

Liberty

Political Science

The two main conceptions of freedom, and what each implies.

Negative liberty

- Absence of external interference
- Freedom is where the law is silent
- Focus on constraints imposed by others
- Smaller state follows naturally
- Berlin, Hayek, classical liberals

Positive liberty

- Capacity to act on one's purposes
- Requires resources and capabilities
- Poverty is a limit on freedom
- Justifies enabling intervention
- Green, Taylor, capability theorists

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

The disagreement is about whether a right you cannot exercise counts as a freedom.

Educational reference. Berlin warned that positive liberty can justify coercion in the name of a person's real interests.