Abstract

This paper should be seen against the background of my dissertation project, in which I aim to sort out some of the empirical confusions concerning Ronald Inglehart's so-called self-expression values by developing more theoretically refined research hypotheses. I argue that much of the empirical disagreement on whether self-expression values promote democracy or not depends on the fact that their active ingredient, called liberty aspirations, actually consists of several very different and often conflicting conceptions of liberty that have been collapsed into one. Thus, contrary to what Inglehart and his colleagues assume, there can be no unambiguous relationship between liberty aspirations and democracy. The relationship very much depends on which conception of liberty we are discussing. We will not know where self-expression values come from, why they arise, and which kind of democracy they do (or do not) promote, unless we know which sort of liberty aspirations they actually capture. In order to do this, we cannot as Inglehart start with factor scores. Beginning in the proper end necessarily brings us back to political theory.

Introduction

Ronald Inglehart is perhaps most well-known for his theory of postmaterialist value change. However, his most recent work is focused on a closely related but slightly different value dimension that he shows to be significantly linked to democracy. According to data gathered form the four last waves of World Values Survey, Inglehart and Welzel put forward a two-stage modernization theory stressing the importance of value change. They argue that there is not only a shift from traditional to secular-rational values (the one predicted by Weber and others); but more importantly, when countries reach a certain level of post-industrialization and the service sector outgrows the industrial sector, there is a second cultural shift from what Inglehart calls survival values to self-expression (sometimes called emancipative) values. It is these latter values that the authors argue form the necessary base for any stable and efficient democracy.

For Inglehart and his colleagues, this value change is part of a larger process referred to as the human development syndrome. They conceive of the underlying theme of this process as a broadening of human choice. In essence, their theory is that the emergence of objective possibilities of choice in post-industrial societies give rise to the subjective desire for a broadening human choice, represented by the cultural shift from survival to self-expression values. When self-expression values emerge, they generate mass demands for the institutionalization of human
choice – and this is, according to the authors, the main feature of democracy. The most important ingredient, so to speak, in the self-expression values syndrome is referred to as liberty aspirations\(^1\).

Naturally, there are many controversial aspects of this theory. For political theorists, it is perhaps Inglehart’s view of democracy as the institutionalization of human choice that appears most debatable\(^2\). What about political participation, deliberation and other parts that are usually seen as integral to democracy? And, most importantly here, when he speaks of self-expression values, Inglehart confuses two very different notions of liberty\(^3\). Theoretically, he defines their most crucial element as a drive towards liberty of the negative kind; he speaks of a universal need for broadened human choice, the removal of constraints and authority and rising concerns for individual well-being over conformity to the group (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p.259). But what he actually measures bears more resemblance to liberty aspirations in a positive sense; many questions tap the importance people attribute to self-expression and imagination and their refusal to stay in traditionally or socially fixated roles (Ibid., p.137).

Looking at the broader debate on civic attitudes in which Inglehart’s work is situated, we find an abundance of rarely defined concepts with roots in political theory. Both Inglehart himself, his colleagues and his critics use terms as individualism, choice, autonomy, liberty, moral relativism and humanism rather incautiously. Hereby they often add to the empirical confusion over the causes, effects and interpretation of the values that emerge in post-industrial societies.

This paper will examine Isaiah Berlin’s classical distinction between negative and positive liberty. I believe that Berlin captures an important conflict between two closely related yet

\(^1\) Liberty aspirations are measured as the importance a respondent gives to freedom of speech compared to fighting rising prices and to having more of a say in government decisions and at his/her work place compared to maintaining order in the nation. Self-expression values are measured by five items: in addition to liberty aspirations, the respondent’s attitude to homosexuality, his/her subjective well-being, general trust and likelihood to sign petitions or otherwise take part in protests are also taken into account. The self-expression values syndrome is broader and encompasses over thirty issues, including attitudes on the justifiability of prostitution, gender equality, the importance of friends and family, post-materialism over materialistic concerns and the importance of teaching children imagination and tolerance rather than perseverance, to mention but a few (Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

\(^2\) I am here thinking of Barry’s procedural definition for example. Barry is against building ”into democracy any constraints on the content of the outcomes produced, such as substantive equality, respect for human rights…personal liberty, or the rule of law. The only exceptions (and these are significant)are those required by democracy itself as a procedure” (Barry 1991, Democracy and power).

\(^3\) I shall herinafter refer to liberty and freedom synonymously.
different conceptions of liberty, and ultimately a conflict between liberalism and democracy. As we shall see along the way, this has many affinities with the discussion yielded by self-expression values.

Spartans – free or not?

When this paper is being written, a much criticized film has recently appeared in cinemas, telling the story of the famous Battle of Thermopylae, where three hundred Spartans fought a Persian army that allegedly outnumbered them by half a million men or more. In a scene that has struck critics as particularly absurd, Leonidas, king of Sparta, encourages his men to fight for freedom against the mysticism and tyranny of Xerxes, the Persian emperor. The absurdity here is invoked not primarily by the fact that Sparta had slaves just like any other Greek city state, but in the fact that none but the most physically fit infants were allowed to survive in Sparta. Those who did survive were rigorously trained to become the toughest and most skilled of warriors and to look upon philosophy, science and Athenian democracy as signs of unmanliness and weakness. If anything, the Spartan ideals of collective goals over individual ones, authority over individual reason and glorious death in the battle field over compromise or humility, remind us much more of 20th century fascism than of anything we would call liberty. The juxtaposition of “free” Spartans and “tyrannic” Persians appears downright false.

However, if we want to reject the image of the battle at Thermopylae as one between freedom and tyranny, we will inevitably become involved in a discussion of what it is that we mean by liberty. Here we need not only conceptual clarity to sort out what we should mean by the word, but also imagination and understanding of human psychology to acknowledge the different ways the word has actually been used throughout history and may be used today. I believe we find both clarity, imagination and understanding in Isaiah Berlin’s seminal lecture from 1958, called “Two concepts of liberty”. The distinction between negative and positive freedom that he makes here, in the shadow of the Cold War, is a fruitful and almost inescapable point of departure for any discussion of different types of freedom.

Even though Berlin’s obvious aim is to caution against several misuses of the word freedom and to point out where it is confused with other concepts and why this may lead to what he considers the very nemesis of freedom itself, he openly acknowledges the psychological

reasons people might have for making these, as he sees it, tragic mistakes. Of course, it could be argued that Berlin’s psychological ponderings are nothing but condescending ways to diminish the beliefs of people who are not as refined in their arguments as he is; who have, as he says, “a craving for the certainties of childhood” and should be cured from their “metaphysical need” and “moral and political immaturity” (Berlin 1997, p.411). But, even if we take that position, we cannot escape a rather paradoxical observation: Berlin, who is often accused of being blind to the needs and psychological complexities of real human beings, displays an interest in and understanding of the human mind after all in saying that: “Men who have fought for freedom have commonly fought for the right to be governed by themselves or their representatives – sternly governed, if need be, like the Spartans, with little individual liberty, but in a manner which allowed them to participate…in the legislation and administration of their collective lives” (Ibid., p.410). For Berlin, “the non-recognition of this psychological and political fact…has, perhaps, blinded some contemporary liberals to the world in which they live” (Ibid., p.410).5

In what follows, I shall try to interpret more precisely what Berlin means and what his allegations are against positive liberty. I am thus trying to reconstruct Berlin’s argument against positive liberty, not to say that his identification of negative liberty as truly liberal is coherent or right. Although he puts great effort into advocating one of the two major notions of freedom that he presents, it is just as an integral part of his project to outline these two strands of thought and present their differences and similarities so that we can recognize them in the real world, and it is this latter task that is my concern here.

For now, let me outline two crude definitions of what Berlin means by negative and positive liberty. These are to be regarded as working definitions and along the road I will specify them further. Negative liberty is the answer to the the question “What is the area within which the subject…is or should be left to do what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?” (Ibid., p.393). Those who like Berlin value negative liberty mean that all coercion is “bad as such” and that all non-coercion “is good as such”, although they need not necessarily mean that it is “the only good”. (Ibid.,p.397). Positive liberty answers a different question “What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?”. The positive notion of freedom is thus about self-direction, being a subject “moved by conscious purposes” (Ibid.,p.393).

5 See for example Taylor’s critique of Berlin in “What is wrong with negative liberty?”, year?.

In sum, negative liberty measures non-interference within the private realm of the individual and positive liberty measures the amount of individual self-control, the extent to which he is his own master. Although Berlin acknowledges that these two notions seem to be “at no great logical distance from each other”, yet he stresses that they “historically developed in divergent directions not always by logically reputable steps, until, in the end, they came into direct conflict with each other” (Ibid., p.397).

**Distinguishing between distinctions**

One reason why I find it logical to use Berlin’s distinction as a starting point when discussing Inglehart’s self-expression values is that Berlin, as opposed to some of his predecessors, separates between two different kinds of *individualist* freedom (Ibid., p.408). As John Gray has noted, both positive and negative freedom are essentially individualist (Gray 1995, p.19-20).

The Spartan mistake, as I shall call it, is to think of freedom as collective rather than individualist. The collectivist vision of freedom is what Constant terms “the liberty of the ancients”, and he contrasts it with the individualist “liberty of the moderns”6. Although Berlin discusses what I call the Spartan mistake, it is not really at the heart of his positive-negative distinction; in fact, Berlin is careful not to include a collectivist conception of freedom in either of the two.

It is also important to clarify that Berlin uses the positive-negative distinction in a distinctly different way from the philosopher who first used it, the Hegelian T.H. Green. Aside from the fact that Green advocated positive over negative liberty whereas Berlin takes the opposite stand, their greatest difference is in their use of the terminology. What Green referred to as the positive-negative distinction is a split between what we may term *effective freedom* and *formal freedom* (Berlin 1998, p.416; Crowder 2004, p.67). I believe we can say that Berlin’s concept of freedom (which encompasses both positive and negative, as I shall soon explain) is from Green’s ability perspective a necessary, but not sufficient, definition of freedom (Simhony 1993, p.43.) This is because Green differentiates between a stand where freedom is considered *only* as non-interference with someone’s desire or choice (both positive and negative liberty are to be found here on Berlin’s account) and a stand where freedom is considered to consist of

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6 Although S. Holmes has argued that Constant’s distinction is really between two positive conceptions of freedom (Simhony 1993).
non-interference and enabling conditions, i.e. ensuring not only the absence of obstacles but also that there is a capacity to act on a desire or choice (Ibid., p.48). Whichever stand we take on the effective-formal issue raised by Green, we also have to include Berlin’s non-interference in our definition of freedom (Ibid., p.37).

Understandably, it is rather common to mix traits of Berlin’s negative-positive distinction with those of Green’s formal-effective distinction, because of the shared terminology. An example of this confusion is found in an interesting essay on the subject of autonomy by Göran Möller, who commits two understandable, yet what I believe to be erroneous, conclusions on the subject. He refers to positive freedom as substantial and negative freedom as formal, whereas he is actually discussing them as effective versus formal freedom (Möller 2003, p.81-82). In my view, he describes the distinction he tries to make by using the wrong words and furthermore he also mistakenly assumes this distinction to capture the negative-positive issue correctly.

This may seem as an exercise in excessive pedantry, but I believe it is necessary to make this point for the sake of clarity. First of all: the issue of formal versus effective freedom should in my opinion be held separate from formal versus substantial freedom. The former is about what it is that we need in order to realize one specific ideal of liberty (whether it is a positive or a negative ideal in Berlin’s idiom); should we or should we not include the empirical conditions for its realization, conditions such as a certain level of income, culture, opportunities, alternatives, education etc.? This is the distinction made by Green and it is also the one that Möller seems to have in mind. It is another thing, I believe, to talk of formal as opposed to substantial freedom, because then we are discussing whether something is a formal “empty” definition that can be filled with any normative ideal or whether it is already filled with ideological content and is in fact what we might call a conception (I will return to the difference between concepts and conceptions).

When Möller believes to have shown that negative freedom is only a necessary but insufficient condition for proper freedom, and that it should be combined with a condition of existing valuable alternatives to choose from, it is because he is a believer in a positive ideal of freedom as choosing autonomously between different values. Although his observation might be correct that we need certain conditions to pertain before we can realize an ideal of autonomy, this critique should not be directed towards the ideal of negative liberty. One cannot reasonably criticize an ideal for not being sensitive enough for the conditions that are needed to live up to an entirely separate ideal – that is simply off the mark. Finally, Möller hereby
misses an important point that Green makes. The formal-effective distinction may very well contribute something to our analysis of negative liberty in Berlin’s terminology, but not in the way that Möller assumes. Imagine that we are firm believers in the overriding importance of negative liberty. There might very well be situations in which we realize that for an agent to be truly free from external constraints, we cannot only consider the absence of external obstacles but must also take into account whether this agent has the external capabilities to do whatever he wants (i.e. education, economic means, a certain minimum of physical abilities etc.). This position would be an expression of both a negative and an effective conception of liberty and shows that far from being incompatible, these two positions may be significantly interrelated (Simhony 1993, p.38).

The upshot of this is that Green’s concerns, as Möller’s, come logically second to Berlin’s negative-positive distinction. We can worry about whether to include the necessary conditions for certain ideals of liberty to be adequately realized only after we have chosen which ideal we are interested in. How we define the non-interference part of a definition of liberty is thus essential whichever of Green’s alternatives we go for.
The following model is a sum-up of what has been said so far. Note that I have replaced Green’s use of *negative* and *positive* for *formal* and *effective* liberty:

**1. Constant:**

![Diagram](attachment:image1.png)

**2. Berlin:**

![Diagram](attachment:image2.png)

**3. Green:**

![Diagram](attachment:image3.png)

**Internal and external impediments**

I shall now leave aside the relations between Berlin’s distinction and those of others. Instead, I shall take a closer look on where it is more specifically that the two notions of liberty he discusses diverge. In the working definitions I gave earlier, we saw that according to Berlin, the essential difference between positive and negative freedom lies in that the former is concerned with the source of control over the individual and the latter with his area of free action.

I suggest we look at these notions as two ways of defining non-interference. On Berlin’s account of positive liberty, non-interference is seen as concerning the self mastering other parts of the self. In other words, what distinguishes positive liberty ideals is that they count not only external but also *internal* impediments as interference with the individual. What seems to define negative ideals of freedom for Berlin is, on the contrary, the idea that only *external* obstruction qualifies as interference. This position seems to make sense since if the individual is per definition his own master in a certain area whenever this area is free from external interference, it is of course logical not to include self-mastery as a condition for freedom in the negative sense. In fact, Berlin seems to question the very assumptions that underlie any talk of self-mastery. When we say that a man can choose not to make the best of himself, he asks, what self are we then talking about? (Berlin 1997, p.416; Crowder 2004, p.80).
The difference between those who think that we are free only when we do whatever we want, and those who refuse to call anyone free until they can control their wants and master their selves, goes back to the very classics in political theory. Plato seems to have been convinced that one is never truly free as long as one is a slave to one’s passions (Plato 2000, p.373). Many after him have invoked the image of tyranny versus freedom as a battle taking place within each individual, between one part of the self pictured as a cruel tyrant and other parts of the self that are being held hostages by that inner tyrant. For Berlin, this is an image upheld by the notion of reason, the same idea that later came to impregnate the Enlightenment and that is at the core of the thinking of philosophers like Kant, Rousseau and Fichte (Berlin 1997, p.397).

Berlin juxtaposes the Platonists and the Enlightenment view of reason with what he calls “the classical English political philosophers” (Ibid., p.393). He especially mentions Hobbes, and this should come as no surprise. Hobbes was one of the first who, rather deliberately it seems, challenged the prevailing views on voluntary acts as only those that are governed by “rational appetite” (Hobbes 1994, p.33). For him, any act, even one motivated by fear, was to be considered free unless the individual was exposed to external impediments (Ibid., p.79). As opposed to the imagery invoked above of the inner conflict between desire and reason, Hobbes seems to imagine people as bundles of desires, chaotic rather than engaged in a fight between two essential inner forces (Ibid., p.34-5). Indeed, if desires and “inclinations” are all there is, it makes no sense to say that actions generated by fear, passion or envy are somehow less worth than other actions. In fact, it would seem peculiar from Hobbes’ point of view to talk of any other actions than those motivated by desires, or as he calls them, “appetites”. This is also why it makes sense for Hobbes to say that people can voluntarily agree to a contract with Leviathan out of fear for death. For Hobbes, fear, just as lust, ambition or any other appetite is a motive as good as any and does not make the action that it generates any less voluntary than had it been the result of reasonable deliberation (Ibid., p.34).

It seems clear from this that what we have here are two disparate views of human nature that in turn generate two different views on what freedom is. But before we go deeper into these different psychologies and what their consequences are, I think it is necessary to sort out what we mean by different views or notions of freedom. What is it that Berlin allows for within the
confines of his concept of freedom, what falls outside the scope of freedom and what is his normative position?

**Two valuable conceptions of liberty**

Both Plato and Hobbes appear confident that they are not just using one specific kind of freedom, but that they are in fact talking of the only freedom worthy of its name. In other words, they seem to be using entirely different definitions or concepts of freedom. This stand is also often attributed to Berlin (Crowder 2004, p.79). It might seem as a logical step to assume that Berlin, who speaks favourably of Hobbes, also sides with his definition and rejects that of Plato or any other positive definition of freedom as improper usage of the word. But I believe this conclusion would be mistaken.

In line with Gray and Crowder, I believe that Berlin acknowledges both positive and negative freedom as legitimate positions on freedom (Ibid., p.69; Gray 1995, p.17). Implicit in Berlin’s argument is that what really separates these two views is not that one of them speaks of liberty and the other of something else, but that they stand for different substantial conceptions of liberty.

I believe it is helpful here to take the advice of H.L.A. Hare, who tells us to think of the idea of justice - a concept that is often considered to be essentially contested - as partly constant and partly empty (Hart, The concept of law, 1961, p.156). The constant is what Rawls refers to as the concept whereas we might choose to fill it with varying conceptions (Rawls, A theory of justice, 1972, p.5). In this terminology, it is more clarifying to say that Berlin’s positive-negative distinction is actually concerned with two different conceptions of freedom within the confines of one concept, rather than with different definitions or concepts of freedom altogether (Hansson 1990, p.16). Although Berlin did give his lecture the title “Two concepts of liberty”, in the text he often refers to the positive-negative distinction as one between conceptions (Berlin 1997, p.396, p.402). From here on, I will thus use the term conception or ideal rather than concept.

Not only does Berlin acknowledge positive liberty ideals as ideas concerning real liberty, he does not even deny that they might express valuable ideals (Berlin 1997, p.413). In fact, I believe he endorses both conceptions of liberty, but stresses that they are often at odds with each other. When we have to choose between them, we should not choose positive liberty.
because it is dangerous; it opens the door for authoritarian distortions that may jeopardize all kinds of liberty, even positive liberty, in the end (Crowder 2004, p.75, Gray 1995, p.17). Thus, Berlin’s normative position is not that he denies the value of positive liberty ideals in general but that negative liberty trumps positive liberty whenever there is a conflict between the two.

But is it not inconsistent to say that both negative and positive liberty are valuable although they are often at odd with each other? It might be for someone else, but Berlin is a pluralist and therefore it makes perfect sense to say the above (Both Crowder and Gray agree). For him, life consists in tragic choices between different incommensurable goods; Gray refers to it as “agonistic liberalism” (Gray 1993, p.64). When we find ourselves choosing between two incommensurable ideals of freedom, however, Berlin thinks the negative conception should override the positive one in the political sphere. But this is, as far as I can see, because of pragmatic reasons; not because negative liberty is somehow essentially a better good than positive liberty.

None of this should of course be taken to imply that Berlin allows the concept of freedom to encompass whatever we want. It is evident that Berlin does not want us to, as he eloquently puts it, “confound liberty with her sisters, equality and fraternity” (Berlin 1997, p.407). As we saw earlier when discussing Green and the formal-effective distinction, Berlin is in fact very careful to draw a line between non-interference and ability; or, as we might like to call it more broadly, between freedom and power (Simhony 1993, p.42). As I have already noted, both positive and negative freedom are about non-interference and nothing else, in the sense that they essentially require the absence of obstacles. The difference between the two is about what counts as obstacles and to what.

Another way to see this is by using MacCallum’s triadic concept to specify both the negative and positive conceptions. In what follows, I shall argue that, far from breaking down Berlin’s distinction as MacCallum himself thinks, it is his triadic concept that gives us just the right tool for detecting the significant differences between negative and positive liberty.

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7 Just as Gaus for example has noted, it is questionable whether Berlin’s pluralism really gives him reasons to endorse the negative concept of liberty. But I am here not concerned with whether Berlin is right or not; all I am trying to do is to give as accurate a picture as possible of how he reasoned. Maybe we just have two realize that far from entailing each other, as Berlin thought, pluralism and liberalism are incompatible and we must reject one of them. However, the possibility that Berlin’s own position is incoherent does not entail that the critique he aims at the positive conception of liberty is off the mark (Gaus 2003).

8 This is a parallel to Simhony’s analysis of Green’s positive-negative distinction in a triadic form (Simhony 1993, p.31).
MacCallum’s triadic concept of freedom

MacCallum criticizes Berlin for constructing a false opposition between two movements within one concept: freedom to and freedom from (Hansson 1990). McCallum is right, I believe, to question the plausibility of this latter distinction, but wrong in attributing it to Berlin. At least, this is not a very generous reading of Berlin.

It is true that Berlin once refers to his distinction as one between freedom to and freedom from, but this is inconsistent with the rest of what he says (Berlin 1997, p.396; Crowder 2004, p.77). In fact, Berlin also specifies his use of freedom from as the “absence of interference” to pursue “our own good in our own way” (Berlin 1997, p.395). This, far from being a definition of one movement within a concept, is a specification of three parts of one concept, quite compatible with MacCallum’s own view.

The confusion over freedom to and freedom from partly arises from the fact that these are formal categories, so the distinction between the two (if it can be upheld at all as MacCallum rightly questions) does not really concern the substantial distinction between positive and negative freedom. Freedom from focuses on \( x \) being free from constraints with regard to \( y \) (but we must still specify what the constraints concern=\( x \)). Freedom to focuses on \( x \) being free to do \( z \) (but the freedom of \( x \) must still be further specified with regard to whom it is held=\( y \)). Just as MacCallum points out, there is nothing inherently incompatible about the two, they just highlight different movements within the same triadic concept of freedom.

In line with what I have argued above, I believe positive and negative freedom are both substantial notions in the sense that they both define the content of a concept, but differently. The difference between them is not that one is “empty” and the other is not. If that would be the case, then negative liberty would not define the actors, objects of or obstacles to freedom,

\[ \text{Gray takes a third stand on this issue: he argues that MacCallum is wrong but because his triadic concept is misguided. On Gray’s reading, Berlin rightly uses a dyadic concept of freedom, according to which it is not necessary to specify what it is that one wants to do with one’s freedom. However, I believe there are several passages where Berlin does specify the object of freedom, which warrants my interpretation of his conceptions as possible to fit into a triadic concept. Thus, instead on concluding that Berlin favours one view over the other, perhaps we should conclude that he is ambiguous on the subject. Nevertheless, I do not believe such a conclusion would make my triadic analysis incorrect. After all, if Berlin gives us enough information to put his liberties into a triadic concept, it is of course also possible to put them in a dyadic concept, but we risk losing information. In line with Crowder, I argue that the best answer from Berlin’s position is to show that both the negative and positive conceptions are consistent with a triadic concept (Crowder 2004, p.77).} \]
only positive freedom would do this. But in Berlin’s version, both negative and positive freedom do define all of the above, but differently\(^\text{10}\).

In fact, I agree with Crowder that the best way to see the relevant differences between positive and negative liberty in Berlin’s sense is to apply MacCallum’s triadic concept on them (Crowder 2004, p.78). As I anticipated above, MacCallum’s concept needs to be filled with content on three points: who is free with regard to whom and to do what? Let us say \(x\) is the “who”, \(y\) is the “whom” and \(z\) is the “what”. Then negative freedom is about \(x\)’s freedom from external coercion \((y_1)\) to do or not to do whatever he wants \((z_1)\). Positive freedom on the other hand is \(x\)’s freedom from both external and internal coercion \((y_1\) and \(y_2)\) to exercise his capacities of will and reason \((z_2)\). Positive freedom thus differs from negative in that it defines both obstacles (with regard to whom or what one is free to do something) and the very object (what it is one is free to do) differently. For advocates of positive liberty, it is not enough not to be coerced by external forces but one can also be coerced by internal forces. And it is not enough to say that one is free to do whatever one wants or wishes but one is only free to do what one really wills with reason. Finally, we should perhaps also say that negative and positive liberty ideals define \(x\), the agent, differently. For negative liberty ideals, the agent \(x\) is actually \(x_1\), the “empirical self”. Nothing in his empirical self is considered more or less true and there are no different selves to divide. In the case of positive liberty, the agent \(x\) is conceived of as \(x_2\), a rational being who can set his desires and other irrational sentiments aside. Obviously, any element of irrationality is not part of \(x_2\) but rather of \(y_2\) which interferes with him. (Crowder 2004, p.78).

Two different views of human nature

The above analysis confirms that we are dealing with two very different views of human nature. Berlin and other advocates of negative freedom in his sense implicitly assume that individuals are always masters over themselves, or rather that it does not even make sense to speak of individuals as mastering themselves, since the human nature cannot be split into

\(^{10}\) Perhaps this is most obvious in the following passage: "The essence of the notion of liberty, both in the 'positive' and the 'negative' senses, is the holding off of something or someone – of others who trespass on my field or assert their authority over me, or of obsessions, fears, neuroses, irrational forces – intruders and despots of one kind or another" (Berlin 1997, p.409).

\(^{11}\) Crowder talks about \(z_2\) as "the realization of the 'true' or authentic self". However, I believe this is to collapse autonomy and authenticity into one idea, when in fact these should be kept separate. Just as Beckman has noted, the fact that realizing one’s authentic self may be done autonomously does not automatically make these two phenomena synonymous. One might very well autonomously choose not to be authentic or be authentic non-autonomously (Beckman 2003, p.72-32).
different layers with some parts considered more “true” than others (Berlin 1997, p.398). Whatever an individual thinks that she wants is per definition what she wants and that is all there is to it (Crowder 2004, p.73-4).

But as I suggested earlier, many would disagree with Berlin. One cannot be free, says Rousseau, if one is enslaved by one’s desires. The essential freedom for Rousseau is moral freedom, and moral freedom can only be attained when man is master over his own instincts (Rousseau 1994, p.33-4). Of course, having heard Berlin’s objections to this use of freedom, we can say that we see where this is going and simply refuse to board Rousseau’s positive ship since it is clearly heading towards the abyss of tyranny. But I do not think it is as easy as it may seem to reject Rousseau’s understanding of freedom. Let me illustrate this by returning to the Spartans. Is it really possible for us to speak of them as free to pursue their own good to the extent that their private sphere was not invaded by collective decisions? Would we not agree that even in cases where they were legally and physically free to do as they pleased, they were still unfree to choose their own good for themselves since they were perhaps brainwashed as infants to prepare for glory on the battle field? Does it really make sense to say that, to the degree noone else right then interfered with their way of life, they were free to choose whichever life they wanted - including that of the quiet potter, or the lonely philosopher, or the artistic sculptor?

But if we were to coerce any “Spartan” of today, in the name of freedom, to flee his country and be liberated from the ideals he was brought up with, Berlin would accuse us of committing a “monstrous impersonation” in claiming that we are in fact making him more free. The monstrosity would consist in us presuming to know what is good for the Spartan better than he himself does, and to argue that to coerce him to do this would in fact not be coercing him at all; since it is perfectly in line with what he should really want. Moreover, according to Berlin it is not only Rousseau’s ominous words of the possibility to force people to be free that express this “monstrous impersonation”; this reasoning is what lies “at the heart of all political theories of self-realization” (Berlin 1997, p.398).

To sum-up my discussion of Berlin so far, I have argued that Berlin distinguishes between two sides of individualist freedom, also called “the liberty of the moderns” by Constant. Berlin’s positive and negative notions of freedom are prior however to Green’s distinction between formal and effective freedom. Also, I argued that Berlin’s two freedoms are not the same as
freedom from and freedom to, but that they should be seen as two substantially different conceptions that can both be fitted into MacCallum’s triadic concept. By using this method, I found their most important differences to lie in their views on human nature. On one side we have negative liberty that sees the human personality as impossible to split up; on the other positive liberty that conceives of man as “divided against himself”, between reason and desires (Berlin 1997, p.398).

What is wrong with positive liberty?
All this talk of positive liberty as valuable should by no means diminish the suspicion that Berlin believes that it warrants. In his view, there is definitely something wrong with positive liberty. Now, since we have settled that positive liberty is not wrong because it is not liberty, then what reasons remain for us to be doubtful of it? Crowder identifies three theses in Berlin’s argument, and I shall quickly recapitulate each. As opposed to Crowder, I have put them in order of graveness, starting with the mildest and ending with the worst form of abuse that Berlin believes can be made of positive liberty (Crowder 2004).

1. The confusion thesis
One common mistake is, according to Berlin, to confound positive liberty with her ”sisters, equality and fraternity” (Berlin, p.407). This is because positive liberty is about self-direction rather than just the free area given to the empirical self (negative freedom) and thus easily gets tangled up with issues of identity and belongingess, i.e. questions that deal with what my self is or should be. Berlin argues that when we talk of social freedom or identity we are in fact outside the scope of both positive and negative liberty, but entering the separate grounds of solidarity, status and recognition (Ibid.,p.408). In fact, Berlin seems sympathetic to the needs people may have to avoid “being ignored, or patronized, or despised, or being taken too much for granted – in short, not being treated as an individual” (Ibid.,p.407). Nevertheless, he is adamant that these are not demands for liberty in any sense but “a hankering for status and recognition” (Ibid. p?).

My interpretation is that Berlin does not want us to stretch the meaning of liberty to encompass all things that we hold to be good, because then we risk losing track of what for him is perhaps the most important insight: namely that human life is a tragic choice between several incommensurable goods. If we call all values by the name of liberty we do not see that
we are constantly forced to trade-offs between them. Berlin realizes that in reality we may want to trade in some liberty for other ideals such as equality or justice and he seems even to approve of this; but it is fundamental that when we do so we are conscious of the trade-off involved. We should by no means trick ourselves to believing that we are in fact increasing all of our goods, including liberty, without making any sacrifices at all (Ibid., p.394).

2. Monism

Secondly, Berlin is highly suspicious of any ideals of positive liberty per se because he believes them to be based on the false assumption that there is one single moral order which tells us which life is the "truly" right for each person. In fact, to speak of suspicion might be a euphemism; Berlin attacks the idea of reason converging on one single moral truth with unmistakeable fervor. He has nothing but contempt for any utopianism consisting of a belief in a harmonious order of values or in a "final solution" for humanity (Ibid., p.412). As Crowder phrases it, for Berlin "positive liberty is no more than the tip of the authoritarian iceberg" (Crowder 2004, p.73). This is only to be expected. Berlin echoes Hobbes in that for him, the natural state of man is constant conflict, if not between men then between values (Berlin 1997, p.403). He is a moral pluralist, whereas positive liberty ideals have as their common denominator some degree of moral monism. Berlin's view of politics is "empirical, as opposed to metaphysical"; a view that he shares with the later John Rawls and several other so-called Post-Enlightenment liberals (Berlin 1997, p.417). In short, the familiar idea here is that there will always be reasonable disagreement on what the good life consists in. This is the very reason we should opt for a liberal society, where each individual is given a wide space of negative liberty on religion, morality and ideology - in sum, a state where choice is maximized as a sort of meta-value (Crowder 2004, p.75).

3. The inversion thesis

Finally, what Berlin fears most is that positive liberty can lend itself to becoming inverted into the very antithesis of liberty: authoritarianism. The reason for this lies in the very defining mark of positive notions of liberty, namely that the personality can be divided into what Berlin calls "the transcendent, dominant controller, and the empirical bundle of desires and passions to be disciplined and brought to heel" (Berlin 1997, p.398). The step from here to authoritarianism is not necessary, but Berlin insists that enough damage can be done by merely

12 The difference is that whereas Berlin thinks this is a metaethical truth, Rawls only claims to observe an empirical fact.
opening up for the logical possibility that an individual can be wrong about what he truly wants (Crowder 2004, p.70).13

Since it can be agreed that it is the political consequences of positive freedom that concern Berlin the most, I think this is an issue that deserves to be dealt with more in depth. In what follows, I shall try to elucidate what he means by stating the difference between positive and negative liberty as a conflict between democracy and liberalism14 (Gray 1995, p.22; Berlin 1997, p.396, p.411).

Democracy versus liberalism?
It is obvious that Berlin prefers liberalism to democracy – but what is it that makes him think he has to choose between them? His observation that we should not equate freedom with democracy does not logically entail a conflict between the two, or does it (Ibid., p.414)?

“Democracy may disarm a given oligarchy…but it can still crush individuals as mercilessly as any previous ruler” (Ibid., p.411). Berlin seems to think that the two conceptions of liberty are indeed the root of a possible conflict between liberalism and democracy. I believe he has a good point here, although his position does by no means represent all liberals.

If we go back to the classics yet again, we can see that the two conceptions of liberty yield two contending institutional arrangements. A brief comparison of Hobbes’ notion of negative liberty with Rousseau’s ideal of positive freedom (although Berlin would also argue that Rousseau mixes it up with other ideas) shows that it is indeed the different definitions of liberty that ultimately make the difference between how a citizen’s life may be jeopardized. Hobbes’ Leviathan can ask anything of the citizen except to sacrifice his own life. There will always be a part of the individual that Leviathan cannot control – his private sphere in more

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13 Of course, for authoritarianism to come about, we would need to couple this with the idea that someone actually has better insight into the true selves of others than they themselves do, i.e. that we are not all mistaken; and this is of course alien to many ideals of positive liberty.

14 Obviously, I can not do justice to the subject of a possible conflict between liberalism and democracy in this short paper. My focus has been on the two different conceptions of liberty rather than the institutional arrangements that follow from them. Besides, Berlin acknowledges that the links from ideals to politics are not necessarily logical but historical (p.396).
modern words. In fact, it is in order to protect exactly this negative freedom, freedom as a sacred space to do whatever he wishes (and, ultimately, mere survival) that the individual agrees to Leviathan in the first place.

For Rousseau, however, we must agree to *le contrat social* in order to be fully men; the purpose is not to achieve a sacred space of free action but to become our own lawgivers. In line with his positive conception of freedom, we are not free until we exchange instinct and desire for duty and morality and this can only be done by giving up our own wills entirely to the General Will. For Rousseau it is thus legitimate to ask an individual to sacrifice his life for the General Will (Rousseau 1994, p.48-49).

In ordinary language, the paramount difference is that the General Will is per definition something good which we do not need protection from; whereas Leviathan is per definition a monster that we need to set up inviolable boundaries against. It is in Rousseau’s mistake to equate authority with the good that the danger lies, according to Berlin.

It is this, as I see it, that the classical conflict between liberalism and democracy amounts to. If we give higher priority to being our own masters, to who governs us, rather than to which extent we are being governed; we always risk curtailing what liberals hold should be sacred no matter what. Naturally, many a liberal might disagree here. But I do believe Berlin has a good point in juxtaposing liberalism and democracy as relying on two logically, if not conflicting, then at least distinct ideas. For him, positive liberty rights, i.e. democratic rights of participation, have to be considered as valuable beacuse they are “a means for protecting what they (liberals) hold to be an ultimate value, namely individual – ‘negative’ – liberty” (Berlin 1997, p.412). The opposite position would of course be to hold that negative liberty rights of freedom of opinion and religion are valuable as means for expressing or protecting the ultimate democratic value – ‘positive’ – liberty, in the form of self-direction, self-mastery, laundering preferences or simply Millian self-perfection.

**Autonomy - a positive or negative liberty?**

Before I conclude, there is one last issue that needs to be settled: What is wrong with the ideal of personal autonomy? Is it or is it not a form of a conception of positive liberty? I am here thinking of the ideal that MacIntyre calls our specific human ability to be “an independent
It is clear that Berlin presents autonomy as a dangerous form of positive liberty, a “metaphysical blanket” that man throws over “self-deceit or deliberate hypocrisy” (Ibid., p.414). But it is equally obvious that choosing freely constitutes an essential part of the negative freedom he defends. In fact, it is exactly because choice is some sort of meta-value in his pluralist conception of morality that the state should be liberal – it needs to maximize choice in one way or the other. But if this is so, then what is it that makes Berlin dismiss autonomy?

I believe it is easy to be tricked by the way Berlin extols choice. Indeed, Crowder draws the conclusion that far from being incompatible with Berlin’s pluralism, the positive ideal of personal autonomy should in fact be consistent with it, and perhaps even be considered as a necessary implication of it. (Crowder 2004, p.86). I can see why this would seem logical. Autonomy is clearly not very likely to be confused with something else (the confusion thesis) and on the face of it, it is hard to see how the idea that each man should be an end in himself could be inverted into authority (the inversion thesis). But, whereas it is true that autonomy does not lend itself well to confusion, it does fall into both of the other traps that I accounted for earlier: the ideal of personal autonomy relies on monistic assumptions (monism) and these assumptions may lead it to become, after all, inverted into the opposite of negative liberty, i.e. authority (the inversion thesis).

The crucial component of the ideal of personal autonomy, the very essence that makes it into an ideal or a virtue, is that it is a conception of the good – but one of second order. Crowder fails to see that these conceptions are still ideals. Although they are more “open-ended” than first order ideals, they are still not open-ended enough (Ibid., p.85-6). For Berlin, just as Crowder recognises, it is the possibility to split the personality into two that opens up for authoritarianism and that therefore should be avoided. And the ideal of personal autonomy relies on exactly such a splitting up of the personality, which Berlin is quite openly suspicious of. Although it is true that holding an ideal of personal autonomy does not allow for the

\[15\] I realize that, for a longer discussion, this ideal would need to be defined more precisely, but for the present purposes I think this is a sufficient account of it.
interference within people’s life plans as such, as Crowder notes, he fails to see that it does warrant an interference with the way people choose their life plans. If people do not choose autonomously enough, they might have to be forced to be autonomous. And here we are, full circle, right at the feet of Rousseau yet again.

John Gray is more perceptive in this sense than Crowder. He refers to Berlin’s so-called meta-value of choice as self-creation. For Gray, it is clear that self-creation is different from autonomy. Within the liberal society Berlin envisages, one can very well choose to be a nun, a passionate painter or an alcoholic (Gray 1995, p.32). But arguably, none of the above lifestyles are compatible with the ideal of autonomy, since they each mean giving up either the possibility of future choice, or that of self-knowledge and reasoned self-reflection. Just as Gray notes, Berlin here agrees with Rawls (and we might add others, such as Larmore or Barry) that a liberal society cannot be founded upon a certain conception of the good – even if this is the second-order conception of the good as autonomy. It is still important for Berlin, and this is probably because of his pluralism, that the liberal state does not force people to be autonomous and does not limit the range of life-styles that can be chosen to concern only those chosen autonomously. There are non-autonomously chosen but still valuable life-styles; presumably, the life of the nun and the artist would qualify here. There are also non-autonomous non-valuable life-styles which we should still be able to choose; most probably, the life of the alcoholic is an example of this. Gray puts the point as follows: “…for Berlin, the justification of a liberal society cannot be primarily that it harbours liberal individuals…that is to say, autonomous subjects having all the powers and capacities that autonomy implies, but rather that it permits a far greater variety of forms of self-creation through choice-making” (Ibid., p.35-6).

I conclude that for Berlin, the ideal of personal autonomy is a kind of positive liberty. Moreover, it is wrong to think that Berlin could be persuaded into including autonomy as a part of his pluralist outlook. Far from entailing autonomy, pluralism as Berlin conceives of it is often in conflict with autonomy. It is essential for pluralism that we can choose life-styles whichever way we want, including non-autonomously, and most likely, a liberal state founded on an ideal of autonomy would not permit such life-styles or ways of choosing life-styles.

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16 For some interesting suggestions as to what it actually might mean for a state to be based on the ideal of personal autonomy and which life-styles might be banned, see Gray 1996, p.243.
Summary

I have argued that Berlin warns us against positive liberty for three major reasons. First, it opens up for confusions with other concepts and this blinds us of the necessary trade-offs we are often forced to make between incommensurable values. Secondly, it relies on false metaethical premises - monism instead of pluralism. This monism is what opens up for the third and gravest abuse of positive liberty: its inversion into authority. I also argued that the ideal of personal autonomy should be understood as one such positive conception of liberty that is open for inversion because of its second order monism. I briefly considered some possibilities that Berlin would object to; a society founded on the ideal of personal autonomy would probably end up with some coercive policies after all, because it would most probably disqualify many choices of life-styles that were non-autonomously made. Now let us turn to the question: How does all of this apply to Inglehart?

Back to self-expression values

It should now be clear that Inglehart confuses two very different conceptions of liberty. First of all, as I noted in passing, he equates democracy with the institutionalization of negative freedom – a confusion that Berlin explicitly warns us against. Secondly, and most importantly, Inglehart and his colleagues talk of self-expression, emancipation, autonomy, self-realization, individualism and the maximization of human choice as synonyms. But it is difficult to see how moral pluralism, the removal of authority, the relaxation of social norms, tolerance and acceptance of out-groups, interest in gender equality and the environment, a drive towards more autonomously chosen life-styles and less materialism - that are all measures in the larger syndrome of self-expression values – could possibly form a coherent whole, with one single underlying aspiration for more choice.

Part of the explanation for why Inglehart makes these mistakes is that his value dimension of self-expression versus survival values is empirically close to the individualism-collectivism dimension found by the Dutch anthropologist Hofstede and the autonomy-hierarchy dimension used by the Israeli psychologist Schwartz (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p.292). All of the above seem confident, although to different extents, that these empirical correlations testify to one theoretically coherent whole.
But these presumed similarities between self-expression values, individualism, autonomy and moral relativism have made some scholars doubtful of their purported consequences for democracy. Flanagan and Lee, for example, prefer to talk of libertarian and ego-centric rather than self-expression values (Flanagan and Lee, year?). Their libertarian measure largely overlaps with self-expression values, yet they offer a different interpretation of their civic consequences. They argue that these same attitudes might in some sense be detrimental to democracy and produce alienation, anomie and more political violence.

Because Inglehart and colleagues agree with their critics that self-expression values are more or less the same as individualist and relativist values, they are left with no good defense (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p.292). They simply deny the “communitarian” accusations and call self-expression values human-centric, backing up their reading with nothing but rather airy claims to the well-known fact that only self-interest can serve as a proper source of altruism. But why should we think of self-expression values as human-centric when they clearly express high concerns for subjective well-being, pleasure, exciting life and other phenomena often thought of as signs of hedonism?

I believe self-expression values might in fact be hiding two diverging and perhaps even opposing trends that are only related in their timing and by the fact that the post-industrial information society is conducive to both. The fact that they are significantly correlated at the aggregate level does not necessarily entail that they are different operationalisations of the same underlying, latent value dimension. My suggestion is that there might be both a trend towards more positive liberty ideals and one towards more negative liberty ideals. Thus, at an aggregate level, they may empirically appear together, but on an individual level they have little to do with each other.

**Implications**

This paper points towards some possible mistakes that Inglehart and colleagues might be making. Here, I have gathered a few suggestions of which they might be:

1. Mixing autonomy with individualism/ego-centrism. This is probably done because it is not recognized that the ideal of autonomy, just as Berlin observes, relies on a belief in human reason and the necessity to liberate oneself from inner constraints. This drive is very different from what I would call autonomy as a first-order ideal, namely the ideal of loneliness or
external independence. This ideal is about liberating yourself from any close bonds and relationships with other humans, such as it is idealized by for example Thoreau (Beckman). Indeed, Hofstede however measures something that comes closer to this ideal in his Individualism index; but it is not as present in the measures of self-expression values. The possibility that there is an emerging ideal of internal independence would in fact explain better than Inglehart can why parts of the self-expression values syndrome do not entail egocentrism in life and politics after all.

2. Hedonism is conceived of as part of autonomy. Valuing an exciting life or pleasure are positions that are closer to Berlin’s view of the human mind than the Platonist or Enlightenment view expressed in the ideal of reason and internal independence. In fact, there are many reasons for keeping these apart and even conceiving of them as two opposites17.

3. Self-expression values might often be confused with equality and support of a redistributive welfare state. Flanagan and Lee are surprised to find that they are linked with classically leftist attitudes and high trust in unions, since they see them as the very nemesis of solidarity or altruism. Nevertheless, it is a fact that these values are most spread in welfare states like Sweden. Berlin recognizes that most men do not fight for negative liberty but for virtue, equality or some other belief. He also tells us to be wary of confusing liberty with equality. Since self-expression values nurture political activism, might it be that we are in fact making such a confusion of liberty “with her sisters, equality and fraternity”?

4. Self-expression values are seen as a move away from authority and towards pluralism. For Berlin, it would be highly questionable to call the awakening of autonomy the same thing as a move away from authority. Instead, it represents the advent of a new authority: reason. Also, to speak of pluralism is perhaps not as warranted as it may seem. Are we perhaps witnessing a rise in the ideology of self-direction rather than in what Gray would call self-creation? And if so, what would this mean for democracy and liberalism and the conflict between the two? Perhaps self-expression values are not that liberal (in Berlin’s sense) after all?

17 Shalom Schwartz is on the right track when he separates intellectual and affective autonomy. But this distinction might be even further developed and the differences between the two brought further into light.
Conclusions

My argument here is that a clearer view of the theoretical ideas that the value dimensionalists are dealing with can help us solve at least two important empirical puzzles. First of all, if we have a clearer picture of what the latent values dimensions are and how well the manifest value dimensions capture them, we might find useful hints in theory as to what the mechanisms are between living in a certain environment and coming to hold certain values that also promote democracy. We can thereby find a remedy to the behavioristic tendencies in Inglehart’s theory, namely the failure to account for the possible force of ideals as motivating mechanisms for people at an individual level. Inglehart and his colleagues seem largely unaware of what happens inside the so-called black box, of the reasons why people come to hold a certain value. Their rudimentary accounts of these processes often convey the picture of some sort of invisible hand that leads people to embrace whatever they are exposed to. Thus, when people are given choice, they automatically start valuing choice. When they start valuing themselves and get self-respect, they naturally come to respect others. But why? What is the mechanism? I argue that a better understanding of the underlying ideals that these value dimensions capture can shed light on the individual-level mechanisms between being exposed to a post-industrial society and coming to internalise self-expression values.

Secondly, I believe the link between different sorts of liberty aspirations and different sorts of democracy (some perhaps more participatory, some more republican, other more liberal) must be investigated. It is a great mistake not to distinguish between the two very different forms of liberty that exist within the theoretical debate. Inescapably, the fact that the two main concepts Inglehart uses, liberty and choice, each host very different and possibly opposing interpretations, creates problems for the empirical interpretation of his findings. What Inglehart and his fellow researchers fail to do is to recognize the major divide that separates liberals from democrats and one sort of freedom from the other. They take their recourse to different and even opposed thinkers, seemingly assuming that the liberal field is one of total unanimity on what freedom means and what it means for a society to respect it (For example, they quote both the later Rawls, Berlin, Aristotle and Sen; see for example Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p.175).

In sum, the argument that this paper forms is that it is not enough to say that there is a rise in liberty aspirations and a strive towards human choice – we need to know which kind of liberty people are actually valuing and which sort of independence it is that they want to realize. This
will make it much clearer what political consequences we might expect from value change and allow us to formulate research hypotheses to detect them.

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