"NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE OF FREEDOM" ON MACCALLUM'S

This essay is about MacCallum's article "Negative and Positive Freedom" which was published in 1967 and was meant as a response to Isaiah Berlin's distinction between "negative" and "positive" freedom (Miller, 1991:17). In what follows, we will give an insight into MacCallum's argument and show that it cannot discard the borders between these two concepts of freedom.

The notion of freedom, as defined by MacCallum, consists of three parts that are more or less related to each other: the agent, the preventing conditions and the actions. On the basis of this definition, we cannot talk about freedom without mentioning any of these three constituents and it is possible to synthesize any known analysis of freedom in terms of these three parts.

Therefore, "negative" and "positive" freedom can be regarded as simply different interpretations of the same formula of freedom. For this purpose, however, some aspects of these two concepts need to be set aside or at least we have to limit the number of aspects. MacCallum does this and thereby makes the concept of "positive" freedom fit into a broader concept of freedom, which, in my view, is that of "negative" freedom.

In the beginning of his paper, McCallum alludes to the distinction between "negative" and "positive" freedom and argues that we cannot "usefully distinguish between two kinds or concepts of political and social freedom, that is negative and positive freedom" (1967:312) MacCallum suggests that the opposing stances concerning the definition of freedom are the cause of many other disputes within the sphere of the Political (e.g. the attainment of other social benefits) and the opposing parties' responses to these disputes are "certainly historically best understood as a series of attempts" by them "to capture for their own side the favourable attitudes attaching to the notion of freedom" (1967: 313).

Another factor for the confusion in tackling the concept of freedom is the "failure to understand fully the conditions under which use of the concept of freedom is intelligible" (1967:314). MacCallum defines freedom as follows: "X is (is not) free from Y to do (not do, become not become) Z" where X stands for the agents, Y for the preventing conditions and Z for actions or conditions of character or circumstance. As we saw above, omitting any of these three term variables in a discussion about freedom renders the latter unintelligible. Freedom can only be defined as a relationship between these three variables.

As such, confusions regarding the notion of freedom can result from the exclusion of either of these term variables in definitions of freedom which as a result are very inaccurate or even unintelligible. This is MacCallum's view. Cases where the agents have been omitted are illustrated in the "free-will" or "free society" discussions (1967:315). The "freedom of choice" discussion (1967:316) exemplifies cases where the preventing conditions have not been mentioned or properly corresponded to. As for the "freedom of hunger" discussion (1967:317), it illustrates the last type of cases, which are those without any allusion to the action. In the first type of cases, MacCallum affirms that "the criteria for identification of the persons or selves whose freedom is in question have not often been made sufficiently clear" (1967:315)

In the "freedom of choice" discussions, he considers that such discussions can be made intelligible by referring to legal constraints (1967:317). Finally, in the last case, he regards various social, political and economic conditions equally as barriers (1967:318) According to MacCallum, the differences between "positive" and "negative" freedom, given that it does not make sense to distinguish between "freedom to" and "freedom from", are presented in the following table:

"Negative" Freedom	"Positive" Freedom
The presence of something can render a person unfree (1967: 320)	The absence of something may also render a person unfree (1967: 320)
Only other *people* or *their arrangements intentionally Can pose* as *preventing conditions*(1967: 321)	No such restriction (1967: 321)
On the term variable that concerns the agents: *Ordinary Persons: natural as opposed to artificial* (1967: 321, 323)	A: "The real, the rational self, the moral person who is sometimes hidden within, or has his seed contained within , the living human body" B: "Expansion of the limits of 'person'": in institutions, history, future of the community (1967: 324)
Common use of the meaning of the term variable that concerns the preventing conditions: Obstacle(1967: 323)	Different from the ordinary view of an obstacle. Not only because of the different view on the meaning of a person but also because of the belief that their social arrangements can also be counted as obstacles (1967: 325-326)

"Ordinary view" on what the agent may be or may not be free to do or become. Mostly the third term variable consists in doing what the agents want (1967: 323)	Mostly the third term variable consists in conditions of character (1967: 327)

MacCallum divides these differences into two categories: "they concern (a) the ('true') identities of agents whose freedom is in question, and (b) what is to count as an 'obstacle' or 'barrier' to, 'restriction' on, or 'interference' with the freedom of such agents" (1967: 322) Moreover, by analysing the relationship between agents or societies and freedom, the only way to make "rational evaluations of the relative merits of societies with regard to freedom" is "only when we determine what the men in question are free from, and what they are free to do or become" (1967: 329).

On these grounds, we should not project our desires about certain ways of behaviour into possibilities of claims about freedom whenever we say that "men are free" (1967: 328 – 329) In this way, it may well be the case that we do not take into consideration any political, social or economic conditions that restrict our freedom (1967: 329) On the other hand, whenever we try to give a definition of freedom, we should not forget to provide an answer to the following questions:

- What are the elements that influence the freedom of agents?
- What are the actions of which we can unambiguously say that agents are free to carry out or not?
- What counts as a legitimate interference with the freedom of agents?
- What actions are agents best left to do?

This idea converts a restriction into a non-restriction simply by making clear that it's not an important restriction, or the action could be defined in such a way that nobody could engage in this sense (1967:332). In conclusion logical interpretation depends on the concept of freedom as understood by MacCallum, that is as a triadic relation between the three term variables. It is in this way that the debates on the freedom of people can be fully understandable and rationally assessed (1967:333) MacCallum seeks to give a descriptive definition of freedom, descriptive in the sense that it can be applied to any discussion about freedom without any ideological distortions. In my point of view, this definition is not convincing. First of all, it does not contain any evaluative elements (see Oppenheim, 1973:56)

Certainly, MacCallum´s analysis is impressive, but on the overall his conception of freedom is rather "negative".

Indeed, by conceiving freedom as a unique concept (thus discarding the coexistence of two opposing types of freedom, the "positive" and "negative" one), MacCallum does not refer to all the aspects of "positive" freedom, but restricts himself to the necessary and sufficient conditions – as set by the partisans of this type of freedom – of what constitutes freedom into a broader, more elaborate "negative" freedom (that only includes reference to social, economical and political arrangements as possible barriers to a person's freedom).

In Oppenheim's credit, he does recognize that his conception of social freedom is "by definition negative" (2004: 176), a definition which is very much similar (though limited to social freedom), and which, according to Carter, anticipates MacCallum's definition (1999: 15, ftn5) Oppenheim´s definition is: With respect to an authority, A, a subordinate, S, is free to do an action Z or any other action different from it, that is not-Z, if and only if with respect to A, S is neither unfree to do X nor not-X.

The concept of negative freedom could be defined as a certain class of external impediments which prevent an agent to move outside a particular area. In other words, negative freedom implies that what we can do depends on the options that are open to us, whether we exercise it or not (Taylor, 1991:144) "Positive" freedom, on the other hand appears as an exercise concept, or a capability concept: "One is free only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life" (Taylor, 1991:143), where self-realization doesn't conflict with "what you want" (Taylor, 1991: 147), since persons are purposive beings (Taylor, 1991: 151)

After reading MacCallum´s article we can understand that he fails to distinguish between opportunity and exercise as intrinsic to the discussion about freedom and tends to fit the former into the latter by saying that what persons want to do freely and what persons actually do freely, and what it is meant by them, all fit into the third variable. By admitting that there can be differences with respect to the accounts of the term variables, as the ones described above and since MacCallum considers that it is mistake to infer from these differences that there are different types of freedom, I believe that it undermines his analysis in two ways. First of all, I think that he gets stuck in a vicious circle by saying that

1. Freedom is a triadic relation (and not two different kinds) and
2. (to view Freedom as) A triadic relation is reasonable and intelligible to everybody thus
3. Everybody reasonably and intelligibly views (or should view) freedom as a triadic relation (o
4. Viewing Freedom in a variety of kinds, is not viewing freedom from a rational and rewarding perspective)

MacCallum logically arrives at the conclusion by considering the first premise as undeniable. Any argument constructed on the basis of the traditions of the proponents of "negative" and "positive" freedom can fit into his formula as the term variables can be adapted in such a way that include the beliefs of both of them. In MacCallum´s view, this is the only reasonable thing to do since by using the common view of freedom, agents, hindrances and actions, there is nothing else that fits our intuitions. In other words, this is the only way to avoid seeing the instance of freedom as non-unique. In my opinion, MacCallum tries to impose an ideology of overcoming differences by transforming them into something they are not.

Furthermore, his first premise (i. above) is not undisputable as he argues which implies that we cannot reach the conclusion by means of logical reasoning. In what follows, I will provide a detailed discussion about MacCallum´s implied ideology mentioned above. Second, I believe that MacCallum´s view of "positive" freedom is somewhat altered (which may be due to the fact that he is an empirist). This allows him to upgrade the prevailing version of "negative" freedom in order to apply it to more aspects of social life and to harmonize it with the "ordinary" use of freedom. MacCallum avoids alluding to self-mastery (Berlin, 1991:43), i.e. the ability of motivating oneself through reason and conscious purposes, concepts that are of primary importance to the defenders of "positive" freedom. Unlike the latter, he continually uses the personal pronoun "we", which illustrates the ordinary use of the meaning of the words by the broader society.

Also, he disagrees with the discussion regarding the "exercise of control over one's life" (Taylor, 1991: 143) which stems from the proponents of "positive" freedom. Finally he looks upon the whole disagreement mentioned above as a disagreement of the concept of person. Actually, a writer sharing MacCallum´s view is unable to see how a disagreement in the terms of the concept may entail a disagreement to the concept itself.

This is because such a writer highlights that writers in general must first share the same concept of freedom before being able to compare the differences, if any, among the uses of the concept of "person" and thereby gives priority to what in his belief is the "whole" over the "part". This problem is of course a very serious one in the sense that it can undermine MacCallum´s theory. The point here is that MacCallum defines "positive" freedom in terms of "negative" freedom. In other words, it is not clear at all what is meant if one can divide a person and his self and say.

Putting this in MacCallum´s formula, (a) *X is free from his self to control his desires* But even if one could make such a claim, it would not be intelligible for two reasons. First of all, the notion of will must be clarified before making such a statement intelligible, as MacCallum claims (1967:316). Second, the function of term variable *person* is "to point to living human bodies" (1967:323) and in that sense, it is impossible to divide between a person and himself.

As for the fact that any discussion about freedom must not leave out any of the three term variables in order to be understandable, it is subject to empirical confirmation. The claim (a) above could never be confirmed empirically in the sense that it is what we observe in reality. Thus, in this context, the "ordinary view" talks about an empirical (and secular) world. Since the "worries" of the advocates of "positive" freedom cannot be confirmed empirically, MacCallum treats them as reasonably unfounded "fictions". Thus, MacCallum´s definition of freedom as a triadic relation between the three variables is actually "negative" freedom redefined to include the "worries" of the partisans of "positive" freedom that concern the capability of social arrangement to pose as barriers to one's freedom, something that proponents of "negative" freedom would definitely discard. It is in this way that MacCallum distinguishes his notion of freedom from that of Oppenheim which he considers to be rather restricting (1967: 314 ftn 2).

MacCallum´s conception of freedom is in line with the common intuitions about political arrangements, and in this sense his argument is quite significant: if in a liberal society freedom is considered to be important, a liberal government should lift all restrictions on the citizens' life, including those restrictions imposed to them by social, political and economic arrangements. Thus, the "free market economy" must be in a way restricted or at least appropriately regulated so that the freedom of every citizen is respected. This is a position that proponents of "positive" freedom have been fighting for a long time and MacCallum grants that to them, by "putting" it on the map of general discussions about freedom.

Bibliography:

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