## THE NEGLECTED FREEDOM

JAMES A. GOULD  
University of South Florida

Philosophers concerned with the general concept of freedom fall into two main camps. The older tradition emphasizes freedom from constraint as the central concept. This is usually referred to as "negative freedom". Among its main adherents are Hobbes, Locke, and more recently Cranston. To them "to be free" means "X is free from Y".

A recent variant of negative freedom extends the meaning of "X is free" to "X is free from Y to do Z". This meaning was developed by Gerald MacCallum<sup>1</sup> and later held by Joel Feinberg. Their phrase is held to be the total meaning of freedom.

The second main general theory of freedom, which I call "the enabling means theory" also has restricted and extended advocates. A restricted theorist, such as P. H. Partridge, argues that in addition to freedom from coercion complete freedom requires adequate political and economic freedom. A person needs the means to be enabled to have these.

The extended theory is represented by Mortimer Adler and Herbert Muller. They believe freedom has three main components: natural freedom or free will; acquired freedom or the free personality; and finally circumstantial freedom, which has as sub-categories economic, political, and social freedom. I would add climatic-geographical freedom as well. This paper concerns one aspect of acquired freedom what it is, why it has been neglected, and finally its application to Isaiah Berlin's concept of "positive freedom".

<sup>1</sup> MacCallum, C., "Negative and Positive Freedom," *Philosophical Review* 1967. pp. 312-334. Feinberg, J., *Social Philosophy* (New York) 1971, Ch. 1.

Consider the following quotations:

“Virtue then is the moral strength of a man’s will in his obedience to duty (i.e., the Categorical Imperative). . . Its possession alone makes man free.”<sup>2</sup>

“The precepts of the will are written in the depths of his heart by conscience and reason; let (every man) obey those laws and be free.”<sup>3</sup>

These statements by Kant and Rousseau, respectively, refer to a kind of freedom, (viz, acquired freedom) which has been neglected by most scholars in their writings about freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps it was because writers in the Western countries were so long preoccupied with political freedom problems that they neglected the freedom contained in the statements by Kant and Rousseau. In contrast, acquired freedom plays a large role in the Eastern world where it is advocated by philosophers and theologians. The holy man of India and the Zen priest of Japan epitomize this freedom.

What is this kind of freedom? Acquired freedom is an “inner freedom.” It is a unique kind of freedom exhibited in the lives of people who live by great ideals. Such people have a rare combination of courage, intelligence, humility, cleverness, temperance, integrity, unselfishness, stubborn willfulness, etc. Thus Socrates was “free” in spite of the harassment

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau, J. J. *Emile* (trans. by B. Foxley). Everyman’s Library (New York: E. P. Dutton), 1950. p. 437.

<sup>3</sup> Kant, I., *Preface to the Metaphysical Elements of Ethics* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.), trans. by T. K. Abbot 1889. p. 317.

<sup>4</sup> Feinberg writes of acquired freedom, but he fails to note it as an important freedom as a triadic relation, i.e., in terms of “the agents who are free, the person as one who is “non-servile,” as one who is “deliberate and dignified, and can look anyman in the eye.” These are aspects of the free personality—a freedom Feinberg fails to note. Rawls in *Theory of Justice* (p. 202) defines freedom as a triadic relation, i.e., in terms of “the agents who are free, the restrictions or limitations which they are free from, and what it is they are free to do or not to do.” Hence Rawls recognizes natural and circumstantial freedoms, but not acquired freedom. The *O. E. D.* gives two related uses: “‘Free in a spiritual sense’ — as in ‘He who is free from conscience is a slave to fame’ and “the quality of being noble.”

by Athenians; Martin Luther King was free inspite of death threats, FBI surveillance, etc. They were not free from constraint, but they acquired “free” personalities. Hence we can speak of this as the freedom of *the free personality*.

This meaning of freedom can be grasped via a definition given by Mortimer Adler:

“It is a freedom which is possessed only by those men who, through acquired virtue or wisdom, are able to will or live as they ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature”.<sup>5</sup>

The emphasis here appears to be a moral life, but an “ideal befitting human life” could be an aesthetic, a religious, or a psychological ideal as well as the ethical one stressed by Adler. The aesthetic ideals exhibiting freedom are reflected in this statement by Muller:

“If he (a civilized man) is a Shakespeare or a Beethoven, then in his creativity he may know a godlike freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

Religious ideals have been stated by Christ, Buddha, Moses, etc., among many others. The Golden Rule represents one such ideal.

Psychological ideals have been stated by Freud, Maslow, Fromm, etc. Consider a statement by Christian Bay:

“Psychological freedom means a degree of harmony between basic motives and overt behavior.”<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that all of these ideals or any others are equally adequate. One judges them by the usual criteria of consistency, clarity, and comprehensiveness.

<sup>5</sup> Adler, M., *The Idea of Freedom* (New York: Doubleday & Co.), 1958, Vol. II, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Muller, Herbert, *Issues of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row), 1960, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Bay, C. *The Structure of Freedom* (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press), 1958, p. 83

Discussion of this freedom, i.e. acquired freedom, has been neglected because freedom from coercion has been conceived to be the only kind of freedom. This latter is referred to as “negative freedom,” one according to which a man is free when he is not constrained or coerced from acting as he wished. For the past three hundred years the Western Democracies have been obsessed with “negative freedom.” The First Amendment of our Constitution, containing such statements as “There shall be no abridgment of free speech” and “Congress shall make no law respecting the right of the people to peaceably assemble,” embodies the idea of negative freedom. Furthermore this concept, i.e. negative freedom, embodies the free enterprise economic system as well. It considers any restraint of economic endeavour to be a constraint of freedom. Because the free market represents negative freedom this latter concept has become embodied in the Western way of life — especially in the United States.

What are the grounds for believing this is a kind of freedom? I believe there are three grounds. In the first place note that many of the best known philosophers throughout history have considered it so: Plato, Epicurus, Cicero, Philo, Epictetus, Augustine, Aquinas, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Bosanquet, Dewey, Russell, etc. It is strange that although “acquired freedom” can be *culled* from these writings, it is rarely discussed by current writers on freedom nor did many of these earlier philosophers see it *per se* as a freedom. The point is that the writings of these philosophers have passages containing the idea of acquired freedom, although it is rarely discussed as such. A second and further evidence that this is a freedom is shown when one asks who are the individuals one considers to be or to have been the “free” publically known individuals in our century. One immediately thinks of Martin L. King, Schweitzer, Eleanor Roosevelt, Ralph Nader, Phillip Berrigan, Picasso, Casals, etc. What is it that all of them have in common? It is that they all lived to a high degree by an *ideal*, be it aesthetic, religious, psychological, or ethical.

These individuals acquired through their character the ability to live according to their ideal. They each have or had a strong sense of identity, and this identity has as its source their lived ideal. By such and in such a way they are free. The more one is able to live by a significant ideal, the stronger will be one's sense of identity. One way to establish this fact is to consider those individuals we would deem as not having a free personality. The anti-heroes of recent novels represent good examples. They are men whose lives were determined by events acting upon them. They were men who did not will an adequate idea. Reflect upon the example of Nixon, a man whose moral ideals and consequently his sense of identity are difficult to find. If he had any it was the ideal of the acquisition of money . . .<sup>8</sup> an inadequate ideal.

Such ideals as the acquisition of money, or power, or extreme imbibing of alcohol so often exhibit an unfree man. In many cases they can and have literally destroyed the man. It must be quickly pointed out that acquired freedom is a degree concept. A man who has it I call the free personality. No man has a completely free personality. And it is just as probably true that no man is completely unfree even Hitler or Nixon. To say that freedom is a degree concept is to say that a man is free a certain percentage of time or in a certain manner. In this sense we can say that Martin Luther King was a freer personality than George Wallace, or Eleanor Roosevelt freer than Marilyn Monroe.

The above brings out the third reason "acquired freedom" is a kind of freedom. If a person had free will and if he had adequate money, political rights, social acceptance, and a pleasant environment he still might not be called "free." Such would be the case of any individual whose ideals were self-destructive or even encumbering. Among these could

<sup>8</sup> In this recent book on Watergate, Leon Jaworski pointed out that if Nixon had burned the tapes he probably would have still been president, but Nixon believed he would gain so much money via the tapes, that he didn't burn them. Jaworski, Leon: *The Right and the Power* (New York) 1976.

lie power, fame, sexual extremes, etc. Men like King Farauk, Hitler, or Onassis are examples of such.

Consider the following objection to my theory, *viz.* why not call Socrates or Spinoza “good” rather than free. Many men are good whom we don’t refer to as free. A man who is simply provider for and loves his family is often called good, but we reserve in our language the word “free” for those who live by these ideals. It is their *unusual* achievements via their lived ideal that causes us to refer to them as free men.

Consider another possible objection to this view of acquired freedom. Could one be determined by events and yet have an ideal which makes himself a relatively free personality? Spinoza believed it possible. In Part Five of his *Ethics*, after having earlier denied the existence of free will, he tells us that the freedom which only the truly wise possess is difficult to attain, but then “all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.” Furthermore recall that Hospers in his well known article, “Free Will and Psychoanalysis” argues that the healthy ideal is to arrange the forces in your life so that they represent a determining coherent group. Hence one could live an ideal and not have free will. Adler, Muller, and Kant disagree, but it is possible.

Consider a more extreme question. Could one be so free via a compulsion to follow an ideal? The answer is clearly no. A compulsion is defined by Webster as “an irresistible impulse to do an irrational act the performance of which tends to disturb what a neurotic does but not a psychotic”. The ideals here before mentioned aren’t the goals of such people via such ways.

Notice that if there is such a condition as acquired freedom, MacCallum’s formula doesn’t apply to it. One can’t fit the Categorical Imperative into the form “X is free from Y to do Z”. The decision to follow an ethical ideal is not an act freeing a person from something. It is an act of an active positive self. Hence MacCallum’s formula is inadequate.

Acquired freedom is not held to be a freedom by the average man. I see three reasons for this. The *first* is that the average man has been indoctrinated to believe that negative freedom is the only freedom. This is what is meant when it is said that the United States is a free country and China is not. This is maintained in spite of the fact that the percentage of people suffering hunger in the United States is probably much higher than in China. Freedom in the Western countries including the United States is simply identified with "political freedom". In the United States economic freedom for all is not usually held to be a freedom. The *second* reason that acquired freedom is not held to be an important freedom by the average person is that they don't consider the lives of people like Martin Luther King, Nader, Margret Sanger, Schweitzer, etc., as free. People so involved aren't considered free. These activists are individuals who try to change society, who upset customs, who are critics of the traditional mores, and finally whose lives are difficult to lead. The difficult life of the active social critic is not held to be a free life, and his criticism is apt to make the average man uncomfortable. The average man wants the calm comfort of his dignified middle class life one in which his achievements are respected.<sup>9</sup> To him it is the free life. But the fact is that these idealists experience a unique freedom. Thus mass man does not consider acquired freedom to be a freedom, first, because of his indoctrination to negative freedom, second, because he equates freedom with respect for his endeavors, and thirdly, he perceives the life of the social critic to be too difficult to be a free one.

To sum up to here: men can be free in many ways; they may have free will; they may have political, economic, and environmental, social freedom; they may be free from coercion and constraint; but they also may acquire a free personality via their ideals. This latter has long been neglected as an independent kind of freedom.

<sup>9</sup> Sennett, R. and Cobb, J., *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Random House), 1972, p. 220.

Yet in a significant way the title of my paper is a misnomer. There has been attention given to *one* aspect of acquired freedom by some of the foremost writers on freedom in our time. This attention has come in reference to the concept of "positive freedom." Although discussed in the earlier years of our century by Dewey and R. B. Perry, this concept was not current until it was revived with a strong criticism of it by Isaiah Berlin in his Inaugural Lecture in 1958, the same year that Adler's *Idea of Freedom* was published.

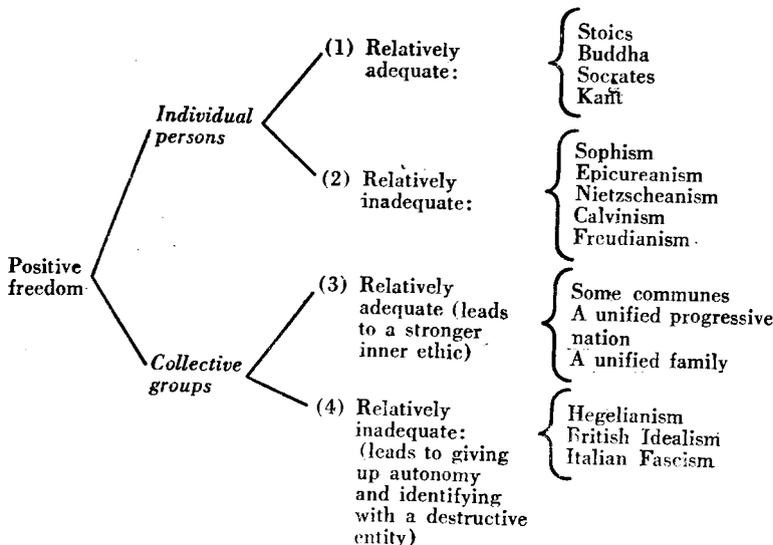
Berlin divides the general concept of freedom into two parts: negative and positive freedom. These he conceives to be opposite, mutually exclusive, and together representing a complete description of freedom. He defines negative freedom as "freedom consisting in not being interfered with by others". Such freedom depends upon the absence of external forces, and is historically referred to as "freedom from" external forces. The opposite of negative freedom is positive freedom, which he defines as "the freedom to be one's master." He holds this freedom to be the opposite of negative freedom because it is conceived to be the freedom which depends purely upon yourself and not upon the existence of external forces. These external forces, according to Berlin, have no effect if one conceives freedom in this "positive" way. This has historically been called "freedom to." It is usually the freedom of the inner-directed person although as we shall see, he holds it can become perverted. Such freedom has two aspects: personal and social. Such philosophies and religions as Buddhism and Stoicism personify such personal positive freedom. The second aspect, social positive freedom, is exemplified by the various organic social philosophies, among which those represented by Hegel and Bosanquet.

Berlin is sharply critical of all forms of positive freedom. He believes that the personal positive freedom as exemplified by the Stoics represents little else than a retreat from the world whose logical culmination is suicide. His interpretation of Stoicism is rather extreme. Spinoza's stoicism didn't so cul-

minate. Furthermore one wonders why he finds no value in this freedom as exemplified by the Eastern religions.

He claims that social positive freedom is often represented in the self-realization philosophies of Hegel, Marx, etc. He argues that such men who believe in freedom as rational self-direction and are the leaders will sooner or later attempt to mold all members of the society to their beliefs. In the attempt to set up a rational society by such leaders, a way will be sought to impose proper views upon the minds of recalcitrant humans, i.e., those who haven't adequately developed their *real* (proper) natures. Such a philosophy Berlin argues can lead to the totalitarisms of Hegel and other organicists. Hence Berlin sharply rejects social or collective freedom as well as personal positive freedom.

The truth is that he has taken too extreme a position regarding positive freedom. There are relatively adequate and relatively inadequate types of positive freedom in both the personal and social realms. Berlin errs in his failure to realize this. I see in this chart the following possibilities:



A person can achieve a degree of acquired freedom relative to both (1) and (3). Socrates sought and achieved an ideal. In Berlin's terms he attempted to realize his self —and we speak of Socrates as a free person. Berlin focuses his criticism on the extreme Stoics, and ignores such persons as Socrates. Thereby Berlin weakens his argument.

The relatively inadequate personal ethic is represented by: anyone whose ideas fail in their comprehensiveness; anyone who has contradictory ideas; or anyone whose concepts are vaguely defined.

Berlin also fails to notice that there are relatively adequate collective ethics. In such cases the persons in the group live more readily by their moral ideal via their *organic* association. A special *esprit* develops whereby each individual as well as the group achieves more. This has occurred in some communes; it exists among certain families; and even I suspect in a nation at times of strong unity. Hence Berlin is incorrect in viewing collective groups as *always* detrimental entities.

Of course he is correct that there have existed in the 20th century several organic states in which the greater part of the populace has sought to realize themselves. Such is a danger, one that probably exists anytime superpatriotism, etc. exists. But again it is a question of the adequacy of the particular ideal.

But what Berlin does not realize is that one can acquire a relatively free personality through either a personalized or a collective ideal.

Thus Berlin and others have neglected "acquired freedom," i.e., the freedom of the free personality. Berlin has failed to realize its valuable aspects; most others have neglected considering it a freedom at all.

## RESUMEN

Para James A. Gould, los filósofos que han tratado el concepto general de libertad se dividen en dos grandes grupos. El primero de ellos pone de relieve, como idea central, el ser libre de coacción. Esta vieja tradición es usualmente conocida como la "libertad negativa". Entre sus principales prosélitos se hallan Hobbes, Locke, y recientemente Cranston. Para ellos "ser libre" significa "X es libre de Y".

Gerald MacCallum propuso una variante de la libertad negativa ampliando el significado de "X es libre" a "X es libre de Y para hacer Z". Según él, esta frase recoge el significado total de la libertad.

El segundo grupo tiene defensores restringidos y amplios. Un teórico restringido como P. H. Patridge argumenta que además de la libertad con respecto a la coerción, la libertad completa requiere una adecuada libertad política y económica. Una persona debe tener los medios que le permitan alcanzarla.

La teoría amplia está representada por Mortimer Adler y Herbert Muller. Ellos creen que la libertad tiene tres grandes componentes: la libertad natural o libre albedrío; la libertad adquirida o personalidad libre; y, por último, la libertad circunstancial, que tiene como subcategorías las libertades económica, política y social. Gould agregaría también la libertad climático-geográfica.

El artículo de Gould tiene como fin primordial analizar un aspecto de la libertad adquirida: lo que ésta es; por qué ha sido rechazada y finalmente, su aplicación al concepto de "libertad positiva" de Isaiah Berlin.

Kant y Rousseau, en algunos pasajes de sus obras, se han referido a la libertad adquirida. Pero ésta ha sido rechazada por la mayoría de los humanistas en sus escritos sobre la libertad. Esto se debe, posiblemente, a que los escritores occidentales han estado muy preocupados por los problemas de la libertad política. Por el contrario, en el mundo oriental, la libertad adquirida juega un papel muy importante: ha sido defendida por filósofos y teólogos.

La libertad adquirida es una "libertad interna". Este tipo de li-

bertad se muestra en la vida de las personas que viven grandes ideales, y que poseen una combinación rara de coraje, inteligencia, humildad, talento, templanza, integridad, generosidad, obstinación, voluntariedad, etc. Así, Sócrates fue "libre" a pesar del vejamen de los atenienses; Martin Luther King fue "libre" a pesar de las amenazas de muerte, la vigilancia del FBI, etcétera. No estuvieron libres de coacción, pero alcanzaron personalidades "libres". Por tanto, podemos llamar a ésta la libertad de *la personalidad libre*.

Este significado de libertad puede entenderse mejor gracias a la definición de Mortimer Adler: "Es una libertad poseída sólo por aquellos hombres que, a través de la adquisición de la virtud o la sabiduría, son capaces de querer o vivir como deberían en conformidad con la ley moral o con un ideal conveniente a la naturaleza humana." Este ideal no tiene que ser necesariamente moral; puede ser estético (como ha señalado Muller), religioso (Cristo, Buda) o psicológico (Freud, Fromm, etcétera).

Esto no quiere decir que todos los ideales anteriores u otros sean igualmente adecuados. Los juzgamos según criterios de consistencia, claridad y comprensión.

La razón por la que el concepto de libertad adquirida no se ha discutido como debiera es la siguiente: se ha considerado que el único tipo de libertad es la "libertad negativa", según la cual un hombre es libre cuando no es constreñido o coaccionado a actuar de alguna manera. Durante siglos las democracias occidentales han estado obsesionadas con la "libertad negativa". Ésta entraña también la idea de un sistema económico de libre empresa, que considera cualquier restricción al esfuerzo económico como una restricción a la libertad. Debido a que el mercado libre representa la libertad negativa, este último concepto se ha arraigado en el modo occidental de vida, especialmente en los Estados Unidos.

¿Qué bases tenemos para creer que la "libertad adquirida" sea un tipo de libertad? Hay tres. La primera es que los filósofos más importantes en la historia, de Platón a Russell, han considerado la "libertad adquirida" como un tipo de libertad. Lo extraño es que no se hayan preocupado por discutirla. Una segunda evidencia la da el hecho de que, cuando preguntamos qué individuos se consideran "libres" en el presente siglo, se mencionan nombres como Luther King, Eleanor Roosevelt, Picasso, etcétera. ¿Qué tienen en común? To-

dos ellos han vivido por un ideal, ya sea estético, religioso, psicológico o ético. Estos individuos adquirieron a través de su carácter la habilidad para vivir de acuerdo a su ideal. Cada uno de ellos ha tenido un fuerte sentido de identidad, y esta identidad brota de un ideal de vida; por él y en él las personas son libres. La mayoría de nosotros somos capaces de vivir por un ideal significativo, pero lo importante es el sentido de identidad de uno. Una forma de establecer este hecho es considerar a esos individuos que no estimaríamos personalidades libres. Los antihéroes de las novelas recientes son buenos ejemplos: seres cuyas vidas fueron determinadas por acontecimientos que actuaron sobre ellos; hombres que no tuvieron un ideal adecuado. Nixon es un hombre cuyos ideales morales (y, en consecuencia, su sentido de identidad) resultan difíciles de encontrar. Si tiene alguno, es el ideal de la adquisición de dinero, un ideal inadecuado.

Ideales como la adquisición de dinero, poder o fama exhiben muy frecuentemente a un hombre que no es libre. En muchos casos han destruido al hombre.

La libertad adquirida es un concepto de grado. Un hombre que la tiene posee una personalidad libre. Aunque ningún hombre tiene una personalidad libre completa; y es posible que ningún hombre sea completamente no-libre. Decir que la libertad es un concepto de grado es decir que el hombre es libre un cierto periodo de tiempo o de cierta manera. En este sentido podemos decir que Eleanor Roosevelt fue más libre que Marilyn Monroe.

La tercera razón por la que la "libertad adquirida" es un tipo de libertad es la siguiente: Aun si una persona tiene (libre) albedrío, suficiente dinero, derechos sociales, aceptación social y ambiente placentero, no podría llamarse "libre". Esto sucedería en el caso de que los ideales del individuo fueran autodestructivos.

Hay algunas objeciones. Primera: ¿por qué no llamar a Sócrates "bueno" en lugar de libre? Muchos hombres son buenos pero no los describimos como libres. A un hombre que cuida y ama a su familia suele llamársele bueno, pero nos reservamos la palabra "libre" para aquellos que viven por sus ideales. Son sus logros extraordinarios, vía su ideal de vida, los que nos impulsan a llamarlos hombres libres.

Otra posible objeción es la siguiente: ¿puede uno ser determinado por las circunstancias y tener aún un ideal que lo haga una perso-

nalidad relativamente libre? Spinoza contestó afirmativamente. Además, es posible vivir por un ideal y no tener libre albedrío.

El tercer problema lo plantea la pregunta: ¿puede uno ser libre a través de una compulsión para seguir un ideal? La respuesta es no, debido a que los ideales de gente así no son para ellos una meta según un camino racional.

Si existe algo así como la libertad adquirida, la fórmula de MacCallum no se aplica a ella. La decisión de seguir un ideal ético no es un acto que libere de nada a una persona. Es el acto de un ser activo, positivo. Por tanto, la fórmula de MacCallum es inadecuada.

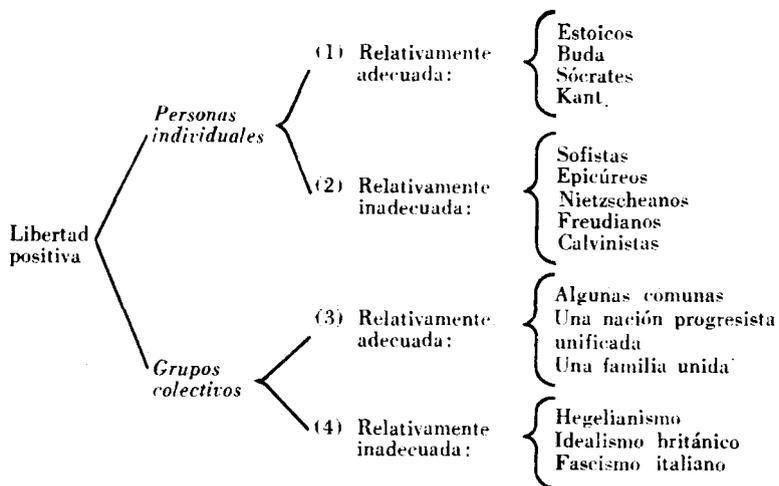
La libertad adquirida no es vista como tal por el hombre ordinario. Esto se debe a tres motivos: (a) el hombre corriente ha sido adoctrinado en la libertad negativa; (b) iguala la libertad con sus logros pequeño-burgueses, y (c) considera la vida del crítico social demasiado difícil para ser una vida libre.

En suma, el hombre puede ser libre de distintas maneras: puede tener libre albedrío; libertad política, económica, ambiental y social; puede estar libre de constreñimiento y coerción; pero el hombre puede también adquirir una personalidad libre gracias a sus ideales. Esto último ha sido rechazado y se niega que sea un tipo de libertad independiente.

Isaiah Berlin se ha ocupado de la libertad adquirida al referirse al concepto de "libertad positiva". Berlin divide el concepto de libertad en dos partes: la libertad positiva y la negativa; ambas partes son opuestas, mutuamente excluyentes y juntas dan una descripción completa de la libertad. La libertad negativa, según Berlin, "consiste en no ser interferido por los demás". La libertad positiva es "la libertad para ser dueño de uno mismo". Esta libertad tiene dos vertientes: la personal (representada por el budismo y el estoicismo) y la social (representada por las filosofías de la autorrealización de Hegel y Marx).

Berlin rechaza la libertad positiva individual, que en el estoicismo culmina en el suicidio; rechaza también la libertad positiva social, que lleva al totalitarismo en la filosofía de Hegel.

El error de Berlin, señala Gould, consiste en haber tomado una posición extrema frente a la libertad positiva. Lo cierto es que hay tipos adecuados e inadecuados de libertad positiva, tanto individual como social. El siguiente esquema muestra una variedad de posibilidades:



La crítica de Berlin a la libertad positiva se basó en casos del tipo (2) y (4), por eso es incorrecta.

En conclusión, Berlin no acepta que uno puede adquirir una personalidad relativamente libre a través de un ideal personal o colectivo. Por tanto, se equivoca al rechazar la “libertad adquirida”, i.e., la libertad de la personalidad libre.

*(Resumen de Sebastián Lamoyi)*