

The Nature and Value of Freedom

The Politics of Freedom

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Overview

1. Introduction
2. The Concept of Freedom
3. Why Value Freedom?
4. The Instrumental Value of Freedom
5. Some Freedom Puzzles
6. Freedom's Intrinsic Value: Agency

1. Introduction

Why a course on the politics of freedom?

- Political importance of freedom (justice, security, migration, environment, etc.)
- The PPE-angle: each of the disciplines have made important contributions to the analysis of freedom

1. Introduction

Course topics

1. The Nature and Value of Freedom
2. The Politics of Responsibility
3. Two Political Theories of Freedom:
Libertarianism and the Capability Theory
4. Freedom Applied

2. The Concept of Freedom

A family of conceptions. Some basic ones:

- Negative freedom
Being unprevented (“freedom from”)
- Positive freedom
An ability to do or become (“freedom to”)
- Republican freedom
Having “robust” negative freedom (“your freedom cannot be easily taken away from you”)

2. The Concept of Freedom

Examples:

- Absence of coercion (negative freedom)
- Autonomy (positive freedom)
- Capabilities (positive freedom)
- The rule of law (republican freedom)
- ...

3. Why Value Freedom?

Do we really want more or less of it?

- Think of the feelings that may be generated by being released from prison or seeing a dictator overthrown.
- These feelings may be related to outcome that we can achieve by being free (e.g. well-being) or we may simply value the freedom itself, without any reference to outcome (it is simply good to have the freedom regardless of what you can do with it).
- Freedom as a “protective sphere” or “opportunity space”.

3. Why Value Freedom?

Freedom is a component of justice:

- Rawls: opportunity to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution benefits all.
- Sen: capability as an answer to “equality of what”?
- Cohen: equality as access to advantage.
- Mill: freedom as the space for individuality.
- Raz: freedom as autonomous choice.

4. The Instrumental Value of Freedom

Freedom has

- Instrumental value: freedom is valuable for the things it can achieve, such as well-being.
- Intrinsic value: freedom is valuable as such.

4. The Instrumental Value of Freedom

Freedom permits us to maximize our personal well-being through choice (we are better able to match means and ends for ourselves than others can).

- Basically the idea of consumer sovereignty: each of us knows best what is best for us.
- Exercising choice improves our abilities to make better decisions and thus improve our wellbeing (although there are indeed limits ...)

4. The Instrumental Value of Freedom

Freedom is a space for personal development: we experiment with our lives and find new combinations (Mill's Art of Living).

- You define your own life and ends regardless of the wellbeing it may have for you or others. What is important is that you develop a unique individuality (Mill emphasized eccentricity).
- More mundane: we learn from our mistakes, and freedom gives us the opportunity to make mistakes

4. The Instrumental Value of Freedom

Freedom is necessary for social and economic development (Smith; Mill; Popper; Hayek).

- Economic: Smith's invisible hand; welfare theorems
- Social: we generate new knowledge, ideas, even organizations and communities. In this process genius is discovered and that is beneficial to society as a whole.

5. Some Freedom Puzzles

- Raz and the puzzle of free speech
- The job offer
- The anniversary gift

5. Some Freedom Puzzles

The freedom to do x has

- Dependent value: the freedom is valuable because x is valuable.
- Independent value: the freedom is valuable independent from the value of x .

5. Some Freedom Puzzles

	Dependent value	Independent value
Instrumental value	Example: consumer sovereignty	Example: Mill, Hayek, Popper
Intrinsic value		Example: Free speech, the job offer, the gift

6. Freedom's Intrinsic Value: Agency

- Expressive value
- Symbolic value

Together they form freedom's *agency-value*: the value of being an agent who can be held *responsible* for her actions