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Treacherous Liberties

*Isaiah Berlin's Theory of Positive and Negative
Freedom in Contemporary Political Culture*

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Abstract

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Contemporary attitudes in affluent Western societies are characterised by a growing emphasis on individual freedom. What, then, does this commitment to liberty entail for our openness to diversity; and ultimately for liberal democracy? Previous research on popular attitudes, for example by Ronald Inglehart, tends to assume that valuing freedom entails an encouragement of a plurality of life-styles. This thesis, by contrast, argues that there are several ideals of freedom in public opinion; ideals that may have opposing consequences for our permissiveness towards ways of life that differ from our own.

The introductory essay in this book suggests that Isaiah Berlin's theory of positive and negative freedom provides a fruitful analytical framework, which helps theorise and empirically nuance our picture of popular ideals of freedom. Essay I goes on to present a novel, psychological, interpretation of Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty*. This essay also suggests that Berlin was critical not only of enlightened ideals of positive liberty, but also of romantic ones, which might be even more widespread today. Essay II then applies Berlin's framework to contemporary survey data. Through confirmatory factor and regression analyses, this essay demonstrates that Berlin's negative-positive distinction does in fact hold also in popular opinion; and that the two dimensions have rather different effects on moral and legal permissiveness. Essay III, finally, revisits a recent example of disrespect in the name of liberty: the Danish cartoon controversy. This essay develops the concept of 'romantic liberalism', thereby deepening our knowledge of romantic ideals of positive liberty, and their particularly disrespectful tendencies.

Drawing on Isaiah Berlin, and his critique of positive liberty, the essays in this thesis together suggest that it is crucial for liberal democracy to recognise the existence of treacherous liberties: ideals that lead their supporters to ridicule, condemn, or even prohibit ways of life that differ from their own – all in the name of liberty.

Keywords: freedom, liberty, values, autonomy, authenticity, tolerance, liberalism, permissiveness, Romanticism, Enlightenment, diversity, Inglehart, political culture, civicness, factor analysis

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To Ralph, my rock

List of Papers

This dissertation is based on the following essays:

- I. Gustavsson, G. (2011) The Inversion of Liberty. Isaiah Berlin and Coercion in the Name of Liberty. Manuscript, Department of Government, Uppsala University.
- II. Gustavsson, G. (2011). Freedom in Mass Values: Egocentric, Humanistic, or Both? Using Isaiah Berlin to Understand a Contemporary Debate. * *European Political Science Review*. Prepublished August 29, 2011; DOI: 10.1017/S1755773911000191. To be published in a forthcoming issue 2012.
- III. Gustavsson, G. (2011) Romantic Liberalism. An Alternative Perspective on Liberal Disrespect in the Muhammad Cartoons Controversy. Manuscript, Department of Government, Uppsala University.

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Uppsala, September 21st 2011
Gina Gustavsson

Introduction

The goal of philosophy is always the same, to assist men to understand themselves and thus to operate in the open, and not wildly, in the dark.

Isaiah Berlin, *The Purpose of Philosophy* (2002)

What does it mean to value individual freedom? It is often suggested that at the turn of the 21st century, individual freedom has become the main ideal to which the average person in Western societies pays homage. Some even suggest it is the only ideal left. Our commitment to freedom, according to the predominant interpretation, supposedly makes us increasingly permissive towards life styles, sexual behaviour, and cultures that are different from our own (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 144, 259). In other words, valuing individual freedom purportedly goes hand in hand with openness to diversity; an openness that some scholars believe verges on nihilism (Putnam, 2000: 258; Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 238; Bellah, Madsen et al., 2008: 47-48).

However, recent developments in many of the most liberty-oriented societies seem to contradict the expected relationship between valuing freedom, on the one hand, and permissiveness of different out-groups, on the other. Consider for example the debate over the Muslim veil, a term that here denotes both head scarves and face-covering garments, such as the burka and the niqab. The veil is often claimed to be morally problematic for the very reason that it stands in the way of women's freedom, of their authentic self-expression and self-realization; or because wearing it is supposedly not a free choice to begin with. In such discussions, it is common to invoke individual freedom in favour of a non-permissive stance, or even in support of legal prohibitions (Wallach-Scott, 2007: 125-131; Joppke, 2010: 31).

To value freedom, in other words, does not always seem to mean that one sides with permissiveness and diversity; it can also mean siding against them, for better or for worse. This seems puzzling, in the light of the fact that previous research assumes that anyone who values individual freedom *per definition* accepts 'no absolutely clear moral guidelines' in life, or no longer recognises any 'normative expectations of what makes life worth living' (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 239; Bellah, Madsen et al., 2008: 48).

On the contrary, it seems that the very reason the veil provokes such a heated debate, and indeed the reason it has become a political issue, is that it

is regarded as a matter of freedom, and freedom is understood to be a clear moral guideline, a normative expectation of what does indeed make life worth living. Those who take a stand against veils – or blasphemy laws, or arranged marriages, for example – often argue that to do otherwise is to compromise the very ideal of freedom. To permit such practices is, they say, to give in to cultural relativism, and this constitutes an act of moral cowardice, a failure to stand up for freedom itself (Joppke, 2007: 14, 16; Stolzenberg, 2009). This suggests that valuing liberty, far from being regarded as a matter of personal taste, at least for some of our contemporaries means taking a moral stand, and sometimes even fighting for it.

In a similar vein, it has often been argued that penalizing for example prostitution or drugs does not hinder, but in fact promotes, individual liberty. This is the case in Sweden, where surveys show that the value of individual freedom is held higher than in most other countries (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 65, 87), while a considerable amount of the population at the same time strongly supports the penalization of Muslim veils, and prohibitions against prostitution, pornography, marijuana, and the selling of alcohol in regular shops (Dodillet, 2009; Gustavsson, 2010; Mella and Palm, 2010).

Some of these attitudes may of course be peculiar to the Swedish context. However, Swedes are often portrayed as the epitome of freedom-oriented people (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2006; Schwartz, 2006). Inglehart and his associates even speak of a ‘Swedenization’, as opposed to an Americanization, of the world (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 65, 87). The Swedish data may thus also tell us something of a more general interest. They suggest that valuing freedom need not, as previous research often assumes, be incompatible with strongly condemning certain choices, or even favouring their restriction by law. In fact, it is not entirely unlikely that the positive Swedish attitudes towards prohibitions are to some extent an *effect* of valuing freedom; not in the sense of doing what one pleases unhindered by others, but in the sense of realising one’s authentic self (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2006: cf. 213; Gustavsson, 2010).

Yet, existing research tends to assume that the ethos of valuing individual freedom – which I shall use synonymously with liberty and independence throughout this dissertation – is by its very nature devoid of moral fervour for or against any one way of life. Some empirical scholars lament what they see as a weakened commitment to following any moral constraints and clear moral guidelines in life (Flanagan and Lee, 2003), while others welcome what they see as the natural decline in moral absolutism and closed-mindedness (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Both sides essentially agree, however, that valuing freedom brings along a general permissiveness towards different behaviours, for better or for worse.¹

¹ Inglehart and Welzel acknowledge that many practices that have been historically tolerated are now becoming *less* acceptable for the very reason that they come into conflict with human

This dissertation, by contrast, suggests that if we continue to treat ideals of freedom as a morally ‘empty’ stance that is assumed to be permissive of close to everything, we overlook the possibility that some ideals of freedom may lead a person to strongly oppose, or even to coerce those who engage in, a certain way of life. I suggest that the consequences of valuing freedom depend on what *kind* of freedom people value. Different ideals of liberty simply lead to different and sometimes conflicting consequences.

My aim in this dissertation is to theorise, operationalise and empirically analyse contemporary ideals of freedom, and their consequences for our permissiveness of different behaviours. In doing so, I will apply Isaiah Berlin’s distinction between positive and negative liberty as a theoretical framework to the empirical study of freedom in contemporary public opinion (Berlin, 2008b).

The three essays in this dissertation each contribute to different scholarly debates. Together, however, they also put forward one shared argument, namely that there are several parallel ideals of liberty in the public mind, ideals that have different empirical consequences for our political behaviour, and in particular for how we handle diversity.

It is therefore mistaken to equate the spreading commitment to individual freedom with the dawn of a new age of tolerance and the welcoming of diversity, as Inglehart and Welzel (2005) for example tend to do. It is likewise erroneous, however, to assume that the rise of freedom in mass values means that people are becoming narcissistic nihilists and free-riders, as Putnam (2000) or Flanagan and Lee (2003) sometimes seem to suggest. My conclusions demonstrate that both understandings of what it means to value individual freedom are conceptually flawed, and empirically erroneous, for both assume that there is only one ideal of freedom and that valuing this ideal necessarily brings along some kind of moral permissiveness.

By including both quantitative analysis of survey data, and qualitative textual analysis, this book employs a mixed-methods approach. This introductory chapter will try to show the rationale behind this methodological eclecticism. Most importantly, it will also try to show why I took the rather un-orthodox decision to combine discussions from political theory with the empirical study of contemporary attitudes, which traditionally belongs to the field of political sociology and is seldom connected to more philosophical debates.

freedom. However, the examples they give of such intolerance in the name of freedom are all about intolerance of discrimination. The authors tell us that we are less likely today than in earlier times to tolerate discrimination of for example ethnic minorities, women, homosexuals, or handicapped persons (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 292-293). Nowhere, however, do they recognise the more complex, and indeed more troubling, possibility which I suggest: that valuing freedom and self-expression might sometimes make us *oppose* some of these minorities and their practices to begin with.

In what follows, I briefly recapitulate the theoretical background for my dissertation, namely Berlin's discussion regarding positive and negative liberty. I then turn to consider existing empirical work on ideals of freedom in contemporary attitudes. These overviews of the theoretical and the empirical background help me specify the research gap that I wish to address with my studies. In the fourth section, I present the essays, and address their main findings, contributions and limitations. The final section considers the lessons learned from this research project as a whole, as well as potential avenues for future research.

Ideals of freedom in theory

This book takes its theoretical point of departure in Isaiah Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty (Berlin, 2008b). *Two concepts of liberty*, his seminal lecture from 1958, was to become one of the classics in political theory. It later became an essay and is still an inescapable starting point for discussing ideals of freedom. By outlining the distinction between positive and negative liberty, Berlin, it has been suggested, 'opened up critical discussion of the concept of freedom in much the same way that Rawls later opened up discussion of social justice' (Crowder, 2004: 189).

This is not to deny, of course, that there are other important distinctions between different types of liberty. For example, there is the distinction suggested by Benjamin Constant between the liberty of the ancients and that of the moderns (Constant, 1988). Steven Lukes distinguishes between what he calls the three faces of freedom: personal autonomy, lack of public interference, and the power of self-development (Lukes, 1973: 127-131). There are also distinctions between collective and individual freedom; and between other types of positive and negative liberty, as the terms were originally used by for example T.H. Green (Simhony, 1993; Dimova-Cookson, 2003).²

Yet, the central divide in most of these discussions has regarded the concept of freedom itself. In other words, different thinkers have advanced contending definitions of what freedom *is*.³ My concern, however, lies not with the true nature of freedom. The aim of this dissertation is instead to achieve a better understanding of the kind of freedoms to which our contemporaries attribute great value in life – independently of how they choose to define the nature of freedom, or how it should be defined.

Hence, my natural theoretical starting point is not to begin with different definitions of freedom, but rather to establish what *ideals* of freedom there

² There is also the so-called third concept of liberty: republican liberty, or freedom as non-domination. See Pettit, 1997 and Skinner, 2002. Also see note 4 in Essay II.

³ Cf. MacCallum, 1967; Benn and Weinstein, 1971; Feinberg, 1973: 4-19; Oppenheim, 1981: 53-95; Connolly, 1983: 140-173; Taylor, 1997; and Williams, 2001.

might be. By ideals of freedom, I simply mean various conceptions of freedom that a person may regard as a valuable end in life.

One of the many ways in which Berlin speaks of negative and positive liberty is precisely as this, ideals of freedom; or so I argue in Essays I and II. Berlin speaks of identifying oneself with ‘the creed of’ one of the two freedoms (Berlin, 2008b: 185). He also notes that positive and negative freedom represent two ‘profoundly and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life’ (Berlin, 2008b: 212). His discussion of positive and negative liberty thus serves especially well as an analytical framework for studying public opinion. In what follows, I will briefly recapitulate the gist of his distinction. A fuller discussion can be found in Essay I.

Positive and negative liberty

Negative liberty, says Berlin, is the answer to 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?’ (Berlin, 2008b: 169). Supporters of the negative notion thus believe ‘that all coercion is, in so far as it frustrates human desires, bad as such, although it may have to be applied to prevent other, greater evils; while non-interference, which is the opposite of coercion, is good as such, although it is not the only good’ (Berlin, 2008b: 175).

Berlin clearly believes that the negative notion of liberty has seldom ‘formed a rallying cry for the great masses’; indeed, that the great majority has often gladly compromised this liberty in order to achieve other, more popular values, such as security, status, virtue, power or equality (Berlin, 2008b: 176, 207). One such value that may threaten negative liberty is positive liberty.

Positive liberty answers the following question, according to Berlin: ‘What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?’ (Berlin, 2008b: 169). Supporters of the positive notion of liberty are thus concerned with attaining self-direction. The goal, for them, is not to avoid external interference, but to be a subject ‘moved by conscious purposes’, to be one’s own master, quite simply (Berlin, 2008b: 178).

It is sometimes argued that Berlin denies that the positive notion regards *individual* liberty, or even liberty altogether (Cf. McCloskey, 1965; Macfarlane, 1966; Taylor, 1997). This, however, seems mistaken to me.⁴

⁴ My interpretation is in line with the suggestions of Gray, 1995: 387; Crowder, 2004: 78; Cherniss, 2007: 95; and Ricciardi, 2007: 126.

Berlin clearly states the following, for example:

The essence of the notion of liberty, in both 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, 2008b: 204).

Berlin also acknowledges that the two notions may seem ‘at no great logical distance from each other’. He nevertheless insists that they have ‘historically developed in divergent directions not always by logically reputable steps, until, in the end, they came into direct conflict with each other’ (Berlin, 2008b: 178-179).

This strongly suggests that the distinction between positive and negative liberty should not be reduced to a requirement for conceptual clarity for its own sake. Berlin instead believes that we must distinguish between the two notions because we should expect supporters of positive and supporters of negative freedom to end up in very different political camps. The heart of the matter, we shall now see, is that Berlin believed that positive liberty, although valuable in and of itself, risks leading us to the conclusion that liberty is compatible with coercion. This is what George Crowder has called the inversion thesis (Crowder, 2004: 68-71). It is this aspect of Berlin’s thought that I reconstruct in Essay I.

Previous research has mainly understood the link that Berlin saw between positive liberty and coercion to be a matter of logical steps; and thus a concern that he exaggerates, since not all ideals of positive liberty allow for coercion in the name of liberty (Christman, 1991: 359; West, 1993; Crowder, 2004: 86). Others have understood Berlin’s critique more as an observation of a specific case, namely the Soviet Union, and thus largely directed towards an enemy that no longer exists (Galipeau, 1994: 85; Franco, 2003).

The argument that I develop in Essay I, by contrast, is that Berlin’s concerns were neither purely logical nor merely historical. Although the Soviet Union certainly provided him with a relevant example of the inversion of liberty – after, all, he wrote *Two Concepts of Liberty* at the height of the Cold War – his concerns with positive liberty also extended beyond any particular historical example. In fact, as we shall now see, they should be highly relevant for us today.

The treacherousness of positive liberty

In my reading, Berlin conceived of the inversion process as a trans-historical pattern rooted in human psychology. He believed that this psychological risk originated in two features shared by ideals of positive liberty: first, their focus on internal rather than external obstacles to freedom; and, secondly, their concern for freedom of preference formation, rather than preference enactment. To put it simply, Berlin believed that we have reason to be cautious of ideals of liberty that emphasise freedom from certain un-wanted elements of the psyche, rather than freedom from others; and the freedom of deciding what we want in the first place, rather than the freedom of acting in line with our existing wishes.

‘Cautious’ is a key word, for Berlin does not deny that these are also valuable freedoms. His point, as I shall elaborate in the following, is rather that we should be vigilant towards the risks that are involved in pursuing these positive ideals of liberty.

In the introduction that Berlin added to his essays on liberty in 1969, he acknowledges that unbridled negative liberty may of course also bring its fair share of ‘disastrous’ consequences. Focusing too much on our freedom to act unhindered by others may lead us to overlook the need for legislation that makes life in society possible, or the benefits of welfare provisions that give everyone the necessary means for making freedom of choice meaningful. Yet, he continues insisting that the negative idea has at least more frequently been recognised for what it is; while positive liberty, by contrast, remains more deceitful, for it may lead to ‘the apotheosis of authority’, the very opposite of freedom, and nevertheless remain able to ‘exploit the favourable associations of its innocent origins’ (Berlin, 2008a: 39).

Thus, in my interpretation, Berlin’s concern is not that positive liberty is conceptually flawed or even without value; nor simply that it has, as a matter of historical coincidence, ended up in totalitarian politics. Rather, Berlin seems to think that ideals of positive liberty are psychologically treacherous. Like Frankenstein’s monster, as he puts it (Berlin, 1997: 237), ideas are likely, in his view, to gain a momentous power of their own over our minds, and thus lead to unexpected and unintended consequences. Positive liberty, more specifically, invites us to overlook or even encourage coercion – in other words, to side against negative freedom – without acknowledging that we are doing so; for, we may now claim, we are acting on the side of liberty, not against it.⁵

From the perspective of political liberalism, it might be objected that the risk of coercion in the name of liberty can be averted as long as the supporters of positive liberty also hold the *political* attitude that we do not have the right to impose our ideal of liberty on anyone else (Rawls, 1993: 9-13). In

⁵ For a more thorough discussion, see Essay I.

this view, it need not worry us if people hold positive liberty as a personal guideline in life; what matters is whether or not they want to use political institutions to impose this ideal on others.

To this, I believe Berlin would in turn respond that the very problem with positive liberty as a comprehensive ideal is that it may blind us to the fact that we are violating the political ideal of non-coercion. Liberty is, after all, not just any ideal. In the standard account of liberalism, liberty is the core ideal for the liberal state to protect and uphold. The problem is that if we truly think of liberty in terms of positive liberty, we are likely to also think that upholding liberty sometimes means hindering people from acting in line with their explicit wishes.⁶ When we have come this far, however, it does not seem very far-fetched to assume that we would also believe that a liberal state can legitimately engage in such interventions and coercions. After all, we might say, coercion for the sake of positive liberty is not *really* to interfere with anyone's liberty; in fact, to not engage in such coercion would be to fail to protect and uphold liberty, the very purpose of the liberal state.

The moral problem that undergirds this dissertation is not, then, that it is always wrong to side against negative liberty, but that it is problematic to do so *without acknowledging it*. I do not for example assume that it is necessarily wrong to ban the veil or pornography, or any other of the examples I listed in the first pages of this introduction. Neither does Berlin wish to deny that we should sometimes hinder those who we have reason to think are brainwashed, or lack any knowledge of alternatives from which to choose, from acting in line with their explicit wishes. Berlin's point, however, is that if we do so, we must acknowledge that however noble our intentions, our attempt to help is *also* an instance of coercion. This, I suggest, is the message in the following passage:

It is one thing to say that I may be coerced for my own good, which I am too blind to see: this may, on occasion, be for my benefit; indeed, it may enlarge the scope of my liberty. It is another to say that if it is my good, then I am not being coerced, for I have willed it, whether I know this or not, and am free (or 'truly' free) even while my poor earthly body and foolish mind bitterly reject it, and struggle with the greatest desperation against those who seek, however benevolently, to impose it (Berlin, 2008b: 180-181).⁷

Positive ideals of liberty, Berlin believes, tend to invite precisely such a 'magical transformation, or sleight of hand' (Berlin, 2008b: 181). They are treacherous, then, to the extent that they invite us to overlook that we are indeed coercing people, albeit in the name of liberty. The supporters of positive liberty might therefore be prone to a certain self-righteousness, or a kind

⁶ By explicit, I do not only mean that they are 'manifest', but rather that these wishes are also to the best of their own knowledge. I am grateful to Marcus Ohlström for pointing out the difference.

⁷ Also see Berlin, 2008a: 31-32.

of moral arrogance, we might say, towards those on the losing side: those who dissent, those whose opinions are not held to be truly free in a positive sense, and are thus not found worthy of our respect to begin with.

Berlin's contemporary relevance

Many have noted that Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty, and his warnings regarding the former, apply not only to totalitarian regimes, but to liberal societies as well (Crowder, 2004: 173, 176; Cherniss, 2007; Ricciardi, 2007). However, this has to my knowledge remained only a vague suggestion. It remains rather unclear in what way, more precisely, we should expect the inversion of liberty to take place today.⁸

This dissertation thus takes a first step towards applying Berlin's reasoning to a specific contemporary issue. Given recent developments in many Western affluent democracies, I suggest that Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty is particularly relevant to the study of public opinion today. On the one hand, the great majority in affluent Western democracies seems to be increasingly committed to individual freedom as an ideal in life. On the other hand, there is also an increasing minority of immigrants in many of these countries, many with Muslim beliefs, who are often portrayed as representatives of much less freedom-oriented values.⁹ This suggests that what kind of liberty a person values lies at the heart of current political debates, not least concerning integration. The risk that positive liberty becomes a cloak for coercion, without us even recognising it, seems far from an abstract concern, today perhaps less so than ever.

An illustrative example can be found in the debate with which this chapter began: the discussion in several European countries regarding a potential ban on Muslim veils in various public contexts. In France, for example, the pro-ban side has often argued that penalizing this garment is in fact an act of liberation of the very women who nevertheless claim to have chosen to wear the veil out of their own free will. This choice, it is argued, is not really free; for example because by wearing a garment that supposedly expresses submission, one fails to express one's individuality – and if this is true freedom, then penalizing whatever hinders it is of course an act of liberation. Penalizing the veil thus appears for some as the proper solution, not in spite of lib-

⁸ Indeed, Crowder notes that since the 1980's, the main scholarly attention has turned away from Berlin's discussion of liberty, towards the theme of value pluralism in his writings (Crowder, 2004: 148).

⁹ The extent to which these minorities actually *are* against freedom is not particularly relevant here; what matters is rather that this is how they are often portrayed.

eral principles, but because of them (Wallach-Scott, 2007: 125-131; Joppke, 2010: 31).¹⁰

In sum, if Berlin's inversion thesis has to do with the notion that liberty has a certain psychological power over our minds, as I argue, then I suggest it should be all the more relevant today, at a time when liberty is perhaps more popular than ever in public opinion. Contemporary inversions of liberty may of course be more subtle, and less openly despotic, than the ones Berlin had in mind. On the other hand, that may also make them all the more treacherous today, when it is perhaps even harder to argue against the increasingly popular positive ideals of liberty, such as autonomy or authenticity, than it was half a decade ago. This suggests that it is particularly important to know more precisely which ideals of liberty surround us in everyday life.

Empirical research on contemporary ideals of freedom

The upshot of the previous section is that it is far from certain that valuing liberty needs to entail that one is permissive and open to diversity; it may very well lead to the opposite, especially perhaps in many contemporary Western societies. We will now see that previous empirical research into the nature of contemporary ideals of freedom does not, however, allow us to assess this possibility. This is because it has neglected to study what can rightly be called ideals of freedom, and instead mainly measures the political attitudes to which valuing freedom might, but might as well not, be conducive.

Freedom values

There is widespread agreement among scholars in the field of mass values, i.e. the study of the ideals of ordinary people, that the past few decades have brought along an unprecedented rise in the commitment to individual freedom. This trend has been given many names. Ronald Inglehart and his associates call it the rise of self-expression values, or emancipatory values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2010). Others prefer to speak of libertarianism (Flanagan and Lee, 2003). More critical observers often refer to this trend as spreading individualism, or even narcissism (Lasch, 1978; Putnam, 2000; Bellah, Madsen et al., 2008). Political psychologists, finally, tend to speak of anti-authoritarianism or open-mindedness, but also of normative

¹⁰ This is of course just one of several lines of argument in discussions concerning the veil. There were of course many other ideals, such as the notion of *laïcité*, at play in the French debate. For a longer discussion, cf. Laborde, 2005; Joppke, 2010.

individualism (Rokeach, 1960; Waterman, 1984; Oyserman, Coon et al., 2002; Triandis, 2004).

Although there are of course important differences between these literatures, they nevertheless share a common core: the notion that mass values in affluent Western democracies today display a growing commitment to some kind of individual freedom. As I will show in Essay II, some accounts describe this trend in terms that theoretically resemble negative freedom; and others more in terms of positive freedom. For now, however, suffice it to say that all of them describe the values they examine as values that have to do with freedom of some kind. Thus, I shall refer to them as ‘freedom values’ in the following.¹¹

The growing commitment to freedom values is held to have important political implications. Scholars of political participation and voting patterns for example claim that political cleavages in affluent Western societies have become increasingly centred on the issue of freedom, rather than equality. This means that people from diverging socio-economic groups, different age groups, and with different levels of education, no longer differ as much as only a few decades ago in their positioning on the classic left-right divide. Instead, they differ more and more in their attitudes towards the value of individual liberty.¹²

A related and still unsettled debate in political sociology regards not the direct effect of freedom values on voting behaviour, but rather their long-term effects on civicness. A long line of scholars, from Alexis de Tocqueville to Robert Putnam, fear that the rise of freedom values erodes social capital, solidarity and traditional duty-based political participation in a way that risks undermining democracy itself (de Tocqueville, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Bellah, Madsen et al., 2008).¹³

Other scholars, most notably Ronald Inglehart and associates, rather see the emerging focus on individual freedom as a welcome shift away from stifling conformity and authoritarianism – towards more tolerance, individ-

¹¹ It is of course one thing to *value* individual freedom, and quite another to feel that one has it in one’s own life. The literature often lumps together these issues and speaks of both ideals and identities that have to do with liberty. For this critique, see Oyserman, Coon et al., 2002. In this book, however, my focus is not on the feeling or experience of individualism, but on the normative issue, on the notion that there is something valuable about individual independence.

¹² Flanagan, 1982; Kitschelt, 1988; Heath, Evans et al., 1994; Kitschelt, 1994; Evans, Heath et al., 1996; Carmines and Layman, 1997; Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Tilley, 2005; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006.

¹³ Note that de Tocqueville is sometimes erroneously assumed to have been in favour of individualism. It is certainly true that he was in many ways fascinated by the American ethos, which he described in *Democracy in America*, and by the self-reliant individualists who considered themselves to stand alone in the world, with their destiny entirely in their own hands. Yet, he clearly also stated that ‘individualism, at first, only saps the virtue of public life; but in the long run attacks and destroys all others and is at length absorbed in downright selfishness’ (de Tocqueville, 1998: 205-206).

ual self-assertion and encouragement of diversity. This side contends that a stronger focus on individual freedom and self-expression makes citizens both more tolerant, and more likely to monitor politicians and demand their rights from them.¹⁴

As this shows us, then, most scholars seem to agree that the rise of freedom values has significant consequences for political behaviour, even if some accounts are pessimistic and others optimistic. However, I shall now suggest that this focus on the *effects* of valuing freedom has led to the neglect of a crucial matter that comes logically prior to the question of consequences: what we know and do not know about what kind of freedom people value to begin with.

Libertarianism and self-expression values

Two of the most renowned conceptualisations of freedom values are ‘libertarianism’ and ‘self-expression values’. Libertarianism, as it is used here, is not to be equated with the philosophical position in support of a minimal state (Nozick, 1974). Quite the contrary: libertarians are believed to be in favour of equality and vote for the political left, rather than the right. In this context, libertarianism instead represents the freedom-oriented extreme of a dimension that spans the entire spectrum from very positive, to very negative, to freedom. One extreme end of the dimension is called libertarianism, while the other is called authoritarianism (Flanagan, 1982; Heath, Evans et al., 1994; Flanagan and Lee, 2003).¹⁵

A libertarian is defined as someone ‘who believes in freedom of thought and action’ (Flanagan, 1982: 441). Libertarians ‘extol independence and self-determination, equality and freedom’. Indeed, judging from how Flanagan and his co-author describe them, their main characteristic appears to be their concern for ‘maximum personal development and self-realization’ (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 238).

Inglehart and Welzel prefer to speak of a dimension of self-expression/survival values – but it is clear that this dimension overlaps with that of libertarianism/authoritarianism, both theoretically and empirically. Self-expression values represent what Inglehart and Welzel call ‘the universal human aspirations for self-realization and individual autonomy’ (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 143). The authors tell us that valuing self-expression means valuing ‘freedom and autonomy as good in and of themselves’ (Welzel and Inglehart, 2008: 132). The authors also refer to self-expression values as ‘emancipatory values’ and ‘autonomy values’.¹⁶

¹⁴ Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart and Flanagan, 1987; Inglehart, 2003; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2006; Welzel and Inglehart, 2008.

¹⁵ This dimension, in other words, is a so-called bi-polar construct.

¹⁶ As opposed to the libertarianism/authoritarianism dimension, which captures an individual level pattern, Inglehart often speaks of the self-expression/survival dimension as an aggregate,

Theoretically, then, both libertarianism and self-expression values revolve around what we might broadly call the value of individual freedom: autonomy, self-expression, independence, etc. However, as is often the case with mass value studies, neither dimension has been theoretically defined before it has been contrasted to the data. Rather, both dimensions are the result of exploratory factor analysis, the goal of which is to find a pattern that explains the largest amount of statistical variance in the responses to hundreds of survey questions (Kim and Mueller, 1978).

In other words, instead of defining what it means to value freedom or self-expression and then try to capture it empirically, the literature on libertarianism and self-expression values has started in the opposite end. First, it has been found that certain survey responses cluster together, for whatever reason; then, it has been inferred that how a respondent feels towards these particular issues is the result of her stance towards individual freedom (Flanagan, 1982: 409, 438; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 48-52).

However, because there are no clear conceptualisations of what it means to value freedom and what this should entail, there is a significant validity gap in the literature on libertarianism and self-expression values. The validity gap consists in that, while there is a lot of theoretical talk of freedom and self-expression, few of the survey questions can in fact be said to capture people's commitment to these ideals, but in fact seem more appropriate as measures of the potential *consequences* of valuing freedom.

To understand this validity gap, let us look closer at the variables that represent the self-expression values index and the libertarianism index, respectively (Table I).

Looking first at the left column of Table I, we can note that none of the variables that Inglehart interprets as examples of self-expression values actually asks the respondent about the freedom and autonomy, or indeed self-expression, with which he and his associates frequently associate this dimension.

Indeed, many political psychologists would object that not only does the self-expression values index not measure self-expression values; in fact, it does not measure any values at all. Inglehart's measures rather reflect issue-specific attitudes (liberty aspirations and the justifiability of homosexuality), predispositions (trust), feelings (happiness) and self-reported behaviour (petition signing) – all of which are generally considered less stable than values (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Jagodzinski, 2004).

country level phenomenon. However, he and his co-authors also tend to treat it as a dimension that applies to the individual level; suggesting how persons with self-expression values behave, and why these values should induce pro-democratic attitudes on the individual level (Haller, 2002; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 54, 259-261). Also, Inglehart openly states that these values 'overlap heavily' with libertarianism, which is an individual level dimension (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 291).

Table I: The measures of self-expression values and libertarianism

Self-expression values mean individual level factor loadings within samples, World Values Survey (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 238)	Libertarian values individual level factor loadings on the first unrotated factor, pooled 12-nation World Values Survey sample (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 239)
the liberty aspirations index (the importance of freedom of speech and having more say in society and work place) 0.55	<i>Sub-dimension 1</i> the importance of freedom of speech 0.341 more say in government, job, community 0.328 teach child independence 0.402 important in job: using initiative 0.209
the justifiability of homosexuality 0.48	
self-reported life satisfaction 0.12	<i>Sub-dimension 2</i> no absolutely clear guidelines on good and evil 0.435 teach child imagination 0.398 new ideas 0.289
general trust 0.35	
whether or not the respondent has signed or would sign a petition 0.45	<i>Sub-dimension 3</i> complete sexual freedom 0.374 parents should have their own life 0.343 self-indulgence at the expense of others (an index including the justifiability of keeping found money, adultery, lying in one's own interest, etc.) 0.597

Social psychologists usually conceptualise values as guiding principles in our life, and thus as something more abstract, more deeply rooted and less malleable than the evaluative attitudes or emotions that Inglehart measures, for example by asking about the justifiability of homosexuality, or our general life satisfaction. Research has in fact shown that values have a strong influence on both attitudes and behaviour (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998: 295-296; Caprara, Schwartz et al., 2006).¹⁷ This suggests that it is especially important to steer clear from the more easily fluctuating and object-specific attitudes that Inglehart measures, and instead try to capture our more abstract values regarding freedom.¹⁸

Even if we agreed on a more generous definition of values than the predominant one in social psychology, I would nevertheless suggest that Inglehart's variables capture other values than those that regard 'self-realization and individual autonomy', as he nevertheless assumes (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 143). When we speak of people valuing originality, self-expression, autonomy, or self-realization, we usually do not mean that they support cer-

¹⁷ For a clarifying overview of how values matter for sociology and political science, cf. Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004.

¹⁸ I suggest that the variables I use to measure positive and negative freedom values do indeed capture *values* to a greater extent; although they are not ideal. For a discussion of these items, see pp.26-27; and Essay II (Table 1).

tain forms of government, or that they are positive towards for example homosexuality. Rather, we think of the more personal, and not directly political, ideals that people may cherish. It therefore seems odd to identify any of these ideals with holding democratic norms or being morally permissive *per definition*, as Inglehart does. Such attitudes may be a consequence, but not proof, of a commitment to for example self-expression; at least not if we do not want to stray too far from ordinary language.¹⁹

Nor, it seems to me, can we infer from the fact that someone condemns homosexuality, for example, that this person does not value self-realization and autonomy; quite the contrary. As Berlin suggests, those who believe in the value of autonomy may sometimes condemn certain practices for that very reason, because they believe that those who engage in them are not exercising enough self-government, for example (Berlin, 2008b: 179-181).

Similar problems haunt the work on libertarianism by Flanagan and associates. The first two variables are virtually identical to what Inglehart calls liberty aspirations; and are thus subject to the critique that I have already formulated here above. We may also question why we should assume that just because a respondent believes there are no absolute moral guidelines in life – or that new ideas are to be welcomed, or that complete sexual freedom is a good thing – then he or she can automatically be classified as a person who values freedom of thought and action. Surely it is one thing to ‘extol independence’ or aim for ‘self-actualization’ (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 238), and quite another to celebrate moral pluralism, new ideas and sexual permissiveness. The latter three positions might of course correlate empirically with valuing freedom. But the fact that a person takes these positions can hardly be regarded as *evidence* that she values individual freedom.

It seems particularly misleading to say that agreeing that there are no clear moral guidelines in life means that one values individual freedom. Values, as we have seen, are defined as guiding principles in life (Schwartz, 1992); so valuing freedom must surely include the possibility of valuing at least one clear moral guideline in life, namely freedom itself.

The last variable in the libertarianism index, ‘self-indulgence at the expense of others,’ seems problematic for similar reasons. It seems theoretically erroneous to assume that believing strongly in individual freedom is the same as feeling liberated from morality altogether. Consider for example Immanuel Kant, who forwarded an extremely demanding morality and rigorous self-discipline – not in spite of, but because of his commitment to freedom. It thus seems rather problematic to assume that the extent to which someone is willing to accept adultery or lying would allow us to infer that she values ‘independence and self-determination’ (Flanagan and Lee, 2003:

¹⁹ This is often called the criterion of simplicity. Cf. Oppenheim, 1981: 180-187; and Sartori, 1984: 50-56.

238), values that Kant would be the first to emphasise, while strongly condemning adulterers and liars (Kant, 1964: 93).²⁰

Indeed, the only variables in the libertarianism index that could be said to measure values regarding freedom are those that ask the importance of teaching a child independence, encouraging imagination, valuing initiative in a job, and agreeing that parents should lead their own lives. Yet these are only four out of ten variables, and two of them show the lowest factor loadings of all. I would therefore hesitate to infer, as Flanagan and Lee do, that the dimension they have found tells us much about the nature of freedom values.²¹

What happens, then, if we do not start inductively by analysing a sample of hundreds of survey questions, but rather with a selection of the variables of interest, for theoretical reasons, and only then study the patterns in the data? Table II suggests that the empirical results differ greatly, even with only a minimally more theoretical approach than that employed in previous research.

Table II displays an individual level analysis of the dimensionality of those variables used by Inglehart, Flanagan and their associates, which were available in World Values Survey 2005.²² I also included six ‘freedom items’, which I argue in fact better capture the concepts of which these scholars speak, as well as positive and negative freedom, respectively. These six variables and their factor loadings are italicised in the table. All six items are also used in the models in Essay II.²³

²⁰ The fact that this ‘self-indulgence’ item also shows the highest factor loading out of all the libertarianism measures in fact suggests that this dimension is *not* about freedom, but rather about what we might call moral egoism, or perhaps moral relativism.

²¹ Other libertarianism indices tend to capture freedom to an even lesser extent than Flanagan’s index does. See for example Kitschelt, 1994; and Evans, Heath et al., 1996.

²² The question wording for most of these variables is found in Table 1, Essay II. The question wording for the remaining variables are as follows. The first three variables in Table II are gauged by asking the respondent whether he or she thinks that abortion, divorce, or homosexuality can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between (on a scale from 1 to 10). *Importance of free speech* and *more say in government, job, community* are measured by asking the respondent whether he or she thinks that these are more important goals than ‘making sure that the country has strong defense forces’, ‘a high level of economic growth’, or ‘trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful’. *Teach child tolerance and respect*, finally, is measured by showing the respondent a list of ‘qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home’, and allowing them to choose up to five (World Values Survey, 2005).

²³ See Table I and the adjacent discussion in Essay II. The first three ‘freedom items’ ask about the extent to which the respondent agrees that it is important to ‘seek to be myself rather than follow others’ (*authenticity*), ‘decide my goals in life by myself’ (*autonomy*), and ‘think up new ideas and be creative; do things one’s own way’ (*self-realization*). These items, I would argue, are theoretically much closer to the self-expression and autonomy that Inglehart speaks of than are any of his own measures. The other three ‘freedom items’ I use measure the extent to which the respondent does *not* agree that it is important ‘to always behave properly; to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong’ (*non-conformism*); the extent to which he or she thinks ‘greater respect for authority’ would not be a change for the better (*insubordination*); and the importance attributed to encouraging ‘independence’ as a quality

Table II: A first test of the dimensionality of freedom values

**Rotated component matrix from a principal component analysis
(Varimax rotation)**

Pooled sample: N=9,825 listwise deletion	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Justifiable: abortion	0.820	0.037	0.058	0.107	0.055
Justifiable: divorce	0.797	-0.024	0.074	0.105	0.052
Justifiable: homosexuality	0.738	-0.032	0.068	0.201	0.157
Justifiable: euthanasia	0.737	0.032	0.028	-0.042	0.043
Justifiable: prostitution	0.670	0.138	-0.014	0.005	-0.069
Justifiable: suicide	0.597	0.170	-0.021	0.134	0.002
Justifiable: avoiding a fare on public transport	0.124	0.801	-0.024	0.084	0.002
Justifiable: claiming gov- ernment benefits	-0.016	0.778	-0.015	-0.036	0.003
Justifiable: cheating on taxes	0.149	0.771	0.015	0.038	-0.043
<i>Authenticity</i>	0.009	-0.025	0.771	-0.065	0.026
<i>Autonomy</i>	0.022	-0.035	0.762	0.032	-0.100
<i>Self-realization</i>	0.080	0.033	0.520	0.117	0.165
<i>Non-conformism</i>	0.102	0.113	-0.066	0.649	-0.039
<i>Independence</i>	0.129	-0.081	0.129	0.608	-0.218
<i>Insubordination</i>	0.057	0.049	0.059	0.590	0.237
Importance of free speech	0.089	-0.027	0.007	0.383	0.353
Teach child tolerance and respect	0.140	-0.139	-0.022	-0.125	0.651
More say in government, job, community	-0.037	0.092	0.101	0.106	0.633

Notes: The factors appear in order of explained variance. The factor extraction criterion was Eigenvalue > 1. Factor loadings above the standard cut-off point of 0.3 are presented in bold. The unrotated solution is available upon request but is much harder to interpret, as is usually the case before rotation (Kim and Mueller, 1978: 50). For descriptive data, see the appendix.

for children to learn at home (*independence*). These measures, I would argue, capture the kind of freedom of which Flanagan and Lee speak, namely that of extolling individual independence, non-conformism and anti-authoritarian ideals.

The important question that the kind of exploratory factor analysis presented in Table II may answer is: *Which variables belong to one and the same empirical dimension?* In other words, our main goal here is to find out which survey responses cluster together and to what extent. The logic behind this is that the more certain answers do correlate, the more we can assume that the responses to these different manifest questions in fact depend on how a respondent feels towards one more abstract variable – such as freedom, or democracy – the attitudes towards which we cannot measure directly, and which is therefore called a latent variable. The numbers in each column, the factor loadings, measure the strength of this assumed relationship between each manifest variable, i.e. how respondents have answered a particular survey item, and the common, latent variable that we imagine guides the respondents in their answers.

As can be seen from Table II, the dimensionality of values regarding freedom, democratic norms and permissiveness clearly differs in important ways from what previous research has concluded, based on its more inductive approach. The fact that the six italicised ‘freedom items’ load on factors that are separate from all the other variables (with the exception of *free speech*) clearly corroborates my objection to Inglehart and Flanagan. This result means that the way people react to moral permissiveness, non-compliance with legal norms, civic participation, or even tolerance, is simply not a valid indication of how they feel about individual freedom. These are all *separate* attitudinal dimensions; they are different issues in people’s mind, quite simply.

Admittedly, some of the factor structure we can see in the table may be due to battery effects, which stem from the fact that several questions are placed consecutively in the questionnaire, and the respondents therefore answer them in a similar way for no other reason than fatigue or convenience. This may partly explain the clustering of the first nine items.

Nevertheless, the results here are far from a mirror image of the questionnaire design. They thus appear to be able to tell us something important about the individual level structure of values regarding individual freedom. For example, Inglehart and his associates assume that valuing independence can be equated to valuing tolerance and respect (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 54-56). Table II, by contrast, indicates that even if we know that someone values independence, this does not allow us to predict how the same person will feel about teaching children tolerance and respect.

In sum, it is both theoretically dubious, and empirically erroneous, to assume that the more a person values individual freedom, the more likely she is also to be morally permissive, condone non-compliance with legal norms, and hold pro-democratic attitudes. Since these assumptions nevertheless tend to guide previous work on freedom in mass values, I suggest this field still lacks a satisfactory account of the individual level structure of valuing *freedom*, and the effects of this commitment on other attitudes.

The research gap

We have now seen that there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to engage in a careful and nuanced study of what I have called ideals of freedom. The previous section has shown that, despite the crucial role attributed to values regarding freedom in the literature on popular attitudes in affluent Western democracies, existing empirical research measures these values rather poorly – to the extent it does so at all.

This seems to stem from a more general predicament that haunts studies of mass values: the lack of theory, and thus the predominance of inductive work over the testing of theoretically informed hypotheses. My argument in the previous section was that this lack of theory has yielded a considerable validity gap between the theoretical concepts that scholars refer to, and the empirical measures they examine in practice. While they repeatedly tell us that self-expression and freedom values are important and on the rise, the scholars who have empirically analysed these values nevertheless leave us with too little knowledge of the structure and nature of popular support for individual freedom. Nor do their measures allow us to probe the empirical relationship between valuing positive or negative freedom, on the one hand, and holding certain political attitudes, on the other hand.²⁴

As a first remedy to the problems in the empirical literature, I think it is important to first theoretically clarify what ideals of individual freedom we should expect people to value; and, secondly, what effects valuing these ideals could have on other attitudes. Before something can be studied in real life, we must have some theoretical notion of what this something is.

Moreover, the theoretical section suggested that it is no little matter what kind of liberty people value – positive or negative – especially if this liberty is prone to invite the conclusion that coercion is compatible with liberation. Recognising this seems to be especially important today, when arguments from freedom are invoked in debates regarding how the liberal state and society should handle an increasing cultural and religious diversity.

²⁴ This, finally, is not just a problem that haunts Inglehart and other scholars in political sociology. Much work in political or social psychology similarly assumes that valuing freedom can be measured by asking whether people accept adultery or tax cheating. See for example Rokeach, 1960; Triandis, Bontempo et al., 1988; Bontempo, 1993; Triandis, 1998; and Oyserman, Coon et al., 2002. The work of Shalom Schwartz provides an exception here. Nevertheless, he does not speak of freedom but self-direction, and sees it as a response to evolutionary problems rather than as a pre-defined theoretical issue (Schwartz, 1992). For a longer discussion of Schwartz, see Essay II.

Presenting the essays

The previous section argued that there is a considerable research gap regarding the more precise nature of contemporary ideals of individual freedom. The aim of my dissertation is to provide a first remedy to this gap, by outlining a better theoretical and empirical understanding of freedom ideals in contemporary mass values, as well as their attitudinal consequences.

The first of my essays contributes to a more refined theoretical analysis of freedom ideals by presenting a novel, psychological, interpretation of Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty*. This essay also suggests previous research has neglected that Berlin was critical not only of enlightened ideals of positive liberty, but also of romantic ones, which might be even more widespread today. The second essay provides a more nuanced empirical understanding of contemporary ideals of freedom. Through statistical analysis of survey data, it demonstrates that Berlin's negative-positive distinction does in fact hold also in popular opinion; and that the two dimensions have rather different effects on moral and legal permissiveness. The third essay, finally, scrutinises a recent example of disrespect in the name of liberty: the Danish cartoon controversy. This exercise delves deeper into the study of the disrespectful tendencies of romantic ideals of liberty, which Essay I showed to be neglected, and yet crucial according to Berlin.

The common core in all three studies is their analysis of popular ideals of liberty – which they address either theoretically (Essay I), quantitatively (Essay II) or qualitatively (Essay III).²⁵ Each essay also examines the potential effects of valuing liberty. The first essay discusses its effects on coercion in the name of liberty, while the third essay focuses on its links to disrespect.

The second essay stands out since, in contrast to the others, it does not focus on either coercion or disrespect; or, for that matter, on any other effects of positive liberty that are as clearly disconcerting. This essay instead shows that valuing positive liberty does not lead to as much *moral permissiveness* as does valuing negative liberty; and in fact to slightly less approval of *non-compliance to legal norms* than does its negative counterpart. The reason for this focus is that both moral permissiveness and non-compliance to legal norms are of fundamental concern to the literature that this particular essay addresses: the debate between those who lament and those who welcome freedom values from the viewpoint of democratic civiness (Cf. Putnam, 2000; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).

²⁵ While the first two essays explicitly discuss Berlin's positive-negative distinction, Essay III does not. The reason I have not explicitly connected this last discussion to Berlin's critique of positive liberty is that my main goal in this essay is to distinguish between what we might call two types of positive liberty: the enlightened ideal of autonomy, and the romantic ideal of authentic self-expression. Thus, I believe it would only complicate the discussion unnecessarily to bring in the theoretically prior distinction between positive and negative liberty as well.

Essay I. The Inversion of Liberty. Isaiah Berlin and Coercion in the Name of Liberty

The first essay explores what has been called Berlin's 'inversion thesis': his argument as to why positive ideals of liberty would be prone to excuse or even encourage coercion in the name of liberty.

To the extent that previous research has analysed this aspect of Berlin's thought, it has focused mainly on the claim that positive liberty leads to tyranny in the name of freedom *by logical steps*. In their reading, Berlin's concern was that, if we agree that freedom can be equated with the positive notion of rational self-mastery, then we must also agree that liberation can sometimes require coercion of the supposedly irrational, those who fail to master themselves, for the sake of their freedom. To this, many have objected that surely we may agree that freedom is rational self-mastery and at the same time deny the possibility that we could ever know what is rational for others better than they can for themselves. In other words, not all positive conceptions of liberty allow the monistic conclusion that our ends in life must all fit into a harmonious pattern in order to count as rational. Berlin, it is therefore often concluded, is simply too critical towards positive liberty.

My objection, however, is that Berlin's concern was not limited to what positive liberty may *logically* allow for. He clearly states that positive liberty is more liable to lead to tyranny even when such a conclusion does not follow by 'logically reputable steps'. George Crowder calls this Berlin's 'inversion thesis', and acknowledges that Berlin portrays it as neither logical nor merely accidental. However, since not even Crowder has provided a satisfactory reconstruction of the nature and pattern of this inversion process, I try to remedy this in my essay.

The process of inversion that Berlin had in mind, I suggest, is best described as psychological. For Berlin, the danger of positive liberty was rooted in the treacherous power that he attributed to ideas and metaphors over our mind – a power that he believed could occasionally grow to be so strong as to render us immune against critical argument and reasoning. Berlin furthermore believed, I argue, that most human beings *want* to believe that there need to be no trade-offs between different values, that all ends coincide. In other words, he seems to have thought that there is a universal psychological tendency towards monism already to begin with, so to speak. His concern, therefore, was that, positive freedom paves the way for fooling ourselves that freedom harmonises with other values. Positive liberty, as opposed to negative, simply fails to remind us that when a person chooses what we think is irrational or simply wrong, this is nevertheless a free choice, and that if we interfere with this choice, we cannot maximise both freedom and the other value, but only sacrifice one value for another.

Positive liberty, in sum, allows us to conveniently forget that there are trade-offs between different values in life, and that liberty therefore often

comes at the cost of other values. This is what makes it psychologically risky, according to Berlin.

Contrary to what has been claimed by previous research, I also show that Berlin was especially sceptical towards two aspects of positive ideals of liberty. First, he criticises their focus on freedom from internal rather than external constraints to the self, because this allows us to say that we can liberate people from themselves, as it were. Secondly, and perhaps more surprisingly, he is also critical of their focus on the free formation of one's preferences, rather than the freedom to enact one's preferences. This is because he fears that too much focus on freedom of the soul, as we might call it, risks undermining our wish to change our political reality, to stand up against those who deprive us of freedom of action.

My reconstruction of Berlin's inversion thesis also reveals, finally, that Berlin's warnings do not only apply to the enlightenment notion of liberation by reason, a popular target among contemporary political theorists concerned with repression in the name of liberty. According to Berlin, romantic ideals such as authenticity and individual self-realization are equally vulnerable to this inversion.

The main contribution of this study is to nuance our current understanding of Berlin's negative-positive distinction, and his critique of positive liberty. By reconstructing Berlin's inversion thesis, the essay provides a more elaborate psychological interpretation of Berlin than previous research offers – and also one that suggests he is more relevant today than previous accounts have recognised.

A potential limitation for this essay is the lack of a larger discussion of the interpretive principles involved in the reading of a historical thinker. A contextualist might object that Berlin's warnings cannot be translated into a contemporary context at all (Skinner, 1969). Nevertheless, we can at least be certain that such an objection would not have been raised by Berlin himself. In spite of much critique from historians to the effect that he gave too little attention to context, he insisted that when studying historical thought, our main concern should be how to apply it to the problems of our own time (Berlin, 2000: 8; Crowder, 2004: 194).

Essay II. Freedom in Mass Values: Egocentric, Humanistic, or Both? Using Isaiah Berlin to Understand a Contemporary Debate

In contrast to the first essay, the second starts in the empirical debate regarding the spreading commitment to freedom in mass values. More specifically, it addresses the debate between those who put forward an 'egocentric' and those who prefer a 'humanistic' understanding of freedom values.²⁶

²⁶ These terms are used by Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 292. I readily admit that they are far from ideal for denoting the two sides in this debate, and even more problematic as labels for

In the first camp, we find scholars such as Robert Putnam, Scott C. Flanagan and Robert Bellah, who interpret the increased focus on valuing freedom as a rise in egocentrism, and a general relaxation of all social norms, including solidarity and rule abidance. On the other side, we find Ronald Inglehart, Christian Welzel and Russell Dalton, according to whom valuing freedom leads to less permissiveness of practices that ‘violate humanistic norms’; and to a stronger internalised sense of duty to the common good.

I suggest it is misleading to see this debate as one between different ‘readings’ of the same values, as is commonly done in existing research. Instead, I propose, the two sides appear to be talking of two very different notions of freedom values to begin with. While the pessimistic side speaks of what Berlin would call negative liberty, the optimistic side speaks of what he refers to as positive liberty. I also show that the empirical consequences that either side expects from freedom values resonate rather well with the empirical consequences that Berlin outlines; with the difference, of course, that Berlin is more critical of positive liberty than either side is in this debate.

The introduction of Berlin’s framework in the literature on mass values results not only in further theoretical clarity, but also in five new hypotheses. The main contribution of this essay lies in its test of these hypotheses, using survey data from ten affluent Western countries that were part of *World Values Surveys 2005*.

I first conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in order to test the main hypothesis: that positive and negative freedom values are indeed two distinct individual level dimensions – i.e. that people do not necessarily value one of these things because they value the other. It is worth noting that CFA differs from exploratory factor analysis, which is the main technique employed by previous research within the field. CFA allows us to test a certain, theoretically defined model; and it also allows the researcher to ‘control for’ battery effects, i.e. that certain survey items may cluster together only because they were asked consecutively. Exploratory factor analysis, by contrast, merely tries to minimise the variance in the data, without any theoretical preconception as to what dimensions one might find, and without any possibility of taking potential battery effects into consideration (Bollen, 1989).²⁷

The most important finding in Essay II is that positive and negative freedom values are indeed two different dimensions, as can be seen from the results of the confirmatory factor analysis. This finding is further corroborated by the fact that, just as hypothesised, the two dimensions appear to

negative and positive freedom values, respectively. However, by changing these terms, I believe I would only add to the confusion in the empirical scholarly discussion that I address in Essay II. Since one of my main goals in this essay is to clarify this debate, which is already conceptually and theoretically muddled, I have thus chosen to keep Inglehart’s terminology.

²⁷ For an example of exploratory factor analysis, see Table II.

have different effects on moral permissiveness towards for example prostitution; as well as on the acceptance of tax cheating, and other types of non-compliance with legal norms. This is shown through OLS regression analyses that control for the impact of age, education and religiosity.²⁸ In line with my hypotheses, these analyses show that valuing negative liberty leads a person to be much more morally permissive towards for example suicide; as well as more condoning of non-compliance with legal norms, such as tax cheating.

My expectations regarding the effects of positive liberty are in part contradicted, however. Contrary to my hypothesis, valuing positive liberty does not lead to *less* moral permissiveness. On the other hand, the effect of positive liberty is still considerably smaller than that of negative liberty. Finally, just as expected, valuing positive liberty has the opposite effect from valuing negative liberty on condoning non-compliance with legal norms. Thus, while negative liberty leads to more acceptance of illegal behaviour, positive liberty in fact leads to less. However, this result is tempered by the fact that the effect size is not particularly impressive in substantial terms.

One limitation in this essay is that, in order to make room for the empirical discussion, it can only treat Berlin's theoretical framework in a much more simplified manner than in Essay I. This has to do with the inescapable trade-off involved in any project that combines a rather sophisticated theory with empirical data for the first time. For two literatures to be combined, the complexities of each must inevitably be simplified. Hopefully, however, this cost is compensated for by the innovative theoretical perspective and the novel empirical findings achieved by my combination of the two fields.

Another limitation is that I have not been able to use the ideal measures for my theoretical concepts. Since the only survey questions available were originally designed for other purposes than mine, they do not allow me to fully capture the concepts of positive and negative liberty. The ideal solution would of course be to design other measures. Having to leave such a major task aside for now, however, this essay instead tries to tackle the problem more modestly. In contrast to much previous research, which, as I have pointed out in this introduction, tends to ignore the issue of validity altogether, my essay at least includes a thorough discussion of both the problems and advantages of my measures.

²⁸ I also estimated two structural equation models. In the published version of Essay II, these results were only briefly mentioned in note 20. The reader of this book, however, may also inspect these additional results in a novel appendix, which I have added to Essay II.

Essay III: Romantic Liberalism. An Alternative Perspective on Liberal Disrespect in the Muhammad Cartoons Controversy

The first two essays begin with the distinction between negative and positive ideals of liberty, and then discuss their potential consequences; for example, the possibility that valuing positive liberty leads to disrespect towards other people's explicit wishes. The last essay starts at the opposite end: it examines a position that clearly defended, indeed celebrated, disrespect – and then works its way in the reversed direction to uncover the more specific kind of positive liberty ideals that were involved in defence of this stance.

The position I analyse is the one that was taken by Flemming Rose, previously editor for the culture section in *Jyllands-Posten*, one of Denmark's largest newspapers. In 2005, the paper commissioned and published twelve cartoons of the Muslim prophet Muhammad, which famously sparked the so-called Danish cartoon controversy.²⁹ Rose and many others claimed that a good liberal should ridicule religion, and thus that using one's right to freedom of speech in disrespectful ways is not only within the legal limits of free expression, but in fact a morally valuable act in and of itself. By publishing the cartoons, in this view, *Jyllands-Posten* set a moral example.

The predominant understanding of the cartoon debate presents it as a case of what William Galston has termed 'enlightenment liberalism', a conception of liberalism that has recently come under attack. Enlightenment liberalism is characterised by taking the ultimate goal of liberal principles to be the furthering of a comprehensive ideal: autonomy, in the sense of critical self-reflection and self-direction. According to an enlightenment liberal, freedom of speech, for example, should be used in ways that promote the character ideal of autonomy. According to Galston, this intertwining of allegedly value neutral liberal policies with a certain sectarian conception of the good thus gives rise to attempts to make people 'autonomous by illiberal means', as Christian Joppke aptly formulates it (Galston, 1995; Galston, 2002: 15-27; Joppke, 2007: 16).³⁰ This is also how Christian Rostbøll has recently suggested that we should understand the position that was taken by the most vehement defenders of the cartoon publication, including Flemming Rose (Rostbøll, 2009; Rostbøll, 2011).

My essay, however, challenges this interpretation. Rostbøll fails to recognise that those who defended the cartoons said little to suggest that they thought the cartoons would promote the moral ideal of autonomy as rational

²⁹ The cartoons were the result of a request from Rose, who invited forty members of the Danish editorial cartoonists union to draw the Muslim prophet 'as they saw him' (Rose, 2005). The request elicited twelve cartoons, out of which the most famous portrayed Muhammad with a bomb inscribed with the Muslim confession of faith in his turban. Some of the other cartoons portrayed Muslims as suicide bombers and generally blood-thirsty; yet others were more neutral in content; and some even poked fun at the editors of *Jyllands-Posten*. For a longer background, see Essay III.

³⁰ Also see Lomasky, 1987; King, 1999; Kukathas, 2007.

self-reflection. They simply urged Muslims to embrace the ‘enlightenment’ value of a separation between religion and state, and the right to freedom of speech. Thus, by enlightenment values, they only referred to political ideals, not comprehensive ideals, such as that of autonomous reflection.

This, however, does not mean that there were no ethical ideals invoked in this debate. Quite the contrary: as my essay goes on to show, such arguments were commonplace, but they invoked the value of dedicated, authentic self-expression, not of autonomous self-reflection.

The main contribution of this essay lies in developing the concept of romantic liberalism: a conception of liberalism that places at its heart the promotion of authentic self-expression, and that I argue is exemplified by Rose’s position. From the perspective of romantic liberalism, disrespect is not a mere side effect of trying to enlighten those who are supposedly in the dark, as it is for enlightenment liberals. Rather, disrespect is something to strive for; it is a sign of moral standing, since it shows that a person is doing her utmost to express her authentic feelings or opinions, and that she does not let herself be held back by the fact that doing so may hurt or anger someone else.

The conclusions of the last essay in this book contribute to two literatures. First, they suggest that, if we are to understand recent sources of disrespect in the name of liberty, we must recognise that enlightenment liberalism is rivalled by a strand of thought that is perhaps even more popular and aggressive, namely romantic liberalism. In this sense, the essay offers a closer examination of the romantic ideals of positive liberty that I discussed already in Essay I, when showing that Berlin believed these ideals to be just as treacherous as the ideal of autonomy.

Secondly, my conclusions also shed new light on our understanding of Rose, a key actor in the Danish cartoon controversy. One might perhaps even call him its protagonist. My scrutiny of Rose’s arguments provides the first attempt to understand and classify his position. It shows not only that he invokes romantic ideals of morality, but also that he does not, as has been assumed, frame the cartoon publication as a way of liberating Muslims. Instead, he frames it as a way of liberating non-Muslims from the restraint and self-censorship that he believes they have imposed upon themselves out of misguided respect for Muslims.

Strictly speaking, the conclusions from this essay are limited to the one actor I have analysed: Flemming Rose. In my concluding discussion, I nevertheless indicate the potential fruitfulness of romantic liberalism as a description for the position taken by others than Rose in the cartoon controversy, and indeed beyond it. Further research is of course needed to test if romantic liberalism is also present in other situations and similarly leads to the celebration of disrespect. Alternative cases of romantic liberalism might for example be found in discussions regarding the Muslim veil, school curricula and general education policies, intimate relationships, or prostitution.

However, in these discourses, as opposed to the one that I have analysed, arguments from romantic liberalism are likely to be more tangled up with other salient themes, for example the attitude one takes towards the state as opposed to the private sector, or regarding the religious-secular divide.

The reason that I chose to focus on the case of the Muhammad cartoons controversy was not only that I believe previous research, most notably the work done by Rostbøll, has misinterpreted the situation by erroneously linking the defence of the cartoons to enlightenment liberalism. I also believe that the discourse surrounding the Muhammad cartoons allows us to see the position of romantic liberalism more clearly than many other comparable discourses do; and clarity is crucial in the development of a concept such as romantic liberalism, a category that must be outlined carefully before it can be applied to other topics.

Conclusions and future research

My over-all aim in this dissertation has been to theoretically and empirically deepen and nuance our understanding of what it means to value freedom in contemporary public opinion, and what consequences this commitment may have on our attitudes towards diversity and permissiveness. Each of my three essays thus takes a step towards providing a more thorough understanding of these issues.

The first essay does so by theoretically disentangling how Berlin's framework of positive and negative liberty might be relevant today; and by reconstructing the mechanism that Berlin expected to lead supporters of positive ideals of liberty to the conclusion that we can coerce others against their explicit wishes, and still insist that we are siding *with* freedom, not against it.

The second essay goes on to study Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty empirically, by statistically analysing contemporary attitudes in public opinion. This shows that positive and negative liberty do indeed form two separate value dimensions in public opinion today, and that these two dimensions have different consequences for our moral permissiveness and rule abidance.

The third essay, finally, scrutinises the specific event of the Muhammad cartoons controversy, and thereby both theoretically and empirically analyses the links between romantic ideals of liberty, on the one hand, and disrespect towards a religious minority, on the other. The conclusions in this last essay reveal what Essay I only hinted at, namely that romantic ideals of liberty, such as dedicated and authentic self-expression, are likely to be at the root of contemporary instances of liberal disrespect in the name of liberty.

In what follows, I shall outline, first, the main scientific contributions of the essays taken together as a whole; and, secondly, a few guidelines for future research.

Empirical and theoretical contributions

First, and most importantly, the essays in this book contribute to our empirical knowledge of contemporary ideals of freedom in public opinion. Together, they do so by theoretically introducing, operationalising and empirically analysing Berlin's negative-positive distinction in contemporary mass values; and, in the third article, Galston's distinction between reformation and enlightenment liberalism.

One of the main conclusions from the three essays considered as a whole is that Berlin's distinction between negative and positive liberty, and his warnings against the latter, are highly relevant to the empirical study of contemporary public opinion.

To my knowledge, previous research has never before tested whether positive and negative liberty can be distinguished in public opinion. Nor has it examined the empirical consequences of valuing either ideal. Indeed, as this introduction has tried to show, previous empirical research on mass values has mainly studied not what we can rightly call ideals of freedom, or freedom values, at all. Rather, it has measured what I have suggested are only the potential consequences of valuing liberty: sexual and moral permissiveness, for example.

My findings show that positive and negative liberty do indeed represent two dimensions of freedom values in public opinion, and that these dimensions affect permissiveness differently. They also shed new light on the neglected topic of romantic ideals of liberty. These conclusions yield a clearer picture both of the nature and the potential attitudinal consequences of valuing freedom today, as compared to what has been offered by previous empirical value studies.

Secondly, this dissertation also contributes to existing research regarding the intellectual legacy of Isaiah Berlin, and his contemporary relevance in particular. My conclusions in Essay I suggest that previous analyses of his thought have not fully recognised the psychological nature of his discussion of the two liberties, and especially of his warnings against positive liberty. This has led many to conclude that he exaggerated his case against positive liberty, since all ideals of positive liberty do not conceptually justify coercion in the name of liberty. In contrast, I suggest Berlin would have insisted that we be cautious against all ideals of positive liberty; because, quite independently of their logical implications, they may exercise a treacherous psychological power over our mind.

I also show that previous interpretations of Berlin's thought have focused too one-sidedly on his warnings against enlightenment ideals of positive

liberty, at the cost of overlooking his warnings against its more romantic versions. This neglected side of Berlin's discussion might be of special relevance today, as the findings from the Muhammad cartoons controversy in my third essay suggest.

Third, my dissertation also puts forward an important addition to the burgeoning literature that warns us against enlightenment liberalism. More specifically, I take issue with William Galston, who has argued that the main source of moral arrogance in the name of liberty today is a conception of liberalism that places the fostering of autonomy as rational self-reflection at the heart of the liberal project (Galston, 1995; Galston, 2002). In contrast, my conclusions regarding both Berlin (Essay I) and the Muhammad cartoons controversy (Essay III) suggest that Galston neglects the problems that come with what I call romantic liberalism. This conception of liberalism takes the goal of liberal institutions to consist in fostering not enlightened, but romantic ideals of liberty, such as authentic and dedicated self-expression.

As I suggest in Essay III, romantic liberalism is more likely than enlightenment liberalism to celebrate disrespect as virtuous in and of itself. It is also, perhaps even more disconcertingly, more likely to support a kind of 'liberal fundamentalism' of dedication and uncompromising fervour; in contrast to the sober and rational public debate often emphasised by enlightenment liberalism.

Political theory and political sociology combined: a methodological contribution

This dissertation combines two seemingly disparate literatures within political science: the empirical research of contemporary mass values, which is traditionally pursued by political sociologists and psychologists; and the more normative discussion regarding different ideals of liberty among political theorists. Taken together, my essays thereby also make a *fourth* contribution: they show how political sociology and political theory can be combined in order to enrich each other.

As this introductory chapter has tried to show, the empirical research of freedom in mass values suffers from a lack of both theoretical clarity and empirical nuance. Indeed, there is a long tradition within this field to assume that mass attitudes are not particularly refined, and often incoherent (Converse, 1964). My conclusions, however, suggest that in the case of freedom, the opposite holds true: popular attitudes turn out to be much more nuanced than previous research has acknowledged.

I owe this finding to the already existing theoretical discussions that I have employed as analytical frameworks: most importantly, Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty, but also Galston's discussion regarding reformation and enlightenment liberalism. This suggests that

scholars who study popular attitudes may sometimes underestimate their theoretical complexity. Perhaps future research will find that other theoretical discussions can similarly clarify empirical conundrums regarding public opinion, and salient themes in our culture. In sum, political theory is able to bring new clarity and crucial focus to the field of mass value studies.

On the other hand, the empirical study of mass values can also help political theory to specify, reveal and criticise ideals that are relevant and salient in our contemporary culture. By this, I do not of course mean that empirical findings provide a clear-cut answer to normative questions. When I claim that the study of popular opinion can enrich political theory, what I have in mind is the specific kind of political theory that Berlin encouraged, which is considerably more moderate in its ambition to change society than for example the project of John Rawls (Rawls, 1993).

According to Berlin, the main goal of political theory was negatively defined: to avoid evil, to say what we should *not* do, rather than to construct positively defined principles from which we can derive answers as to what kind of politics we *should* engage in. To paraphrase Judith Shklar, who has outlined a ‘liberalism of fear’ (Shklar, 1998), perhaps we might call this approach a ‘political theory of fear’.³¹

From Berlin’s perspective, the primary task of the theorist is to expose the categories, concepts and metaphors that guide our thinking, and how they can be perverted into dangerous conclusions (Berlin, 1991: 29; Galipeau, 1994: 36; Crowder, 2004: 188). To not do this is to risk remaining at the mercy of ideas that, without the critical distance achieved by careful theoretical dissection, may grow too powerful for us to control (Berlin, 1997: 237). To neglect ideas that are salient in our culture might thus be politically dangerous, as Berlin suggests at the beginning of *Two Concepts of Liberty*:

Dangerous, because when ideas are neglected by those who ought to attend to them – that is to say, those who have been trained to critically think about ideas – they sometimes acquire an unchecked momentum and an irresistible power over multitudes of men that may grow too violent to be affected by rational criticism (Berlin, 2008b: 167).

It is difficult to interpret not only this passage, but also the surrounding discussion with which Berlin chooses to begin his famous essay, as anything other than an encouragement to theorists to pay more attention to political reality, in spite of its theoretical untidiness.

I therefore suggest that it is important that theorists analyse not just any ideas, but especially the ones that are popular in our own time. These ideas may require special attention in order for us to be able to achieve a critical

³¹ Indeed, it has been suggested that Berlin’s ideological position is also best described as a liberalism of fear (Müller, 2008).

distance to them. By not exposing such ideas, we run the risk of accepting them as truths, as something that it would be unnatural to oppose.

This may for example be the case with romantic notions of liberty, such as self-expression and authenticity, which may seem as something that it is only natural for politics to promote. These notions may all too easily appear as ‘soft’, even therapeutic, truths about human nature; when in fact they are also comprehensive ideals that put forward one view of the good life towards which we should all strive.

For example, Inglehart and his associates at times seem to view the ideal of self-expression as the epitome of human development. This is because they rely on the much-criticised psychological theory of Abraham H. Maslow, who assumes that there is a universally valid human hierarchy of needs, in which self-expression takes the highest position (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 33, 139). My point, I should stress, is not that this is necessarily false. It is rather that, even if self-expression is an essential human need, it is *also* a popular and therefore powerful comprehensive ideal, a particular conception of the good in Rawlsian terms (Rawls, 1993: 9-13). We can only notice this, however, by following Berlin’s admonition to attend to the ideas that dominate ‘our own world’ (Berlin, 2008b: 168).

Avenues for future research

The previous section tried to show the benefits of the cross-disciplinary approach that I have chosen for this dissertation. There are also, however, a number of research gaps that follow from my choice to focus on freedom ideals from several angles, rather than one. In what follows, I consider how these limitations open up avenues for future research to explore.

One of the most important tasks for future research is to develop new measures, which are able to capture positive and negative liberty better than the ones that I have used, since the latter were not originally designed for this purpose. Perhaps, with more nuanced survey questions, it might even be possible to differentiate between *different* ideals of positive liberty.

Using such new measures, it would most probably be rewarding to further probe the effects of valuing positive and negative liberty on other attitudes and behaviour. This might shed new light on changing voting patterns, left/right positioning, and tolerance of various kinds.

Another aspect that I have not dealt with, but that would certainly be of great interest, represents the opposite angle: how can we explain the fact that some people value a certain kind of liberty more than others? Personality traits, class, age and gender might for example predict our positioning with regards to positive and negative liberty. For scholars of cultural value orientations, it might also be of interest to move beyond the analysis of individual differences, and examine cross-national differences in valuing positive and negative liberty.

It is also important not to overlook the benefits of qualitative data. Interviews would certainly complement the findings that I have presented on the basis of surveys. Interviews would allow us to ask about the mechanism that leads for example positive liberty to inversion; and they are likely to provide a richer understanding of whether or not it is true that the average person does not differentiate between political and comprehensive ideals when it comes to liberty, as I have to some extent assumed.³²

Moreover, my focus on the effects of valuing liberty on attitudes to diversity has led me to leave aside the topic of republican liberty, which has been called the ‘third’ concept of liberty (Pettit, 1997; Skinner, 2002). However, the finding that popular attitudes concerning freedom are more complex and multi-dimensional than is often assumed suggests that it might be possible to also find a third, republican, dimension of freedom values in public opinion.³³

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I would advise future research – both theoretical and empirical – to pay further attention to what I have called romantic liberalism. This concept did not initially form a part of my project, but turned out to be an essential part of my findings, and a potential trend that needs further consideration. While I only studied the case of the Muhammad cartoons controversy, there is reason to examine whether romantic liberty might also be at play in other situations.

Research from the United Kingdom and the United States for example shows that the average person displays what I would suggest is a rather romantic view towards political and moral deliberation. While standing up for, expressing and holding on to one’s beliefs was important for the respondents, they considered it an invasion of privacy to have to give reasons and arguments for their convictions. The respondents largely believed that even when done in a courteous manner, it was a violation of freedom of thought to try and argue for the objective truth of one’s own political or moral position. In other words, they saw it as problematic for anyone to try to convince them of another view through discussion. For them, a good discussion was characterised by open expression of everyone’s stand-point, without trying to reach agreement (Johnston Conover, Searing et al., 2001). This suggests that it would be of great interest to combine the analytical framework of romantic liberalism with further studies of how deliberation is understood in contemporary political culture.

Perhaps we may also find that it is not always enlightenment liberalism and its ideal of autonomy that is invoked in favour of tougher immigration tests, or veil bans; nor in arguments for the penalization of prostitution, pornography, or drugs. It is possible that a closer scrutiny of some of these discourses, in combination with the novel concept of romantic liberalism that I

³² See my discussion on pp. 17-18.

³³ To my knowledge, there has only been one such attempt previously: Bean, 2001.

have outlined, will show that the values invoked in support of these prohibitions rather belong to the romantic tradition. Perhaps, for example, the liberty that is popularly perceived as clashing with the veil, or prostitution, is not always the enlightened liberty of autonomous reflection – but rather the romantic liberty of authentic self-expression and self-realization.

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Appendix

Descriptive data for the variables in Table II

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. dev.</i>	<i>Number of observations</i>
The justifiability of...					
<i>Abortion</i>	1	10	5.26	3.050	14,595
<i>Divorce</i>	1	10	6.51	2.752	14,676
<i>Homosexuality</i>	1	10	5.90	3.420	14,335
<i>Euthanasia</i>	1	10	5.67	3.138	14,308
<i>Prostitution</i>	1	10	3.93	2.831	14,523
<i>Suicide</i>	1	10	3.35	2.722	14,300
<i>Avoiding fare</i>	1	10	2.30	1.999	14,986
<i>Claiming government benefits</i>	1	10	2.05	1.909	14,890
<i>Tax cheating</i>	1	10	2.20	1.988	14,941
Other variables:					
<i>Authenticity</i>	1	4	3.41	0.594	14,111
<i>Autonomy</i>	1	4	3.27	0.665	14,025
<i>Self-realization</i>	1	6	4.23	1.222	13,113
<i>Non-conformism</i>	1	6	2.97	1.382	13,099
<i>Independence</i>	0	1	0.60	0.491	15,250
<i>Insubordination</i>	0	1	0.13	0.341	13,409
<i>Importance of free speech</i>	0	1	0.21	0.410	14,866
<i>Teach child tolerance and respect</i>	0	1	0.83	0.377	15,250
<i>More say in government, job, community</i>	0	1	0.36	0.480	14,699

Notes: The sample is the same as in Essay II, and includes Australia, Britain, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States (World Values Survey, 2005)

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Essay I



The Inversion of Liberty

Isaiah Berlin and Coercion in the Name of Liberty

Abstract

This article reconstructs Isaiah Berlin's 'inversion thesis': the notion that positive liberty leads to coercion in the name of liberty. Previous research has understood Berlin as analysing the logical implications of positive liberty; or, alternatively, as observing a mere historical fact with no apparent explanation. This paper suggests that there is a third, psychological, layer to Berlin's argument. The inversion of liberty, I argue, is best understood as a psychological process intimately linked to Berlin's insistence on the treacherous, at times dangerous, power of ideas over our actions – even when these actions are not logically justified but only appear so to us. My reading implies that the numerous examples of positive liberty which Berlin provides are united by a pattern that he believes makes these ideals more liable than others to lead their advocates to the fallacious conclusion that coercion is an act of liberation. I show that Berlin traced this risk to two elements in positive liberty: their focus on freedom from internal rather than external constraints to the self, and their interest in preference formation rather than preference enactment. Finally, I show that Berlin's warnings are not exhausted by the enlightenment notion of liberation by reason, the popular target among contemporary theorists concerned with repression in the name of liberty. My reading shows that Berlin saw romantic ideals of liberty, such as authenticity and self-realization, as equally vulnerable to this inversion – the very ideals of liberty, one might add, that are currently on the rise in public opinion.

Introduction

If we care about diversity and tolerance, we must be constantly vigilant against ideals that invite paternalism or even coercion; especially if they do so in the name of liberty. This was the simple yet compelling thesis in Isaiah Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty (TCL)*.¹ The goal of this paper is to understand why Berlin believed that certain ideals of liberty open up for this danger, and through what kind of process such an inversion of liberty may take place.

Berlin believed that when studying historical thinkers, our main goal should be to focus on the aspects of their thought that can be applied to our own contemporary problems (Berlin, 2000: 8); an approach for which he was sometimes criticised, not least by historians of ideas (Hanley, 2004: 338; Cherniss, 2006). Why, then, should we return to his critique of positive liberty, the target of which, it has been suggested, was Soviet communism – an enemy that no longer exists (Franco, 2003: 490)?²

The answer that this paper offers is that Berlin was critical of positive liberty not only for historical, or for that matter logical, reasons. Berlin, I suggest, saw positive liberty as the kind of idea that resembled 'Frankenstein's monster', as he put it. He insisted that, once created, certain ideas might grow beyond our control, thus leading us to the very opposite of what they initially represented (Berlin, 1997: 237). In my reading, the process by which he thought that positive liberty might lead to tyranny does not, then, take place by sound arguments, nor by mere coincidence. Rather, he saw this as a matter of steps that were hard to resist for *psychological* reasons, or so I shall argue in what follows.

The psychological reading of Berlin that I put forward in this paper implies that his warnings have gained a particular urgency in the light of recent developments in many Western democracies. Sociological studies show that the average person in Western democracies has become increasingly committed to individual freedom, self-expression and authenticity as personal ideals in life (Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). At the same time, not least due to immigration, the same person is increasingly exposed to cultural and religious minorities with quite different values; or so, at least, the situation tends to be described. The impulse to impose her personal ideals on these minorities in the name of their freedom therefore looms large (cf. Galston, 2002: 15-27; Joppke, 2007; Rostbøll, 2009).

¹ Following Berlin, I shall use 'liberty' and 'freedom' synonymously throughout the paper (Berlin, 2008d: 169).

² In a similar vein, Michael Kenny claims the following, in a review article on Berlin's contribution to contemporary political theory: "Though his notions of negative and positive liberty remain in intellectual currency, it is doubtful whether this model provides the most plausible justification for returning to Berlin" (Kenny, 2000: 1031).

A political liberal might of course object that even if there are comprehensive ideals of freedom that invite the desire to liberate others against their will, the risk of tyranny can be avoided as long as those who hold such ideals understand that they have no right to impose their comprehensive ideals on anyone else (Rawls, 1993). In my reading, however, Berlin's argument is that certain ideals of liberty allow us to think that we are not imposing anything on anyone by coercing or restricting them to begin with – but that we are in fact liberating them, as it were, even when this conclusion is clearly fallacious. In a time such as our own, when freedom has acquired 'mantric standing in our thought', as Philip Pettit puts it (Pettit, 1997: 6), it therefore seems especially relevant to reconstruct Berlin's argument as to why and how certain ideals of freedom might invoke repression or restriction in the very name of liberation.

The following section recapitulates existing discussions on how to understand Berlin's critique of positive liberty. This exercise reveals that one side of Berlin's warnings remains largely neglected, namely his inversion thesis, which suggests that positive liberty lends itself more easily to the conclusion that tyranny is justified even when such a conclusion is not supported by sound arguments. In the subsequent section, I show that the existing account of this inversion thesis, which George Crowder has put forward, remains unsatisfactory in several regards. In the third section, I propose that Berlin saw the inversion process as the result of an underlying pattern that invites the belief that liberty is compatible with coercion by psychological steps, rather than logical. In the fourth section, I further show that Berlin believed this risk was invited by two elements in positive liberty: first, the focus on internal rather than external constraints, and, secondly, the quest for liberty in preference formation rather than preference enactment. This discussion also reveals that Berlin's target was not mainly, as is often assumed, what we might call enlightenment ideals of positive liberty: ideals that emphasise liberation by rational contemplation. His critique also applies to what we may call romantic ideals of liberty: ideals that strive for passionate authenticity and liberation *from* contemplation and the rules of rationality.

The final section summarises my conclusions and their implications. My findings, I suggest, imply that portraying enlightenment liberty as the main enemy of diversity, as is common today (cf. Galston, 2002: 15-27), represents a treacherous oversimplification. It is an oversimplification because Berlin, as my reconstruction shows, directed his critique just as much towards romantic as enlightened ideals of liberty. It is treacherous because it blinds us to threats that stem from ideals of freedom we encounter daily and that do not extol careful reasoning or reflection, but self-expression and authenticity – ideals, one might add, that appear particularly salient in popular culture and public opinion today (cf. Bellah, Madsen et al., 2008; Stolzenberg, 2009).

The problems with positive liberty

Despite its close to hegemonic influence on theoretical discussions of freedom, Isaiah Berlin's *TCL* is notorious for its ambiguity and, at times, overt inconsistency. One thing is certain: the essay devotes almost three times as much space to criticising positive liberty as to delineating negative liberty (Polanowska-Sygułska, 1989; Galipeau, 1994: 85). It has therefore been suggested that one of its main goals, if not the most central one, was to warn against positive liberty (Macpherson, 1984: 96; Crowder, 2004: 68; Cherniss, 2007: 95).

Indeed, such an interpretation squares well with what Berlin believed to be the primary goal of philosophy: to reveal how the hidden categories and metaphors in which we think can be subject to distortion, and thereby help us avoid being deceived by ourselves as well as others – to know when people 'are talking rot', as he put it (Berlin, 1991: 29; Galipeau, 1994: 36; Crowder, 2004: 188). Yet, even if we take one of Berlin's main goals to be his critique of positive liberty, as I will do in this paper, there are still many different interpretations as to how precisely we should understand this critique.

In the decades that followed the first publication of *TCL*, many commentators assumed that Berlin's argument was mainly conceptual. He was taken to champion 'freedom from', a negative concept of liberty defined by a lack of obstacles, against 'freedom to', a purportedly invalid positive concept, which equates liberty to the presence of possibilities (cf. McCloskey, 1965; Ryan, 1965; Macfarlane, 1966; Gray, 1980; Taylor, 1997).³

However, Berlin was generally sceptical towards philosophical abstractions ungrounded in political reality, which suggests that his main intention was not to discredit positive freedom as a legitimate notion of freedom (Crowder, 2004: 69; Cherniss, 2007: 95; Ricciardi, 2007: 126). Indeed, he explicitly states that negative and positive liberty are 'at no great logical distance from one another', and that their difference lies in having 'historically' moved in divergent directions (Berlin, 2008d: 178-79). Throughout *TCL*, he refers to positive and negative liberty not only as concepts, but 'notions', 'conceptions', 'systems of ideas', and 'ideals'. He also describes their nature in terms of what it means that 'I feel free', or 'I identify myself with' 'the creed of' one of the two freedoms (Berlin, 2008d: 181, 168, 185). At one point, he even speaks of the two liberties as 'profoundly divergent and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life' (Berlin, 2008d: 212).

All this suggests that Berlin did not intend for his distinction to apply only, or even primarily, to two formal concepts of freedom; nor between one he considered formal and one he considered substantial (Galipeau, 1994: 8-

³ For an overview of this vast debate, cf. Harris, 2008.

9). Instead, we should understand both notions as two types of ideals regarding liberty, two conceptions of freedom that people might value (Gray, 1995: 17; Crowder, 2004: 78). Following John Gray, we may roughly say that negative liberty denotes ‘non-interference by others when acting according to one’s actual or potential desires’, while its positive counterpart ‘is the freedom of self-mastery’ (Gray, 1995: 15-16).⁴

Berlin, moreover, readily admits that ‘positive freedom or liberty is an unimpeachable human value’ (Berlin, 1993: 297). The reason he nevertheless warns against it is simply, as he explains in the 1969 introduction to his essays on liberty, that he sees it as more liable than negative liberty to become perverted into ‘the apotheosis of authority’. While he admits that negative liberty may have its fair share of ‘disastrous’ consequences, his point is thus that positive liberty can be more efficiently ‘turned into its opposite and still exploit the favourable associations of its innocent origins’ (Berlin, 2008b: 39).

Berlin thus seems to have believed that one of the main problems with positive liberty was its effects on its followers: its advocates, he suspected, were likely to end up supporting political restriction and coercion under the cloak of liberation (Berlin, 2008d: 178-81). His goal, it has therefore been suggested, was never to deny the value of positive liberty – but to show that this ideal is more liable to distortions than its negative counterpart (Macpherson, 1984: 95; Galipeau, 1994: 104; Gray, 1995: 22; Crowder, 2004: 68-69). This is also the point of departure for the present paper.

According to C.B. Macpherson, the links between positive liberty and authoritarianism that Berlin perceives are of two kinds. The first is logical and stems from the inherent monism of positive liberty, namely its assumption that we can find one single universal and harmonious pattern that makes the different values of all rational beings fit together into a compatible whole (Berlin, 2008d: 212-214). Positive liberty thus supposedly entails the conclusion that the fully rational are justified in ‘liberating’ the less rational by coercing them to do what they would presumably freely choose for themselves, if they were only rational (Macpherson, 1984: 110-11).

The second link, however, is not about something that is ‘logically immanent’ in positive liberty, but rather about what a belief in this liberty is ‘likely’ to induce, Macpherson says. Positive liberty, he notes, ‘lends itself more easily’ to the conclusion that coercion is warranted in the name of liberty, even when such a conclusion relies on a fallacious argument (Macpherson, 1984: 110-11).

⁴ Berlin refers to ‘individual liberty, in either the “negative” or in the “positive” senses of the word’ (Berlin, 2008d: 204). Thus, although he blames positive liberty for being more easily perverted into an idea of freedom as merging one’s individual self into ‘some super-personal entity’, he does not *identify* positive liberty with any collectivist notion (Crowder, 2004: 68; Ricciardi, 2007: 132).

Having made this observation regarding the two links from positive liberty to tyranny, Macpherson nevertheless goes on to discuss only the first, while neglecting the second. In a similar manner, most discussions of *TCL* have in fact focused on Berlin's claim that positive liberty, because of its inherent monism, 'inevitably' or 'necessarily' entails that we can coerce the supposedly irrational in the name of their own good while calling this an act of liberation (Macfarlane, 1966: 79-80; West, 1993: 288; Galipeau, 1994: 101-02; Gray, 1995: 21). A common conclusion from these discussions is therefore that Berlin's concerns were exaggerated. Berlin, we are told, neglected that there are versions of positive liberty that steer clear of monism and instead deny that a truly self-determining or self-realizing individual must reach one specific conclusion. In other words, since Berlin supposedly failed to recognise that there are 'open' conceptions of autonomy that do *not* logically entail that coercion is justified in the name of liberty, he is held to have been too critical of positive liberty (Christman, 1991: 359; Simhony, 1991; West, 1993; Crowder, 2004: 86).

Yet, these discussions neglect that Berlin's critique of positive liberty did not only pertain to its logical implications, as Macpherson indeed recognised. Berlin clearly states that negative and positive liberty 'developed in divergent directions, not always by logically reputable steps' (Berlin, 2008d: 179). In his later introduction, Berlin also returns to the claim that positive liberty is more liable to be used as a justification for tyranny through *false* arguments:

It is doubtless well to remember that belief in negative freedom is compatible with, and (so far as ideas influence conduct) has played its part in generating, great and lasting social evils. My point is that it was much less often defended or disguised by the kind of specious arguments and sleights-of-hand habitually used by the champions of 'positive' freedom in its more sinister forms (Berlin, 2008b: 37).

In sum, Berlin seems to have been fearful of positive liberty for some other reason than that he believed it logically entails tyranny. It is this neglected side of Berlin's thought that the present paper tries to illuminate. Following George Crowder, I shall call it Berlin's inversion thesis (Crowder, 2004: 69-70).⁵

⁵ Mario Ricciardi (2007: 121) also speaks of 'the inversion of liberty'.

The inversion thesis in previous research

Existing accounts of the inversion thesis are in agreement that its roots are to be found in a certain view of human nature, one that allows a division between a higher and a lower self (Christman, 1991: 354-55; Galipeau, 1994: 101; Ricciardi, 2007: 136). Crowder, who has provided the only longer discussion of this matter, offers the following diagnosis:

The positive idea itself, even in the Stoics and Kant, contains a feature, not found in the negative concept, that lays it open to authoritarian corruption. This is the idea that human personality is divided between two selves: on the one hand, the 'higher' or 'true' or authentic self, usually (although not always) associated with reason; on the other, the 'lower' or 'empirical' self, usually associated with the desires and emotions. Once this distinction is drawn, Berlin argues, the way is open to advocating suppression of people's actual desires and wishes in the name of their 'true' or 'real' self (Crowder, 2004: 69-70).

However, since *TCL* is often contradictory and fraught with inconsistencies, only a few pages later, Crowder is forced to admit that Berlin at times suggests 'the subject of negative liberty could be either empirical or authentic'. He then hastily dismisses this statement as 'a mistake on Berlin's part, since it fits so badly with his central argument, the inversion thesis' (Crowder, 2004: 78). Yet it remains unclear to the reader why we should be convinced that Crowder's version of the inversion thesis, which relies only on one specific passage in *TCL*, must take priority over what Berlin explicitly says, not only in the original essay, but also in the later introduction (Berlin, 2008d: 181; Berlin, 2008b: 37).

Nor does Crowder clarify exactly what kind of process is involved in the inversion of liberty. He specifies the inversion thesis in the following way:

From their individualistic or liberal beginnings, Berlin argues, positive conceptions of liberty have developed in modern times in illiberal and ultimately totalitarian directions. The process by which this has occurred is historically contingent – it could have been otherwise – but it is not merely accidental (Crowder, 2004: 69).

To say that the process of inversion is not accidental implies that Berlin had some pattern in mind that made him suspect some ideals of liberty to be more liable to inversion than others. At the same time, if the process of inversion is historically contingent, this must mean that the pattern to look for is not logical; it is not that all positive conceptions of liberty necessarily justify tyranny logically, but that they tend to invite that conclusion in some other sense. Yet, instead of pursuing this further and trying to establish the pattern of inversion, Crowder rather surprisingly seems to end up in the con-

clusion that Berlin was concerned with the logical implications of positive liberty after all:

Having conceded that the steps by which this occurs are ‘not always...logically reputable’, he ought to be more willing to allow that individualist readings of positive liberty are stable enough. The passage from Stoic self-mastery to Stalinist submission is in fact broken by several logic pot-holes. Berlin is inclined to minimize these obstacles by switching, when they appear, from conceptual argument to historical observation: for whatever reason, it is the positive rather than the negative conception that has ‘in fact, and as a matter of history’ been more frequently abused (Crowder, 2004: 84).

However, given that Crowder has himself previously said that Berlin’s inversion thesis is not a claim about necessity but rather of contingency, it is rather ungenerous to nevertheless conclude that, because certain individualist readings of positive liberty do not logically entail that tyranny is justified, Berlin was necessarily wrong in being critical towards them. It seems to me that we cannot know whether Berlin’s concern were exaggerated or not without first knowing his full argument; especially if this particular aspect of his argument against positive liberty is an ‘undercurrent’ that is never ‘completely explicit’, as Crowder indeed recognises (Crowder, 2004: 69). Surely such an implicit argument must first be reconstructed before it can be dismissed. In what follows, I shall thus try to provide such a reconstruction.

Psychological steps to inversion

If the process that Berlin had in mind was neither logically necessary, nor a matter of historical accident, then what could it be? Crowder at one point describes the inversion of liberty as ‘the most spectacular’ instance of what Berlin saw as a more general problem, namely ‘the tendency in modern political discourse to cheapen the ideal of liberty by blurring its boundaries with other values’ (Crowder, 2004: 71). However, by what kind of process does positive liberty invite this tendency?

It has been suggested that this side of Berlin’s critique of positive liberty has to do with his belief in the fact that words, metaphors and ideas exercise a significant and sometimes treacherous power over the human mind, and, in the end, over human actions (Cherniss, 2006; Garrard, 2007; Ricciardi, 2007). Mario Ricciardi notes, for example, that the inversion thesis has to do with ‘the play of political imagination’; that positive liberty ‘*seems* to justify totalitarianism’, and leads one to ‘*feel* authorized to compel others to realise their proper goals’, even when such a conclusion is unwarranted (Ricciardi, 2007: 129,136, my italics).

While I agree with this reading, I think it can benefit from further specification. The process of inversion, I propose, is ultimately psychological. The

steps by which positive liberty leads to inversion, Berlin says, are ‘historically and psychologically intelligible’ (Berlin, 2008d: 198). In order to understand the danger of positive liberty, he also says, we must recognise a ‘psychological and political fact (which lurks behind the apparent ambiguity of the term “liberty”)’.

This is the fact that even the most brutal revolutionaries seem to find it necessary to argue that they are on the side of liberty, although what they have meant by this is very far from the negative liberty celebrated by for example John Stuart Mill (Berlin, 2008d: 207-08).

Berlin in fact seems to think that ideas are not only powerful but perilous. When first trying to explain the conflict between positive and negative liberty, he invokes the image of the idea with an energy of its own: ‘One way of making this clear is in terms of the independent momentum which the, initially perhaps quite harmless, metaphor of self-mastery acquired’ (Berlin, 2008d: 179). Indeed, he even chooses to begin his essay by stating, in a similar vein, that it is ‘dangerous’ to neglect the study of ideas, for ideas left unscrutinised may ‘sometimes acquire an unchecked momentum and an irresistible power over multitudes of men that may grow too violent to be affected by rational criticism’ (Berlin, 2008d: 167). Elsewhere, he even compares ideas to monsters:

Ideas do, at times, develop lives and powers of their own and, like Frankenstein’s monster, act in ways wholly unforeseen by their begetters, and, it may be, directed against their will, and sometimes turn on them and destroy them (Berlin, 1997: 237).

Berlin, then, does not only expect human beings to pervert ideas into *any* fallacious conclusion; he appears to think that we are for some reason prone especially to dangerous conclusions – such as the idea that coercion is justified in the name of liberty.

Perhaps this rather pessimistic assumption in turn has to do with Berlin’s recurrent observation that ‘one of the deepest human desires is to find a unitary pattern’ in which values can be symmetrically ordered: i.e. the monistic belief that there need to be no trade-offs between ultimate values in life, that we can maximise the values we cherish without having to pay a price in terms of some other values that are equally precious to us (Berlin, 2008a: 155). Evidently, he says, believing in such a final solution is ‘a permanent need of mankind’ (Berlin, 1990: 235; Berlin, 2008a: 96).

Berlin also devotes the last two pages of *TCL* to warning us against this monistic assumption – not only as a logical corollary of positive liberty, but also in the form of a deep-set belief that ‘has always proved a deep source of satisfaction both to the intellect and to the emotions’ (Berlin, 2008d: 216). The very last sentence of the essay tells us that the monistic temptation to believe in the possibility of avoiding clashes of values, of combining all

good things in a rational solution, ‘is perhaps a deep and incurable metaphysical need’ (Berlin, 2008d: 217).

Berlin thus seems to have thought that we all *want* to convince ourselves that when coercing someone for some goal – such as ordering a soldier to fight for his country, or forcing a recalcitrant child to go to school – we are in fact not interfering with anyone’s liberty for the sake of some other goal, but engaging in an act of liberation. He seems to be saying that we *like* to think that we are helping the soldier towards self-realization, or enhancing the child’s ‘true’, autonomous, freedom, as it were; even when the soldier and child complain that we are forcing them to do what they have not in fact freely chosen. We must therefore be aware, Berlin insists, of the remarkable ‘ingenuity with which men can prove to their own satisfaction that the road to one ideal also leads to its contrary’ (Berlin, 2008d: 208).

The problem, then, is that positive liberty ‘renders it easy for me to conceive of myself as coercing others for their own sake’, in the name of their true freedom, as it were. If I believe in it, I may indulge in monistic reveries: I may fool myself into thinking that, when others choose what I think is wrong, perhaps they have not chosen freely to begin with. The next step may very well be, then, to think that if I coerce them in the name of the goal I think they should want out of their own free will, I am not even really coercing them at all, but in fact liberating them through my very acts of coercion (Berlin, 2008d: 179-80).

In sum, I propose that Berlin thought the urge to believe that all ends coincide is inherent in most of us – and combined with positive liberty it can become especially dangerous. From this angle, perhaps the fact that Berlin replaced the names of certain philosophers in the revised 1969 version of the essay is not primarily, as suggested by Anthony Arblaster, a sign that these names were not carefully chosen to begin with (Arblaster, 1971: 86). Perhaps the reason is instead that Berlin was not only concerned with any of these examples in and of themselves, but also with the underlying psychological model that united them. He chooses, after all, to discuss the two notions of liberty that he believes have ‘a great deal of human history behind them, and, I dare say, still to come’ (Berlin, 2008d: 169).

In what follows, I shall therefore attempt to look beyond the numerous and sometimes conflicting examples of the inversion process that abound in *TCL*. I shall instead try to reconstruct the pattern these examples have in common: the pattern that Berlin thought led from valuing positive ideals of liberty, on the one hand, to believing that coercion is compatible with freedom, on the other.

The roots of inversion

In an essay that is clearly the main precursor to *TCL*, Berlin says that ‘the only common meaning which the word bears in all these differing, and indeed vehemently opposed, traditions is concerned with the elimination of obstacles to something, which they each believe to be the most important ends of life’ (Berlin, 2008c: 205). This suggests that by asking what obstacles are dangerous for positive as opposed to negative liberty, and what activities the two notions specify as important, we might find a certain pattern that leads one of them to be more open to tyrannical conclusions.

Gerald MacCallum in fact suggested something rather similar, when saying that Berlin’s two notions of liberty can be understood as two different ways of specifying not only who is to be free, but also from what constraints, and to what activities (MacCallum, 1967).

Furthermore, both Christman and Crowder have noted that negative and positive liberty can be regarded as different ways of specifying the content of MacCallum’s three variables; yet, neither of them has shown what kind of constraints or activities the two ideals of freedom identify as most relevant (Crowder, 2004: 78; Christman, 2005: 81). Instead, as we have already seen, they focus on the supposedly different ideas of the self that positive and negative liberty stipulate; which leads them to a conclusion that Berlin himself contradicted. Crowder, as we saw, thus proposes that the positive notion opens up for tyranny because it strives to liberate an authentic self, while negative liberty only pertains to the empirical self – and yet Berlin says that the quest for negative liberty could in fact *also* be a quest for the authentic self (Crowder, 2004: 78).

Since the view of the self does not, after all, appear to distinguish positive ideals of liberty from negative, I suggest we shift the perspective to other elements that might differ between the two types of ideals. As we shall see in the following, focusing on the constraints and the activity of freedom yields a clearer picture of the roots of inversion.

Seeking liberation from internal constraints

Positive liberty, Berlin says, opens up for inversion because it relies on a notion of ‘freedom as self-mastery, with its suggestion of a man divided against himself’. The notion of self-mastery, he continues, was ‘initially perhaps quite harmless’, but nevertheless acquired a treacherous power of its own. This happened in the following way:

‘I am my own master’; ‘I am slave to no man’; but may I not (as Platonists and Hegelians tend to say) be a slave to nature? Or to my own ‘unbridled’ passions? Are these not so many species of the identical genus ‘slave’ – some political or legal, others moral or spiritual? Have not men had the experience of liberating themselves from spiritual slavery, or slavery to nature, and do they not in the course of it become aware, on the one hand, of a self which

dominates, and, on the other, of something in them which is brought to heel (Berlin, 2008d: 179)?

If we perceive of freedom in this way, Berlin continues, the road is open to claiming that I can liberate my opponent by forcing him to do what is in fact ‘the free choice of his “true”, albeit often submerged and inarticulate self’ (Berlin, 2008d: 180).

Thus, according to Berlin, one of the dangers with positive liberty is that its proponents struggle against passions, nature and spiritual slavery. Later in the essay, Berlin also adds love, fear, ‘the desire to conform’, and ‘obsessions, fears, neuroses, irrational forces’, to the list of potential obstacles to positive liberty. The common denominator appears to be that all these ideals fight obstacles to freedom that are perceived as internal to the agent at hand; whereas negative liberty is concerned with constraints that are considered external, such as ‘other persons’ and ‘other men’ (Berlin, 2008d: 185, 204, 169, 174).

I suggest Berlin’s point, then, is that when we allow freedom to become an internal affair, a relation between one part of the psyche with another, we open up for the disturbing possibility of dismissing other people’s explicit will as irrelevant to their freedom; because, we can now say, this is not the voice of their free self. We may even feel we should liberate them, as it were, from themselves. Positive liberty is thus dangerous because it tells us to struggle for freedom against *constraints within rather than outside ourselves* (Berlin, 2008d: 181).⁶

In my interpretation, the danger with positive liberty is not exhausted by the danger in stressing the rule of reason or rationality over desire, as is often assumed in existing research on Berlin (Christman, 1991: 354-55; Galipeau, 1994: 101; Gray, 1995: 21). These readings, I would object, fail to take into account statements of the following kind, which reveal that Berlin is critical not only of the rationalist but also of what he calls the romantic quest for liberation:

Or, abandoning reason altogether, I may conceive myself as an inspired artist, who moulds men into patterns in the light of his unique vision, as painters combine colours or composers sounds; humanity is the raw material upon which I impose my creative will (Berlin, 2008d: 197).

Indeed, in *Two Concepts of Freedom: Romantic and Liberal*, the precursor of *TCL*, Berlin originally categorised positive liberty as a romantic ideal, rather than one pertaining to autonomy. In this essay, Berlin warns us to the romantic notion of liberation, perhaps most vividly expressed by Fichte,

⁶ The idea of internal enemies need not be psychologically correct in order for positive liberty to remain a valid ideal. It suffices that obstacles to freedom are sometimes perceived as coming from inside.

which has little to do with being rational or contemplative, but all the more with ‘ruthless self-realisation of whatever burns within one, at all costs’. It is in this romantic quest for freedom, he says, that we find the roots of authoritarianism in the sense of ‘the worship of powerful personalities’ that has proven so dangerous during the 20th century (Berlin, 2008c: 196-97).

The reason, it seems, is that if we celebrate such romantic ‘liberation from the bonds of dreary everyday concerns’, then we may end up thinking that those who trample on our liberty to go about our everyday business as we please are in fact not diminishing our liberty at all, but doing us a favour. We may thus end up surrendering to ‘the superman who rises above, and mocks at, the petty vision and sordid calculations of men and women bound by the sense, by attachments which spring from conventions or methods which they practice without understanding, and cannot “free” themselves from’ (Berlin, 2008d: 202).

It seems that the problem, in Berlin’s view, is that this romantic notion of freedom, just as its rationalist equivalent, allows for the idea that people cannot free themselves from themselves, as it were, because freedom is conceived of as a fight against internal obstacles. Berlin for example notes that Herder believed that if a man did not commit himself to full self-expression, ‘it was because he maimed himself, or restrained himself’ (Berlin, 2001: 58).

Blake, he similarly notes, believed that we should strive for internal liberation of the spark within; and Diderot stressed that we should liberate our inner genius from the parts of our self that seek to please and conform (Berlin, 2001: 50-51). Liberation, for Diderot, thus turns into an ‘unceasing civil war’ within the self; it consists of removing the internal obstacles to ‘the natural man, struggling to get out of the outer man, the product of civilisation and convention’ (Berlin, 1990: 229).

Berlin is concerned that by striving for such romantic freedom from internal obstacles to my creative will, I might end up crushing others, using them for my ends, restricting their freedom; and if I believe freedom consists of fighting internal obstacles, I may not even acknowledge this. I may insist that no matter how much I hold others back in the external world, they are just as free as I am, as long as they liberate themselves from their *own* inner obstacles. If people are weak or ignorant enough to hold themselves back by fear or conformity, and if I treasure freedom as ‘creative self-expression’, then I might even take it upon myself to help liberate them by going against their explicit wishes; to ‘lift others to a level beyond any which they could have reached by their own efforts, even if this can be achieved only at the cost of the torment or death of multitudes’ (Berlin, 1990: 231).⁷

In sum, I contend that Berlin saw *all* ideals of freedom from internal constraints as open to the inversion of liberty, independently of whether they

⁷ Also see Berlin, 1990: 237; and Berlin, 2001: 145, where he points out the links from the romantic model of aesthetic freedom to fascism.

focused on liberating what we may call the rational self from the spontaneous one, or the other way around. Picturing the main constraints to freedom as internal, he seems to have thought, always invites the risk of inversion of liberty – because this invites us to disregard the un-free relations we may have to other agents, especially those who presume to liberate us from ourselves. This goes for the enlightenment struggle to liberate reason from passion, but also for the romantic quest to liberate authentic passion from logical consistency, or the desire to conform.⁸

The quest for freedom in preference formation

Self-mastery, we will now see, is risky not only because of its focus on the self, but on mastery. Although this has gone unnoticed in previous research, Berlin repeatedly specifies negative and positive ideals differently with regards to what one should be free to do. Negative freedom denotes interference ‘within the area’ in which ‘man can act’, and a state in which no-one is ‘frustrating my wishes’ or ‘desires’ (Berlin, 2008d: 169, 170, 179, 175).

Positive ideals, by contrast, stress the freedom to ‘develop a certain type of character’, ‘be governed by myself’, ‘be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes; which are my own’, ‘conceive my own goals and policies and realise them’; and to be ‘conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by references to my own ideas and purposes’ (Berlin, 2008d: 175, 178, 181-182). Thus, negative ideals emphasise freedom in acting upon our existing wishes, positive ideals stress freedom in forming these wishes to begin with.

Although Berlin acknowledges that focusing on freedom in preference formation enters ‘into the tradition of liberal individualism at least as deeply as the “negative” concept of freedom’, he nevertheless seems anxious to show that we must acknowledge the risks that accompany this ideal. In his discussion of the so-called retreat to the inner citadel, he in fact suggests that focusing on freedom in forming rather than enacting our preferences opens up for ‘the very antithesis of political freedom’ (Berlin, 2008d: 185-86).

This aspect of Berlin’s essay has been interpreted as the argument that, if we claim that freedom is self-mastery, we end up in the absurd conclusion that freedom can be achieved by teaching ourselves to not want what we cannot have; as when a slave decides to no longer want anything of which his chains deprive him (Smith, 1977). Berlin has then been accused of not acknowledging that if a person really does undergo character change, there is nothing paradoxical about calling such an outcome liberation (Christman, 1991: 353-54).

⁸ I do not of course wish to deny that Berlin himself valued many romantic ideals, most notably perhaps the notion of individuality, but also sincerity and dedication; nor that he traced back his own stance of value pluralism to the Romantics. He nevertheless clearly warned against the romantic ideals taken to their extreme (Berlin, 2008d: 193).

I would object, however, that Berlin was not suspicious of the escape into the inner fortress because he did not think it could, on occasion, increase freedom of some kind – but because he believed it represented ‘the psychological machinery’ of totalitarianism (Berlin, 2008b: 31-32). His point was that, if I focus on freedom in the realm of forming rather than acting on my preferences, I may, when ‘I find that I am able to do little or nothing of what I wish’, conclude that one path to freedom consists in restricting or changing my wishes. If I do this, and nevertheless remain a slave or a subject of a tyrant with no more free area of action than before, then calling my situation free need not be absurd, but psychologically treacherous; not only because I am still un-free in the negative sense, but because I am now more inclined to willingly accept my situation and less motivated to remove the obstacles that still hinder my freedom of action. After all, I might say, I am now already free in spirit (Berlin, 2008d: 186-87).

In other words, Berlin feared that valuing freedom in the realm of will formation leaves us with little motivation to fight instances of un-freedom in our actions. Instead, we may end up willingly obeying our masters, who can now say that by depriving us of our freedom of action they do not deprive us of anything that is relevant; for our wishes were not free to begin with – and, surely, being allowed to act on such un-free wishes is not freedom anyway.

This ideal allows us to think that ‘if a man chose some immediate pleasure – which (in whose view?) would not enable him to make the best of himself (what self?) – what he was exercising was not “true” freedom: and if deprived of it, would not lose anything that mattered’. Although many a liberal has believed this to be true, Berlin observes, it is equally true that ‘many a tyrant could use this formula to justify his worst acts of oppression’ (Berlin, 2008d: 180). The reason, it seems, is that if freedom is to decide what one wants in a certain, free, manner, and we think others fail to do so, then we may end up claiming the following:

I must do for men (or with them) what they cannot do for themselves, and I cannot ask their permission or consent, because they are in no condition to know what is best for them; indeed, what they will permit and accept may mean a life of contemptible mediocrity, or perhaps even their ruin and suicide (Berlin, 2008d: 197).

Berlin further recognises that, whereas some put forward the value of reason, ‘romantic authoritarians may worship other values, and see in their establishment by force the only path to true freedom’ (Berlin, 2008d: 197, 189, 191). One such romantic value may indeed be to form one’s will authentically, with passion and fervor, which Ralph Waldo Emerson for example placed in opposition to the ‘contemptible mediocrity’ that Berlin mentions in the passage from *TCL* here above (Emerson, 1999: 7). Berlin was thus highly aware that the retreat to the inner citadel can take the romantic form

of ‘the worship of the heroic martyr, the lonely thinker or artist’, who must turn his back to this vulgar world in order to be truly free (Berlin, 1997: 242; Berlin, 2001: 36-37).

Again, then, we see that Berlin’s critique is not only aimed at the enlightenment ideal of liberation by reason, as is often assumed. Berlin suggests that the romantic quest to conceive our own, authentic goals, to form our will in line with our true personality, is just as amenable to inversion.

Indeed, if I presume to know that your goals and wishes are not the product of your real, true self, but instead of custom, tradition, family pressure, false consciousness, the media, or some other source of what I may think is a corrupting influence – then I might feel justified in ‘liberating’ you by mocking, ridiculing or even banning your actual choices. Your choices, I may conclude, are not ‘free’ and thus merit no respect anyway; not because they have not been formed through conscious reflection with the use of reason, but because they have not been formed with authentic passion.

Concluding discussion

This paper has sought to understand one neglected yet crucial aspect of *Two Concepts of Liberty*: Berlin’s inversion thesis, his argument as to why positive ideals of liberty invite the conclusion that restrictions and coercion are justified in the name of liberty, even when there is no sound argument to support it.

Much previous research has analysed Berlin’s allegation that positive liberty logically entails coercion of the supposedly irrational in the name of their freedom; a claim that he is often criticised for over-stretching, since not all ideals of positive liberty necessarily entail the legitimisation of coercion (cf. Macpherson, 1984: 110-13; Christman, 1991: 359; West, 1993). Other accounts of Berlin have focused more on his observation that coercion has *historically* been justified in the name of positive liberty, for whatever reason. In this reading, the link Berlin suggests between positive liberty and tyranny amounts to little more than a description of a historical contingency (cf. Galipeau, 1994: 85; Gray, 1995: 18; Crowder, 2004: 84-85).

By contrast, the present paper has explored a third, psychological, layer in Berlin’s argument: the notion that ideals of positive liberty contain certain distinct elements that invite the tendency to believe liberty is compatible with coercion – a belief I have suggested Berlin thought most of us are in fact inclined towards already to begin with. Thus, while Anthony Arblaster regrets that ‘Berlin is not really concerned to establish *any* particular date’ from which positive liberty has been claimed to support coercion (Arblaster, 1971: 85), I suggest that this is precisely what makes Berlin relevant for us today.

In my interpretation, Berlin is not only retracing the historical origins of inversions of liberty in his own time. Hidden beneath his examples we also

find a trans-historical psychological pattern that he believes will always risk inviting the perversion of liberty into tyranny. Although it remains for future research to test whether this pattern does indeed exist, there seems to be no obvious reason to think that it would be less relevant today – at a time when liberty has become an even more powerful ideal than half a decade ago.

This is of course not to deny that Berlin wrote his essay with Soviet Communism as the most obvious enemy in mind. However, in his later introduction, he made clear that his inversion thesis applies to liberal and capitalistic societies as well (Berlin, 2008b: 39). In line with his own admonition that we should focus on what historical thinkers can tell us of our contemporary problems, the present paper has thus tried to tease out what elements in positive liberty Berlin believed may invite the notion that we can coerce people in the name of liberty.

This exercise has shown that Berlin warns us of two things. He is critical of ideals of liberty that focus on constraints that are perceived of as internal, rather than external, to the agent's self; *and* of ideals of liberty that emphasise freedom in the activity of forming, rather than enacting, one's preferences.

Finally, I have demonstrated that Berlin's critique does not only, as has often been suggested, target ideals of positive liberty that revolve around values typically associated with the Enlightenment: e.g. reason, reflection and self-examination (Christman, 1991; Gray, 1995: 32-37). To the extent they focus on internal constraints and freedom in will formation, he is in fact just as critical of romantic ideals of liberty, which, by contrast, often idealise passion, authenticity and self-expression. It may of course seem counter-intuitive to lump together enlightenment ideals with romantic values, since these traditions are in most ways opposed to one another. However, from the perspective of the present study, they do in fact have something in common: their focus on internal constraints to freedom and on freedom in preference formation – two risky elements, according to Berlin.

This last conclusion carries a particular relevance for understanding contemporary inversions of liberty. It is commonly assumed that, if there are contemporary tendencies towards repression in the name of liberty, these stem from what has been called 'enlightenment liberalism', and its focus on one kind of positive liberty: liberation by reason (Galston, 1995; King, 1999; Gray, 2000; Galston, 2002; Kukathas, 2007). This ideal, it has for example been suggested, took a prominent role in the French head scarf debate, where the ban on head scarves was sometimes pictured as an act of liberation for veiled women, even when they explicitly opposed the ban (Wallach-Scott, 2007; Joppke, 2010: 31).⁹ The same ideal was also invoked, it has been suggested, by the most vehement defenders of the Danish Muhammad cartoons

⁹ This is admittedly just one of several arguments in these discussions. Cf. Laborde, 2005.

in 2005, who presented the cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* as a way of ‘liberating’ Muslims against their explicit wishes (Rostbøll, 2009).

Berlin, however, did not believe that enlightenment ideals of liberation by reason exhausted the risk of inversion in the name of liberty. He believed that this process was just as likely to start in romantic ideals of liberty, such as self-expression, self-realization, and authenticity, in other words from the quest for the liberty to live life from within, unhindered by internalised convention, duties or commitments. This insight seems especially important, given that several empirical studies suggest that romantic notions of liberty are more popular than enlightenment ideals in contemporary Western culture; more so, probably, than Berlin imagined in 1958, when he finished the first version of *Two Concepts of Liberty*.

Sociological studies have shown that the secular majority in these countries has become insistent on values that are in many ways opposed to autonomous self-reflection, such as ‘authentic self-expression’, or ‘maximum personal development and self-realization’ (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 238; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). I would also suggest that it is possible to interpret recent discussions over the veil as inspired by Romanticism rather than the Enlightenment, for it is often self-realization or self-expression, not rationality or the capacity for reflection, that Muslim immigrants are held to lack and that tougher policies are supposed to further (Wallach-Scott, 2007: 125-31; Joppke, 2010: 31, 36, 118).

Thus, future research might find it fruitful to approach these cases with the framework that I have reconstructed from Berlin in this paper. In spite of their treacherous softness at times, we should expect romantic notions of liberty to be just as amenable to the inversion of liberty as is the notion of liberation by reason, which is rather connected to the Enlightenment.

I should emphasise, finally, that Berlin believed that without many ideals of positive liberty, and not least the romantic ones, our lives would certainly be much poorer (Berlin, 2001: 118-47). The lesson we can draw from him is thus not to disavow any ideals that carry with them the risk of inversion, but rather to keep in mind that they are precisely this: ideals, and, even more importantly, ideals of *liberty*. We should therefore recognise their power over our mind, be aware of the risks they invite, and exercise the appropriate caution when invoking them.

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Essay II



Freedom in mass values: egocentric, humanistic, or both? Using Isaiah Berlin to understand a contemporary debate

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Does an increasing emphasis on individual freedom in mass values erode or revitalize democratic societies? This paper offers a new approach to this debate by examining it through the lens of Isaiah Berlin, and his distinction between positive and negative freedom. I show that, contrary to the common assumption among scholars who study mass values regarding freedom, these do not consist of one dimension but two: negative and positive freedom. I also show that, while valuing negative liberty clearly leads a person to become more morally permissive and more condoning of non-compliance with legal norms, valuing positive liberty does not seem to have the same effects at all; in fact, it shows the very opposite relationship with respect to some of these attitudes. Thus, it matters what kind of freedom people value. The results rely on confirmatory factor and regression analyses on World Values Survey data from ten affluent Western countries in 2005–2006.

Keywords: liberty; self-expression; Inglehart; civicness; permissiveness; CFA

Introduction

Since the 1970s, there has been ample evidence of a shift in the values of ordinary people in affluent Western democracies. Numerous social scientists agree that there is a spreading commitment to individual freedom and self-expression, and that these values increasingly influence political attitudes and behavior (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006; Knutsen, 2009). However, the desirability of this value shift continues to divide social scientists, mainly into two camps. A long tradition of scholarship interprets an increased focus on freedom as a rise in egocentrism. In this account, a commitment to freedom brings less adherence to rules and solidarity (Lasch, 1978; Putnam, 2000; Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Bellah *et al.*, 2008). On the other hand, there are scholars such as Ronald Inglehart, who claim that we are instead seeing a new generation of humanists – individuals who have internalized authority rather than dismissed it altogether (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Dalton, 2008).

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The present paper challenges the most fundamental assumption in this debate, namely that the two sides represent, as Inglehart calls it, two competing ‘readings’ of what is essentially one and the same empirical dimension of values regarding freedom (Stolle and Hooghe, 2004; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 292). My argument is that we are dealing rather with what Isaiah Berlin famously claimed to be two very different dimensions of values: negative and positive freedom.¹

In the following article, my aim is to contribute theoretically to the debate between scholars who study freedom in terms of mass values, and to provide the first empirical study of the distinction between positive and negative freedom values. In the next section, I recapitulate and briefly examine this debate. I then describe Berlin’s distinction between positive and negative liberty, and argue that it provides the debate on mass values with theoretical clarity and nuance, an exercise that yields five new hypotheses. I then present data from the World Values Survey 2005–2006, which allows me to undertake the first empirical test of whether Berlin’s distinction can be found in contemporary mass values.² Subsequently, I present the results of confirmatory factor analyses of personal values regarding freedom, and of Ordinary Least Squares regression analyses of how these values relate to attitudes of moral permissiveness and rule abidance. The final section summarizes and discusses the findings.

Two accounts of freedom in mass values

In *Democracy in America* from 1840, Alexis de Tocqueville famously cautioned against the erosive effects of individual freedom on community spirit (de Tocqueville, 2000). Since then, numerous studies of the values of ordinary people in affluent Western democracies, in particular the United States, have linked mass support for individual freedom to the alleged erosion of solidarity. Although they often recognize that valuing freedom brings unprecedented support for a variety of different lifestyles, they claim that this comes at the cost of increasing indifference towards the well-being of others (Bellah *et al.*, 2008: 23–25, 48). People who value freedom are portrayed as ‘narcissistic’ (Lasch, 1978) and ‘cynical’ ‘loners’ (Putnam, 2000: 258–263). So-called libertarians, whose main characteristic is their ‘belief in freedom of thought and action’, are portrayed as insistent on ‘self-indulgence, pleasure seeking, maximum personal development and self-realization, using work as a means to other ends, weak group loyalties, and putting one’s own interests ahead of others’ (Flanagan, 1982: 441; Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 238).

¹ In line with Berlin, I will use liberty and freedom synonymously throughout this paper (Berlin, 2008).

² It should be noted that Hofferbert and Klingemann (1999) have applied Berlin’s negative notion to the empirical study of values in Central and Eastern Europe. However, they only briefly refer to Berlin, and only to one side of his distinction.

Inglehart and Christian Welzel have found a group of values that they claim ‘overlap heavily’ with libertarianism. They call these values ‘self-expression’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘emancipatory’. They ‘suggest that a *humanistic* reading – interpreting this as reflecting an internalization of authority – is more accurate than the *egocentric* reading that Flanagan and his associates propose’ (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 291–292). From their perspective, valuing ‘freedom and autonomy as good in and of themselves’ means that authority is transformed from an external phenomenon that demands obedience for its own sake, into an internalized commitment made by one’s autonomous self (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 271).³ Inglehart and his followers also question the notion ‘that everything is tolerated today, in a spirit of postmodern relativism’. Instead, they claim that the new commitment to freedom entails that ‘many things that were tolerated in earlier times are no longer considered acceptable today, particularly if they violate humanistic norms’; for example, sexual discrimination (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 291–293). In their account, the new values that idealize freedom do not represent a liberation from ethical concerns altogether, but merely a change in their content (Dalton, 2008: 80–82).

Thus, there seems to be roughly two accounts of freedom in mass values. Using Inglehart’s terminology, I shall refer to these as the egocentric and the humanistic, respectively. In contrast to Inglehart and other existing research, however, I suggest that the two sides do not simply offer two competing ‘readings’ or ‘interpretations’ of the same values of individual freedom (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 292), or draw different ‘normative’ conclusions from the same empirical results (Stolle and Hooghe, 2004: 154; Dalton, 2008: 81–82). I believe there is a more fundamental disagreement at stake, which this view neglects, a disagreement regarding the very nature of freedom to begin with.

When those on the egocentric side state that a person values freedom, they equate this with valuing a state in which a person is unhindered by external constraints in following her wishes, whatever their nature. For Flanagan and Lee, libertarians are characterized by the wish to ‘remove all restraints on the free exercise of their autonomy’. The authors clearly think of autonomy as the freedom to do whatever one wants, since valuing it means to justify various individual actions, even those that are ‘illegal or injurious to others’ (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 245). If this is what it means to value freedom, then it comes as no surprise that those who value it are expected to condone ‘cheating on taxes, avoiding a fare on public transport, claiming government benefits that they are not entitled to’, and justifying other morally questionable activities, such as lying or adultery (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 242). Putnam (2000: 258–263) seems to rely on a similar understanding of autonomy when stating that younger generations are ‘insistent on autonomy’ and ‘self-centered’. Bellah *et al.* (2008: 23, 25) are similarly concerned by the fact that

³ Note that although Inglehart claims this to be an aggregate, country-level phenomenon, he and his co-authors also tend to treat it as an individual level dimension, which is what I am concerned with here (Haller, 2002; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 259–261).

‘freedom turns out to mean being left alone by others’, and for each person ‘to be free to strive after whatever he or she happens to want’. In sum, for those sharing the egocentric perspective, valuing freedom or autonomy means valuing the freedom to behave as one wishes – a freedom that may come into conflict with duties, moral certainties, long-term commitments, and concern for other people’s well-being.

For the humanistic side, on the other hand, stating that a person values freedom implies that she values a certain spiritual state or identity: to ‘form own opinions’, in Dalton’s words; or ‘the capacity to act according to one’s autonomous choices’, in Inglehart’s (Florida, 2002: 93, 105, 135; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 31; Dalton, 2008: 8). Inglehart and his colleagues repeatedly state that this is a strictly human capacity (2005: 33, 43, 136–139, 144, 288), which suggests that it has not so much to do with the freedom referred to by Bellah *et al.* as being able to do what one ‘happens to want’, but rather with being a free person. Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 290) even refer to autonomy as a theory of secular ‘salvation’ or ‘deliverance in this life’.

In sum, it is misleading to say that the egocentric and humanistic accounts expect different consequences from what are essentially the *same* values. In fact, they differ already in their conceptualization of these very values, since they implicitly rely on divergent notions of freedom. In the next section, we will see that Isaiah Berlin offers a fruitful theoretical tool for specifying these notions and their purported consequences.

Berlin’s positive and negative freedom

In *Two Concepts of Liberty*, Isaiah Berlin famously distinguished between positive and negative liberty. Half a century later, this remains one of the most influential accounts of freedom in political theory (Berlin, 2008).⁴ Yet, despite its great influence on theoretical discussions of freedom, Berlin’s distinction is remarkably absent from empirical value studies. This is because he has often been understood as separating two abstract concepts: the positive freedom to engage in certain activities, and the negative freedom from certain constraints (MacCallum, 1967). His typology is also sometimes equated with the distinction between an effective and a formal, or an opportunity and an exercise, concept of freedom (cf. Gray, 1980; Taylor, 1997; Swift, 2001: 54–68).

Nevertheless, recent work on Berlin has shown that these interpretations hardly capture the gist of his argument (Crowder, 2004: 93–94; Christman, 2005; Ricciardi, 2007).⁵ As these studies point out, Berlin was openly skeptical towards philosophical abstractions ungrounded in political reality. This suggests that his

⁴ For the sake of simplicity, here I will follow only Berlin and leave out the more recently introduced ‘neo-Roman’ or ‘republican’ notion of freedom as non-domination, which has little bearing on the egocentric and humanistic understanding of freedom in mass values (Pettit, 1997).

⁵ Berlin clearly separates both positive and negative liberty from ‘social’ or ‘economic’ freedom, which he believes is not in fact freedom at all but a ‘confusion of values’ (Christman, 2005: 81; Berlin, 2008: 172–173).

main aim was not to provide two definitions of what it really means to be free, in an objective sense, but to distinguish between two ideals regarding freedom that he believed opened up, historically and psychologically, for very different empirical consequences (Crowder, 2004: 69, 78; Christman, 2005; Berlin, 2008: 179). Indeed, Berlin begins *Two Concepts* by saying that he wishes to study not just any two senses of freedom, but the ‘central ones, with a great deal of human history behind them, and, I dare say, still to come’ (Berlin, 2008: 168–169). He also says that there are two notions of liberty ‘held in the world today, each claiming the allegiance of very large numbers of men’. Throughout the essay, he repeatedly refers to these as two ‘conceptions’, ‘systems of ideas’, or ‘ideals’, and he often describes their nature and consequences in terms of what it means to say ‘I feel free’, or ‘I identify myself with’ ‘the creed of’ one of the two freedoms. At one point, he even speaks of ‘two profoundly divergent and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life’ (Berlin, 2008: 178–89, 181, 168, 185, 212).⁶

The upshot of this is that, among the many different and at times incoherent ways Berlin uses negative and positive liberty, one central aspect is to distinguish between two different conceptions of freedom that people may value. This aspect of Berlin’s description of both liberties fits well with what psychologists define as a value: the ‘enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence’ (Rokeach, 1973: 5). Thus, although Berlin’s distinction has not previously been linked to empirical studies of values, doing so may help disentangle the debate over the civic or un-civic nature of freedom in mass values today.⁷

Although Berlin often refers to political liberty when speaking of the negative notion, he also describes it as a personal ideal, a ‘desire not to be impinged upon, to be left to oneself’, and it is this personal side of the negative ideal that is my focus in the present paper (Berlin, 2008: 176). Valuing negative freedom in this sense means valuing the ‘absence of interference’ to pursue ‘our own good in our own way’. Since a person’s negative freedom can only exist when no one else is restricting him from acting on his desires, whatever they might be, its very nature is action-oriented and directed at obstacles the person at hand considers external to himself (Berlin, 2008: 169–170). What matters for his negative freedom is the simple possibility to be free from what he sees as external influence in acting upon

⁶ Since Berlin refers to ‘individual liberty, in either the “negative” or in the “positive” senses of the word’, the present paper leaves aside the interesting yet different issue of collective freedom (Berlin, 2008: 2004).

⁷ Singelis *et al.* (1995) differentiate between horizontal and vertical individualism; but while the former concept collapses positive and negative freedom into one dimension, the latter deals with competition – something Berlin does not mention at all. Schwartz, on the other hand, distinguishes between intellectual and affective autonomy. Although the former concept overlaps somewhat with my definition of positive freedom, the latter focuses on enjoying pleasure, excitement, and variation, rather than valuing negative liberty (Schwartz, 2006).

his will – however inauthentic or unoriginal it may be. The wish to be free from the constrictions of authorities or the shackles of conformity is therefore at the heart of valuing negative liberty (Berlin, 2008: 174–175).⁸

The quest for positive freedom, by contrast, is directed towards obstacles considered not external, but internal to ourselves. In Berlin's description, it also tends to focus on forming one's will freely, as opposed to acting freely upon it. Berlin equates positive liberty with 'autonomy', 'self-direction', and the notions that man should be 'critical, original, imaginative', or strive for 'self-realization' and 'authenticity' (Berlin, 2008: 175, 179, 180–181). He also links it to humanism and notes that it has affinities with transcendent religion. For believers in positive liberty, he says, 'the place of the individual soul which strains towards union with Him is replaced by the conception of the individual, endowed with reason, straining to be governed by reason and reason alone' (Berlin, 2008: 185). I shall thus use the term positive liberty to denote ideals that strive for freedom of thought rather than action, as well as ideals that strive for one part of the self, whether reason, imagination or will, to liberate itself from less wanted parts of the self, such as desire, impulse or fear (Christman, 1991; Berlin, 2008: 179–181, 197, 204). Note that, since the goal of this paper is to balance theoretical refinement with making an empirical contribution to the existing debate on freedom in mass values, I leave the exercise of further distinguishing between different types of positive liberty to future research.

Berlin's typology provides us with labels for the two implicit notions of liberty that I found to undergird much of the debate on mass values. As we saw in the previous section, those sharing the egocentric interpretation of freedom in mass values tended to equate it with the notion of warding off external hindrances to individual freedom of action. This seems to be the essence of negative freedom: being unhindered in the pursuit of what Berlin calls 'our own good in our own way'.⁹ The humanistic interpretation, by contrast, tended to equate a commitment to freedom with belief in the value of individual self-realization. For this side, valuing freedom was not inherently opposed to obeying authorities, but rather to what one believes to violate human dignity. We can now identify this as a positive notion of liberty. Note, however, that this is not to say that negative liberty *is* egocentric, nor that positive liberty *is* humanistic. My point is that the side Inglehart and Welzel call egocentric defines freedom in a way reminiscent of negative freedom, while their own, allegedly humanistic notion, relies on a definition of freedom that has great affinities with positive liberty.

⁸ This discussion should not be confused with Berlin's critique of a *definition* of freedom as a state in which one is able to do whatever one desires; a definition he rejects, because it implies that a contented slave is, objectively, more free than a discontented one. My concern here is the *ideal* of negative freedom; and when discussing this matter, Berlin repeatedly suggests that it has to do with valuing the freedom to act in line with one's 'actual' or 'empirical' wishes (Berlin, 2008: 186, 170, 181, 201).

⁹ Bellah *et al.* (2008: xlviii) in fact note in passing that they rely on a negative notion of liberty, but do not develop this further.

Empirical expectations

In the above description, negative liberty is identified, roughly, with the ideals of non-conformity, independence, and insubordination to authority. These ideals strive for freedom of action rather than will formation, and action unhindered by other people as opposed to obstacles perceived as coming from within. We should thus expect people's views on these issues to rely on their attachment to one underlying dimension: negative freedom.

Autonomy, self-realization, and authenticity, on the other hand, are ideals of positive liberty. This is because they focus on setting one's own goals or realizing one's dreams (rather than merely being unhindered by others in acting), or being truly free to live in line with one's 'true', inner self (rather than free to act upon whatever wish one happens to have, be it authentic or not). We should thus expect people's views on these issues to stem from their attachment to a second underlying dimension: positive freedom (Berlin 2008: 178–179). In other words, *I expect there to be two dimensions of values regarding personal freedom: negative and positive (H1)*.

A number of possible empirical consequences also derive from valuing either negative or positive freedom, none of which, I should stress, are an inherent part of valuing freedom of a certain kind. Hypotheses 2 to 5 thus simply express the probabilistic empirical expectation that the more a person values negative or positive freedom, the more likely she or he is to also hold certain other attitudes. This has nothing to do with what either conception of liberty logically entails, and only concerns the question of what social attitudes have often in reality been linked to either ideal. For example, Berlin describes negative freedom as closely linked to the idea that every individual should be allowed to live whichever way he or she wishes, as long as this does not infringe on the freedom of others. Indeed, it was precisely from this notion of freedom, he claims, that Mill developed his famous harm principle: that every individual must be free to act upon her wishes, as long as she does not damage anyone else's liberty to do the same (Berlin, 2008: 175). Thus, *I expect valuing negative liberty to induce more moral permissiveness towards practices seen as self-harming but also self-regarding, i.e. as harmful for the chooser but no one else (H2)*.¹⁰

However, for believers in positive liberty, it should make less sense to speak of the 'freedom' to harm oneself, since the imperative of freedom for them is not that persons should be allowed to do what they want, but that they 'should seek to discover the truth, or to develop a certain kind of character'. Berlin therefore famously warned us that it may be difficult for a person who values positive liberty to accept that other people should be allowed to make certain choices that

¹⁰ How to interpret harm in the context of Mill's harm principle is a notoriously difficult task (Tunick, 2005). However, in the context of the present paper, we are interested in subjective support for this principle in public opinion. Thus, what matters is the respondent's own definitions of harm (also see pp. 15–16).

one believes are not in line with their real, ‘true’, self and therefore do not express freedom in the positive sense (Berlin, 2008: 175). Berlin hereby helps us understand Inglehart’s insistence that freedom in mass values leads to acceptance only of a certain kind of ‘humanistic’ moral choices, and to an even stronger rejection of whatever violates humanism, something that remains rather vague in Inglehart’s account (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 292). Berlin’s distinction allows us to see that, since valuing positive liberty does not mean valuing anyone’s freedom of choice *per se*, it need not induce permissiveness about whatever moral choices other people actually make for themselves, but may in fact invite less permissiveness towards whatever is seen as irrational, non-autonomous or inauthentic (Berlin, 2008: 179–181). Hence, *I expect valuing positive liberty to lead to less moral permissiveness towards practices seen as self-regarding but self-harming (H3).*

If we turn to the issue of rule abidance, Berlin again gives us reason to expect negative and positive liberty to influence a person’s position in opposite directions. He repeatedly claims that negative liberty is anti-authoritarian and self-assertive. Because negative freedom implies ‘that all coercion is, in so far as it frustrates human desires, bad as such’, those who truly value it, Berlin proposes, will be reluctant to bend their will to what authority and rules demand. Negative liberty, therefore, is not only at the origins of ‘every plea for civil liberties and individual rights’, but also ‘against the encroachment of public authority’ (Berlin, 2008: 175–176). Of course, in theory, one may well argue that negative liberty presupposes a well-ordered society and compliance with legal norms that hinder us from threatening each other’s freedom. However, since human beings are not always logical or provident, they are likely to *think* that negative freedom justifies disobedience, since, after all, negative as opposed to positive liberty includes the freedom to act in line with one’s immediate impulses. I thus hypothesize that *the more a person values negative liberty, the more he or she will condone non-compliance with legal norms (H4).*

By contrast, since positive liberty does not revolve so much around the freedom to act in line with one’s impulses as the freedom to do what is right, it does not seem very far-fetched to assume that the more someone values positive liberty, the more this person is also likely to condemn the disobedience of rules that she considers right. Indeed, both Berlin and Inglehart mention Immanuel Kant, whose commitment to the positive ideal of autonomy led him to insist on an extremely demanding individual dutifulness towards rules dictated by reason (Berlin, 2008: 183; Haerpfer *et al.*, 2009: 2). Berlin in fact remarks that for a supporter of positive liberty, ‘I am free if, and only if, I plan my life in accordance with my own will; plans entail rules; a rule does not oppress me or enslave me if I impose it on myself consciously, or accept it freely’ (Berlin, 2008: 190). Whereas he fears this possibility, Inglehart and his associates welcome it, describing it as a process where ‘the innate human potential for autonomous choice becomes an ultimate norm and a moral authority in itself’ (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 292, also see 26 and 144). In sum, then, *I expect valuing positive liberty to lead to less acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms that one agrees to in principle (H5).*

In contrast to much previous research on mass values, the hypotheses presented here rely on the psychological distinction between values – conceptualized as ‘guiding principles in the individual’s life’ (Schwartz, 1992: 17), and attitudes – conceptualized as ‘tendencies to evaluate an entity with some degree of favor or disfavor’ (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993: 155). Much previous empirical work on mass values ignores this distinction and thus includes both values and attitudes in one index, thereby making it true *per definition* that valuing freedom also entails, for example, moral permissiveness.¹¹ This is a common feature in studies of the authoritarian vs. anti-authoritarian personality (Feldman, 2003). Similarly, in a recent study, Christian Welzel collapses survey items about values (e.g. the importance of teaching children independence) with survey questions regarding specific attitudes (e.g. approval of homosexuality) into one and the same index of ‘self-expression values’ (Welzel, 2010: 153). However, the present study argues that the link between valuing freedom and holding certain social attitudes is an empirical question we should open up for scrutiny.

In sum, then, the present study aims to distinguish between *values* regarding freedom (whether negative or positive) and their potential *attitudinal* consequences, both in how the hypotheses are formulated, and in the choice of measures with which to test them. Compared to *attitudes*, which are considered a product of both values and situational factors, among other things, psychologists regard *values* as more tenacious, less specific, and acquired earlier in life (Kohlberg, 1976; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). It is therefore generally agreed that values affect attitudes, as opposed to vice versa, or that they may be collapsed into one dimension (Trevino and Youngblood 1990; Schwartz, 1992). This is also what I will assume in the following.

Measures

In the following, I shall use data from the World Values Survey, which is also the data source used by Inglehart, Flanagan, and their co-authors. I should stress that my main aim is not to put forward two new indices with which to measure positive and negative liberty, but to provide a first test of the argument that these two notions should be empirically distinguished to begin with. I readily admit that the data I use do not provide the ideal operationalizations of negative and positive liberty. They do, however, enable a first test of the positive–negative distinction with what is to my knowledge the only large-scale existing data set that, however imperfectly, allows us to probe the existence of such a distinction in contemporary mass values, namely WVS 2005–2006 (World Values Surveys, 2005).

Because the theories I assess primarily concern values in affluent Western societies, I follow Flanagan and Lee in limiting my analyses to respondents from high-income Western countries, as defined by the World Bank in 2006, which

¹¹ Note that Stenner (2005) provides an exception from, and critique of, this trend.

were available from this wave of WVS (Flanagan and Lee, 2003; The World Bank, 2006: 205). The following analyses are based on the respondents from Australia, Britain, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States.¹² Table 1 shows the measures I will use.

Some readers will notice that I categorize several of Schwartz's personal values items and closely related measures differently (cf. Schwartz, 1992). This is not because I question the dimensionality Schwartz suggests, but because my argument and specific focus on liberty crosscuts his purpose. Schwartz conceptualizes values as responses to three universal requirements 'to which all individuals and societies must be responsive'. This leads him to distinguish ten *motivationally* distinct value dimensions, none of which focuses entirely on freedom (not to mention on distinguishing between negative and positive notions of it), but instead on goals with 'crucial survival significance' (Schwartz, 1992: 4). Schwartz admits, however, that, 'for some purposes, finer discriminations may be desirable' (Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004: 237). I suggest that assessing the true nature of freedom in mass values, the goal of this paper, is precisely such a purpose. By contrast to Schwartz, I do not wish to grasp the general structure of human values, conceptualized as responses to universal challenges crucial for survival – but to understand values regarding one specific and ultimately philosophical issue, namely freedom.

Schwartz constructs a single dimension called 'self-direction', a dimension that he argues revolves around both 'independent thought and action'. He includes setting one's own goals (here: *autonomy*), doing things in one's own original way (here: *self-realization*) and independence in one's actions (here: *independence*) in this one dimension (Schwartz, 1992: 15). However, since *autonomy* captures the Kantian ideal of setting one's own goals, and *authenticity* and *self-realization* the ideals of being creative and true to oneself, I categorize these as measures of the positive wish to be a self-directed person with a free will, while I suggest *independence* rather taps the negative wish for freedom of action unhindered by others. I further suggest that *non-conformism* also captures negative liberty, since it asks about being free to behave as one wishes, independently of what others think, as does *insubordination*, that is, disagreeing that authorities should be respected more.¹³ My point, then, is that all three negative freedom items differ from the positive ones in that they focus not on the freedom to be true to oneself or to be a self-governing agent, but on the freedom to be unhindered by others in acting as one pleases.

As always, when one uses questions designed by others, a certain gap remains between what one wishes to capture and what the data allow. *Autonomy* and

¹² These countries remained after deletion of those high-income Western countries included in the WVS 2005–2006 that did not include all questions relevant for this study. Although it would certainly be interesting to study freedom values in, for example, a non-Western or lower income society, this would require a more thorough discussion of context than this paper can accommodate.

¹³ Note that *non-conformism* is not about being different, but being free to be different. A non-conformist agrees that the mere fact that others say something is wrong is not in itself an important reason to refrain from doing it.

Table 1. Measures: World Values Surveys (2005)

Concept	Variable name	Question wording and coding in parentheses
Positive freedom	<i>Autonomy</i>	People pursue different goals in life. For each of the following goals, can you tell me if you strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3) or strongly disagree (4) with it? 'I decide my goals in life by myself' (coding reversed)
	<i>Authenticity</i>	People pursue... (same as above) 'I seek to be myself rather than follow others' (coding reversed)
	<i>Self-realization</i>	Now I will briefly describe some people. Using this card, would you please indicate for each description whether that person is very much like you (1), like you (2), somewhat like you (3), not like you (4), or not like you at all (5)? 'It is important to this person to think up new ideas and be creative; to do things one's own way' (coding reversed)
Negative freedom	<i>Non-conformism</i>	Now I will briefly... (same as above) 'It is important to this person to always behave properly; to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong' (coding kept in its original form, so that 'not like me at all' = 5, i.e. very non-conformist)
	<i>Insubordination</i>	I'm going to read out a list of various changes in our way of life that might take place in the near future. Please tell me for each one, if it were to happen, whether you think it would be a good thing (1), a bad thing (3), or don't you mind (2)? 'Greater respect for authority' (recoded so that 'a bad thing' = 1, otherwise 0)
	<i>Independence</i>	Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please choose up to five (out of ten). 'Independence' (recoded into independence = 1, otherwise 0)
Moral permissiveness	<i>Prostitution</i>	Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified or something in between, using this card. 'Prostitution' (coding kept in its original form, never justifiable = 1, always justifiable = 10)
	<i>Euthanasia</i>	Please tell me... (as above) 'Euthanasia'
	<i>Suicide</i>	Please tell me... (as above) 'Suicide'
Acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms	<i>Tax cheating</i>	Please tell me... (as above) 'Cheating on taxes if you have a chance'
	<i>Ticket cheating</i>	Please tell me... (as above) 'Avoiding a fare on public transport'
	<i>Benefit cheating</i>	Please tell me... (as above) 'Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled'

authenticity ask about experiences rather than desirable end states. Yet, I think the importance one attributes to these values can be inferred from the extent one agrees that one tries to live by them.¹⁴ One might also object that both *independence* and *insubordination* capture an issue-specific attitude rather than a value. However, since the values we believe are important for our children ought to reflect our own values in life, and *independence* asks about whether the respondent believes independence is an ‘especially important’ quality to encourage in children, I believe we can assume it does tap a value rather than an issue-specific attitude after all. *Insubordination*, finally, asks not about respect for a certain authority, but towards authority as such, which suggests that it may serve as a measure of the deep-set antagonism towards authority that forms a crucial part of both negative liberty and the ‘egocentric’ conception of freedom in mass values.

The remaining measures will serve as dependent variables in regression models. Since it is unlikely that any single survey item could tap the underlying concepts I am trying to explain, I collapsed these variables into two indices, each ranging from 3 to 30. This also makes my models less sensitive to measurement error in the dependent variables. According to H2 and H3, I expect negative liberty to lead to more, and positive liberty to less, moral permissiveness in relation to what are perceived as self-harming and self-regarding practices.

In the ideal scenario, the practices perceived in this way would of course be known. However, in the absence of such data, I assume that *suicide*, *euthanasia*, and *prostitution* represent choices that are seen as both self-harming and self-regarding. In contrast to, for example, homosexuality or ethnic diversity, *suicide* and *euthanasia* undeniably entail physical harm to the person who engages in them, and they are often perceived as choices one cannot make autonomously, things that people do not ‘really’ want, so to speak. Prostitution is also often perceived as harming the persons who engage in it, even if they do not think so themselves. It is, for example, often claimed that the practice hinders prostitutes from achieving true self-realization, or that the very choice to engage in prostitution is the result of inauthentic preference formation – by the prostitute, the customer, or both (Jensen, 1995: 5–6). We may also assume (at least in the secular, individualistic context studied here) that all three practices are mainly perceived as self-regarding, that is, concerning mainly the individual who engages in them.¹⁵

¹⁴ One might object that *authenticity* in fact measures negative liberty, because it asks about the importance of not following others. However, since the question begins with asking about the importance of ‘being myself’, I suggest it leads the respondent’s thoughts towards the positive freedom ideal of finding and following one’s authentic self.

¹⁵ Admittedly, someone might disapprove of these practices for other reasons: because he thinks prostitution harms public morale, that suicide harms not only the individual but also the family, and that euthanasia gives doctors a risky power over their patients. A more ideal question would thus perhaps ask about the justifiability of narcotics, which more clearly speaks to the contrast between a person’s autonomous and explicit will. However, the latest wave of World Values Survey did not include such a question.

I thus suggest that, when controlling for religiosity (as I will in the regression models), the extent to which one finds these practices justifiable is an imperfect yet reasonable measure of moral permissiveness about choices that are seen as harmful to those who make them, but no one else.

Finally, according to H4 and H5, I expect valuing negative liberty to raise, and valuing positive liberty to diminish, a person's acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms with which one agrees in principle. I suggest that three such legal norms are: refraining from *tax cheating*, from avoiding a fare on public transport (*ticket cheating*), and from falsely claiming government benefits (*benefit cheating*). I therefore created an additive index from the three items that ask about the justifiability of non-compliance with these legal norms.

Two dimensions of values

My first hypothesis deals with the issue of dimensionality. I will investigate this through factor analysis, the basic aim of which is to find out whether the observed correlations between a certain set of variables can be accounted for by one or several common unobserved or latent variables, also called factors or dimensions. Since H1 already suggests a number of dimensions (two), I will make use of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In comparison to its exploratory counterpart, CFA is more adequate for testing a specific hypothesis and also provides a more robust test of different models and their fit to the data (Bollen, 1989: 232).

I will report three complementary model fit indices: the chi-square (χ^2), RMSEA, and BIC statistics. A relatively lower value for all these statistics indicates a more satisfactory model fit for our data. The most important of these indices is the BIC (Bayesian information criterion) statistic, since it balances the need to correctly reproduce the true covariance matrix with the need for parsimony, by 'punishing' a more complicated model with smaller degrees of freedom.¹⁶

Figure 1 shows the standardized parameter estimates and model fit statistics for the CFA models. Models 1a and 2a constrain all measurement error correlations to zero. However, since *autonomy* and *authenticity* belong to one question battery in WVS, and *self-realization* and *non-conformism* to another, I also include Models 1b and 2b, which estimate the residual correlations between these pairs of indicators. All the results I present here are based on a pooled sample, but I also analyzed each country separately and found largely the same pattern.¹⁷

¹⁶ The confirmatory models I present here are computed on a polychoric correlation matrix, a recommended solution for factor analyzing the relationships between ordinal and continuous data (Jöreskog and Moustaki, 2001). Standard models, based on Pearson's product moment correlations, were also computed and are available on request. The internal difference between the standard models was similar to that between the polychoric models, but the latter models showed considerably higher factor loadings for the dichotomous variables.

¹⁷ Note that the bi-dimensional models constrain potential side effects from positive liberty on the indicators of negative liberty, and vice versa. Removing these assumptions leaves the substantive results

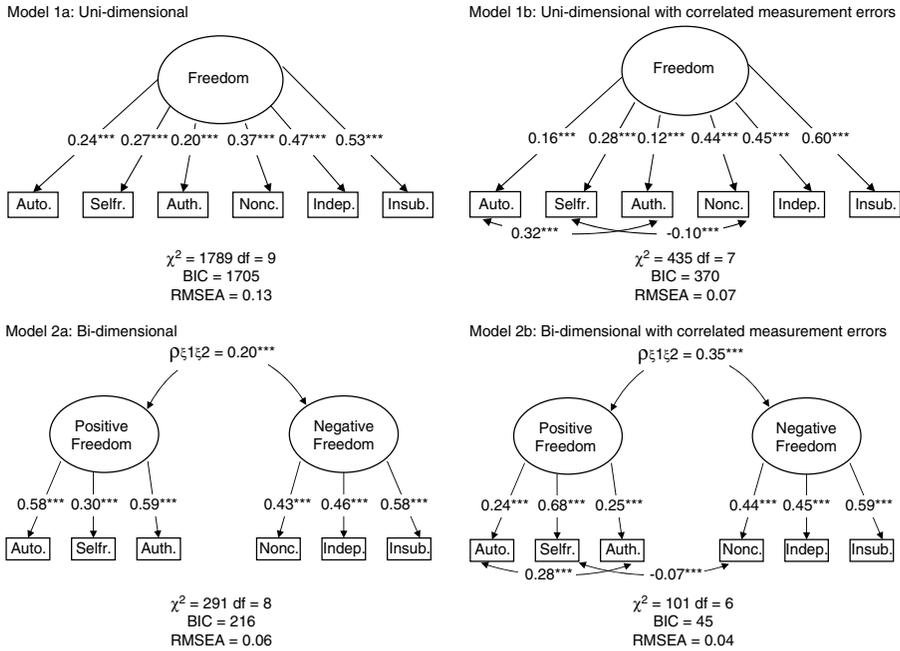


Figure 1 Notes: *** indicates significance at the 0.01 level. $N = 11,232$ in all models. The error terms can be calculated by computing the square root of 1 minus the squared parameter estimate.

What matters most for my hypothesis is the internal difference between the uni- and the bi-dimensional models – the former representing the assumption that we can collapse all the items into one value dimension, and the latter illustrating my hypothesis that we are instead dealing with two dimensions. Indeed, when going from Model 1a to 2a, we first see that the χ^2 statistic drops significantly. The initially high RMSEA also drops from 0.13 to 0.06, which is considered between a ‘reasonable’ and a ‘close’ overall fit with the data (Knoke *et al.*, 2002: 422), and the BIC value shrinks considerably. Finally, many factor loadings rise in the second model. All this demonstrates that a bi-dimensional solution is no doubt better, even when we punish it for its increased complexity.

This conclusion also holds for the difference between Models 1b and 2b, despite the fact that the model fit indices for 1b all suggest a better fit than for 1a.

unchanged. Since removing all these constraints simultaneously would lead to the models being under-identified (Bollen, 1989: 239), I tested this by computing models that each removed one of these constraints. Three models produced a better fit than 2b suggested. They showed a negative effect from positive liberty on non-conformism (-0.23), a small negative effect from negative liberty on authenticity (-0.08), and a positive but likewise minimal effect from negative liberty on autonomy (0.06). All these results are available on request.

The uni-dimensional model that allows for correlated measurement errors (1b) still fares considerably worse than its bi-dimensional counterpart (2b). The latter model reveals several much higher factor loadings and, most importantly, it yields even lower model fit indices than any of the other models. For example, the RMSEA has here dropped to 0.04, which is considered to show a ‘close’ fit with the data (Knoke *et al.*, 2002).¹⁸ This last model finally shows that the two dimensions have a significant positive correlation of 0.35, which suggests that the two dimensions are related to some extent in people’s minds. Nevertheless, as this is far from a perfect correlation, the data still lend clear support for H1: that positive and negative freedom form two separate dimensions.

Admittedly, the factor loadings of *autonomy* and *authenticity* in Model 2b are below the standard cut-off point of 0.30, thereby suggesting that if we do not compare this model to its uni-dimensional counterpart, but to the actual data patterns, it could certainly be improved even further. This also suggests that *autonomy* and *authenticity* may not be the ideal measures of positive liberty. However, as they and *authenticity* represent the only possible measures of positive liberty available today in a large-scale data set, I nevertheless suggest that they serve the purpose of providing a first, admittedly imperfect and yet important, step towards understanding the nature and consequences of valuing positive as opposed to negative freedom. The confirmatory factor analyses presented in this section clearly indicate that these should be conceived of as two empirical dimensions rather than one.

The consequences of valuing freedom

Given that there are two dimensions of values regarding freedom, do they affect moral permissiveness and acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms differently? In order to study this, I computed a positive freedom scale by standardizing and adding together *autonomy*, *self-realization*, and *authenticity*; and a negative freedom scale by doing the same with *non-conformism*, *independence*, and *insubordination*.¹⁹ Table 2 shows the regression results from predicting a person’s *moral permissiveness* and *acceptance of non-compliance to rules* by how much they value positive and negative freedom. Since age, education, and religiosity correlate with valuing liberty and with the dependent variables, the regression models include these three issues as control variables.²⁰

¹⁸ In addition, the bi-dimensional solution in Model 2b reduces the residual correlations to a small extent.

¹⁹ Weighting some of the variables in my index would make their interpretation less intuitive. I thus disregard the fact that some of these variables had higher and some lower factor loadings in the bi-dimensional CFA models.

²⁰ I also tried including income as a control variable in all models. This did not change either the standard error of regression or the regression coefficients for the variables of interest. I furthermore computed full structural equation models that included all the single variables in Table 1 instead of the

Table 2. OLS estimates of the determinants of moral permissiveness and non-compliance with legal norms: World Values Survey (2005)

	Model 1: moral permissiveness	Model 2: acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms
Positive freedom	0.091*** (0.029)	-0.110*** (0.021)
Negative freedom	0.432*** (0.034)	0.301*** (0.025)
Age	-0.016*** (0.004)	-0.063*** (0.003)
Education	0.280*** (0.030)	-0.123*** (0.022)
Religiosity	-0.596*** (0.020)	-0.095*** (0.015)
Constant	16.410*** (0.324)	13.166*** (0.243)
Adjusted R ²	0.202	0.108
Standard error of the estimate	5.915	4.540
N	10,144	10,778

Notes: *** indicates significance at the 0.01 level. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. All estimates are based on the entire sample (Australia, Britain, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States). A dummy variable for each country except one was also included in each model (the coefficients are available on request).

The significant and positive regression coefficient for *negative freedom* in Model 1 is certainly in line with the hypothesis that *negative freedom* will have a positive relationship with *moral permissiveness* (H2). However, since statistical significance is easily achieved by the mere amount of data, we must also assess whether this relationship is substantial. One way is to note that when excluding *negative freedom* from the model, the standard error of regression increases by 2.2 percent. Leaving *age* out, in comparison, leaves the model fit virtually unchanged. Another way is to compare two fictitious persons. First imagine an individual, say a Frenchman, of median age, religiosity, and education, who values positive freedom to the same extent as most people, but negative freedom one standard deviation less than the average person. Now imagine another Frenchman who is the same in all other relevant aspects (i.e. also with a median education, religiosity, age, and

indices, thus estimating the relationship between the underlying factors of *negative freedom* and *positive freedom* with the underlying factor of *moral permissiveness*, and that of *acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms*, respectively (including controls for *age*, *education*, and *religiosity*). The parameter estimates from the structural equation models support the conclusions I draw from the OLS-regressions in Table 2. The former suggest that *negative freedom* has an effect of 0.209 on *moral permissiveness* and of 0.240 on *acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms*; that is, somewhat smaller effects than in the regression models, but still statistically significant and in the same direction. The Structural Equation Models also estimate virtually the same effect of *positive freedom* on *acceptance of non-compliance to legal norms* (-0.013), as do the regression models, and an even lower effect of *positive freedom* on *moral permissiveness* (0.006 and not statistically significant). This gives further support to my conclusion that valuing positive liberty does not seem to lead to more moral permissiveness.

positive freedom score) except for the fact that he values negative liberty just as much *more* than the average person. According to Model 1, the second Frenchman would be 1.7 units, or close to 14 percent, more inclined to moral permissiveness, as compared to the first. In sum, then, the data lend initial support to H2: valuing negative freedom does indeed seem to be conducive to moral permissiveness, an effect that appears both statistically and substantially significant.

The results are not, however, in line with H3, which predicts that positive freedom will have a negative effect on moral permissiveness. Model 1 shows that this effect goes in the opposite direction. However, even though this effect is statistically significant, it does not seem to have much substantial significance. Excluding *positive freedom* from Model 1 makes no real difference when looking at the standard error of regression, while we just saw that excluding *negative freedom* caused it to rise by 2.2 percent. We could also compare someone who values *positive freedom* one standard deviation less than the average person with someone who values it one standard deviation more than the average person. If we filter out all other impacts, our model indicates that the latter person will only be 3 percent more morally permissive (whereas, as we saw above, the same amount of change in *negative freedom* resulted in an expected change of 14 percent in *moral permissiveness*). Thus, even though the results do not support H3, they suggest something else that is interesting: the effect of positive liberty on moral permissiveness differs from that of negative liberty – not in direction, but size.

H4 suggests that negative liberty leads to the acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms, while H5 predicts that positive liberty has the opposite effect. Model 2 shows that, just as expected, *negative freedom* leads to more, and *positive freedom* to less, approval of cheating on taxes, bus fares, or government benefits. Assume this time that the same person for some reason changes her views on negative freedom overnight from one standard deviation below the average, to one standard deviation above it. Her age, nationality, education, religiosity, and views regarding positive liberty remain exactly the same. According to Model 2, such a change would result in her condoning non-compliance with these rules slightly above 14 percent more than the night before. The impact of an equivalent overnight change in positive liberty would cause the same person to condone such behavior 5 percent *less* than before, holding all else constant. We thus see that negative and positive liberty do have opposite effects on rule abidance, just as hypothesized. We also see, however, that even though both effects are statistically significant, substantially speaking the effect of negative liberty clearly exceeds that of its positive counterpart. The data thus lend clear support to H4, but remain ambiguous when it comes to H5.

These models only represent a first attempt to empirically investigate the consequences of valuing negative and positive freedom. They nevertheless show an interesting pattern. They also give us further reason to believe that negative and positive liberty are indeed two different dimensions. If we were to collapse

them, we would overlook the fact that they are differently associated with holding morally permissive attitudes and condoning non-compliance with legal norms.²¹

Conclusions

This paper has sought to shed new light on an ongoing discussion among social scientists: how to interpret the spreading popular support for individual freedom among ordinary people. At the origin of this study lies the observation that those with an ‘egocentric’ view of values regarding freedom and those with a ‘humanistic’ interpretation most often speak of two different types of freedom, respectively, yet without acknowledging it: positive and negative freedom, in the words of Isaiah Berlin (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 144).

The results presented in this study suggest that by collapsing questions regarding positive and negative freedom, both in theory and practice, previous research neglects critical differences between what are in fact two separate dimensions in people’s minds. Valuing negative liberty is about valuing the possibility of non-conformism and insubordination towards authorities. It has much the same consequences that Flanagan and others that share the egocentric interpretation deem deeply worrying, but that Berlin judges to be the bedrock of liberal permissiveness. Valuing positive liberty, on the other hand, is more oriented to inner freedom, authenticity, and self-realization, much as Inglehart and his followers who share a more humanistic interpretation conceptualize self-expression values. Contrary to my expectations, valuing positive liberty does not, however, invite less moral permissiveness towards practices that clash with it. On the other hand, neither does valuing positive liberty make it much more likely that

²¹ Each model presented here includes country dummies to control for the country-specific differences regarding the dependent variables. I also ran the regressions on each of the ten countries separately, and found largely similar results, although there are also some interesting exceptions for future research to examine. Beginning with H2, *negative freedom* has a positive effect on *moral permissiveness* in eight out of the ten countries, just as in the pooled sample (its coefficient ranges from 0.681 in the Netherlands, to 0.251 in Sweden). The exceptions are Poland and Spain, where the effect is not significant, something that might have to do with the high levels of religiosity in the two countries. Turning to H3, in eight of the ten countries, the impact of *positive freedom* on *moral permissiveness* is not even statistically significant. The exceptions are Spain, where the effect is negative as hypothesized in H3 (−0.289), and the Netherlands, where the effect is positive (0.542), something that might be accounted for by the liberal Dutch legislation and norms regarding both prostitution and euthanasia. In nine of the ten countries, negative freedom displays the same strong positive effect on *acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms* as in the pooled sample (its regression coefficient ranges from 0.766 in Spain to, 0.190 in Australia), further supporting H4. The only exception is Sweden, where the relationship is not significant, which might have to do with the high levels of trust in Sweden. An admittedly problematic result, however, is that in eight countries, *positive freedom* does not show the significant effect on *non-compliance with legal norms* that I found in the pooled sample (H5). On the other hand, in Germany and Spain, it has the expected negative effect and indeed even more so than in the pooled sample (its coefficient is −0.370 in Germany, and −0.344 in Spain).

a person will be more morally permissive towards such choices, as valuing negative liberty clearly does.

We may tentatively conclude that positive liberty does not in fact have such clear political consequences as its negative counterpart. This may partly be due to the fact that positive liberties of different kinds may have different consequences. However, it may also have something to do with Berlin's fear that an excessive focus on positive liberty might lead to what he called 'the retreat to the inner citadel', that is, the anti-political attitude that we should not fight obstacles to our freedom of action, but learn to live with, or at least disregard them – because what really matters is our internal freedom (Berlin, 2008: 181–182).

Perhaps, then, positive liberty is not so much illiberal as apolitical. This possibility may, however, be no less worrisome from a democratic perspective. Berlin was convinced that positive freedom was much more popular than its negative counterpart. The present paper has not studied this in detail, but the descriptive data do point in this direction. It is clear that positive freedom exceeds negative freedom in its popularity.²² Future research is thus needed to examine cross-national and cross-generational differences in positive and negative freedom, ideally with better measures than the existing ones used in this paper. Given the increasingly value-oriented nature of politics, the extent to which a person values positive and negative liberty may help explain that person's political participation and voting behavior (Goren, 2001; Keele and Wolak, 2006).

Distinguishing between negative and positive liberty may also shed new light on otherwise puzzling cases, such as the finding that the recent spread of individualistic freedom values in China has not been matched by an equal rise in demands for liberal reforms (Wang, 2005: 162). If younger generations of Chinese are found to value the internal ideals of positive freedom, such as setting their own goals, being creative and original, but not negative freedom, then perhaps Berlin's distinction and the findings in this paper can help make sense of the fact that their commitment to freedom does not seem to translate into non-compliance with the authorities, nor a demand for greater individual rights.

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²² See the appendix for a descriptive data.

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Appendix

Descriptive data for the entire sample used here: Australia, Britain, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States (World Values Survey, 2005)

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. dev.	Number of observations	Cronbach's α
Indices						
Positive freedom	-10.10	3.55	0.016	2.091	12,891	0.465
Negative freedom	-3.03	5.55	0.020	2.0	11,455	0.353
Moral permissiveness	3	30	12.975	6.729	13,696	0.661
Acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms	3	30	6.540	4.681	14,763	0.710
Separate variables (original name)						
Autonomy (67)	1	4	3.27	0.665	14,025	
Self-realization (80)	1	6	4.23	1.222	13,113	
Authenticity(65)	1	4	3.41	0.594	14,111	
Non-conformism (87)	1	6	2.97	1.382	13,099	
Independence (12)	0	1	0.60	0.491	15,250	
Insubordination (78)	0	1	0.13	0.341	13,409	
Prostitution (203)	1	10	3.93	2.831	14,523	
Euthanasia (206)	1	10	5.67	3.138	14,308	
Suicide (207)	1	10	3.35	2.722	14,300	
Ticket cheating (199)	1	10	2.30	1.999	14,986	
Tax cheating (200)	1	10	2.20	1.988	14,941	
Benefit cheating (198)	1	10	2.05	1.909	14,890	
Age (237) 'How many years old are you?'	15	98	48.06	17.462	15,213	
Education (238) Highest educational level attained (coded 1-9)	1	9	5.75	2.231	15,108	
Religiosity (192) How important is God in your life? (coded 1-10)	1	10	5.88	3.354	14,908	

Appendix 2

Structural equation estimates of the effects of valuing positive and negative freedom

	Model 1: <i>Moral permissiveness</i>	Model 2: <i>Acceptance of non-compliance with legal norms</i>
<i>Positive freedom</i>	0.006 ^{n.s.} (0.021)	-0.103 ^{***} (0.023)
<i>Negative freedom</i>	0.209 ^{***} (0.023)	0.240 ^{***} (0.021)
<i>Age</i>	- 0.068 ^{***} (0.014)	-0.312 ^{***} (0.013)
<i>Education</i>	0.141 ^{***} (0.014)	-0.058 ^{***} (0.012)
<i>Religiosity</i>	- 0.358 ^{***} (0.014)	-0.018 ^{n.s.} (0.012)
<i>Autonomy</i>	0.226 ^{***} (0.021)	0.248 ^{***} (0.021)
<i>Self-realization</i>	0.702 ^{***} (0.053)	0.646 ^{***} (0.043)
<i>Authenticity</i>	0.245 ^{***} (0.020)	0.265 ^{***} (0.020)
<i>Non-conformism</i>	0.454 ^{***} (0.015)	0.440 ^{***} (0.015)
<i>Independence</i>	0.457 ^{***} (0.015)	0.427 ^{***} (0.014)
<i>Insubordination</i>	0.561 ^{***} (0.016)	0.603 ^{***} (0.017)
Model Chisquare	3018.5	3213.7
Df	49	49
AGFI	0.922	0.920
RMSEA	0.077	0.077
BIC	2566.5	2758.7
<i>N</i>	10,144	10,778

Notes: *** indicates significance at the 0.01 level. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. All estimates are based on the sample of ten countries used in this paper (Australia, Britain, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States). Data source: World Values Survey 2005.

Essay III



Romantic Liberalism

An Alternative Perspective on Liberal Disrespect in the Muhammad Cartoons Controversy

Abstract

There is an increasing scholarly concern that liberalism comes into conflict with religious diversity. William Galston blames this tendency on 'enlightenment liberalism', which places autonomous self-reflection at the heart of the liberal project. This paper, however, proposes a culprit that is more prone to both disrespect and fundamentalism: romantic liberalism, which idealises authentic self-expression. I develop this concept by revisiting the Danish cartoon controversy, allegedly a case of enlightenment liberalism. This exercise reveals that Flemming Rose, the editor who commissioned the cartoons, invokes romantic rather than enlightened values in defence of the publication. In contrast to previous research, I show that Rose does not portray the disrespectfulness of the cartoons as a side effect of trying to promote autonomy among Muslims. Rather, he argues in favour of artistic provocation as such; invoking a distinctly romantic understanding of freedom of speech, which in many ways runs counter to the ideal of autonomy.

Introduction

Scholars are increasingly concerned that the liberal tradition itself invites a certain moral arrogance towards religious minorities, and thus fails to respect the need for diversity. The culprit, it is widely agreed, is a liberalism centred on the ideal of autonomy.¹

The present paper, by contrast, proposes another culprit. In what follows, I revisit the defence of the Danish Muhammad cartoons, which has been interpreted as a case of liberal disrespect for the sake of promoting autonomy among Muslims (Rostbøll, 2009). My analysis, however, suggests that this is rather a case of ‘romantic liberalism’: a tradition that places authentic self-expression, not autonomy, at the heart of the liberal project. In the following, I develop the concept of romantic liberalism – which does not only allow for, but encourages disrespect and provocation.

The specific point of departure for this paper is William Galston’s notion of ‘enlightenment liberalism’. According to Galston, much discussion over ‘such currently disputed areas as education, rights of association, and the free exercise of religion’ can be understood as a clash between two opposing strands of liberalism: reformation liberalism and enlightenment liberalism. Reformation liberalism conceives of liberal institutions as a way to advance diversity, of promoting ‘legitimate differences among individuals and groups over such matters as the nature of the good life, sources of moral authority, reason versus faith, and the like’. Enlightenment liberalism, by contrast, sees the ultimate goal of the liberal project as fostering autonomy, a certain conception of the good life. According to Galston, enlightenment liberals, as opposed to reformation liberals, thus tend to interfere with choices that are seen not as the result of rational self-reflection, but rather of un-swerving faith or tradition (Galston, 2002: 24-26).

I should note already here that I do not take issue with the *normative* conclusion that this kind of intervention in the name of liberalism is indeed a problem. In the following, I will instead challenge the *description* that Galston and others have put forward regarding the roots of the problem. My point is that their one-sided focus on enlightenment liberalism and autonomy seems to neglect the fact that the average person in Western democracies is becoming less and less interested in the self-reflective critical reasoning that enlightenment liberalism idealises (Flanagan and Lee, 2003).

Indeed, there is a growing support for ‘authentic self-expression’, ‘maximum personal development and self-realization’ (Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 238), and a ‘therapeutic attitude’ to life and politics; ideals that in some ways seem opposed to autonomous reflection. The authors of *Habits of the Heart*, an influential study of the American ethos at the end of the 20th Century, for

¹ Cf. Lomasky, 1987; Kukathas, 1992; Galston, 1999; King, 1999; Galston, 2002; Joppke, 2007.

example conclude that there is an increasing tendency towards ‘expressive individualism’: seeking spiritual well-being by living life from within, in line with intuition and intense feeling, rather than reason and reflection (Bellah, Madsen et al., 2008: 130-133, 333-334).

These trends suggest that, if we are really to capture contemporary examples of disrespect in the name of liberalism, we ought to move beyond enlightenment liberalism. The present paper takes a first step in this direction by reconstructing a rivalling liberal tradition, romantic liberalism, which is currently lacking from these discussions.

In what follows, I develop the concept of romantic liberalism by investigating one of the presumed recent examples of enlightenment liberalism, namely the Danish cartoon controversy (Rostbøll, 2009). More precisely, I will look at the arguments invoked by one of its key actors, if not the protagonist: Flemming Rose, editor at *Jyllands-Posten* at the time of the publication. Previous accounts of the cartoon crisis have paid remarkably little attention to Rose’s defence.² Yet it was Rose’s decision to commission and publish the famous cartoons in the first place, and he has continued to play the role of the main defender of the cartoons in the ensuing debate. He is in fact also alone among the cartoon defenders in having developed a defence of this position at considerable length (Rose, 2010).

The present paper does not only contribute, then, to theoretical discussions of disrespectful tendencies within liberalism. It also provides a first thorough analysis of Rose’s arguments, and thus a valuable addition to our understanding of the Danish cartoon controversy. While it might seem that developing the concept of romantic liberalism and establishing Rose’s position are two very different purposes, I will show that these tasks are in fact well integrated, and that the two discussions enrich each other. The ultimate purpose of conceptualising romantic liberalism – or, as Galston does, reformation and enlightenment liberalism – is to make better sense of precisely the kind of empirical political discourses today that the cartoon controversy exemplifies. It thus makes sense to start in a recent and highly controversial political event.³

I should note that to say that a certain position is liberal is not, in this paper, to justify it – but merely to state a historical and political connection. I use the term liberalism in a minimal and strictly descriptive sense. Liberalism here denotes any position that defends universal political liberties – such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to vote, and the right to a

² Some examples of insightful analyses of the discourse surrounding the cartoons, which nevertheless pay little attention to Rose specifically, are Hervik and Berg, 2007a; Laegaard, 2007; Laegaard, 2009; Rostbøll, 2009; Rostbøll, 2010; Lindekilde, Mouritsen, et al., 2009; Rostbøll, 2009; and Rostbøll, 2010.

³ Galston (1995) originally began this discussion with several famous legal cases, including *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, a dispute between the Old Order Amish community and the Wisconsin state law requiring mandatory high school attendance.

private sphere – even when, as in the case of romantic liberalism, these liberties are conceived of as means for promoting a certain comprehensive ideal. Romantic liberalism is of course not a political liberalism in the sense that John Rawls (1993) famously uses the term. Neither, one might add, is enlightenment liberalism.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section recapitulates and challenges the prevailing understanding of the cartoon controversy as a case of enlightenment liberalism. In the subsequent section, I offer a closer analysis of how Flemming Rose, a neglected key actor, defended the cartoons. This reveals that for him, disrespect of religion is not a side effect of promoting the Enlightenment’s ideal of autonomy; rather, his very argument for the cartoons relies on a romantic notion of the good life that welcomes provocation as such. In the subsequent section, I propose we call Rose’s position a case of romantic liberalism; and I suggest we should expect this position to be more prone than enlightenment liberalism to disrespect and even fundamentalism. The final section summarises my findings and their implications for future research.

The cartoons and enlightenment liberalism

In September 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published twelve cartoons depicting the Muslim prophet Muhammad. The cartoons famously provoked much violent and non-violent protest, and a vigorous debate regarding the limits of free expression.⁴

However, the debate did not only concern whether or not *Jyllands-Posten* had the right to publish the cartoons. Flemming Rose, and many who defended his decision to commission the cartoons, claimed that publishing them was not only within the limits of free speech, but also represented a laudable use of this right. In their view, a good liberal should encourage mockery and ridicule of religion; in particular, it seemed, of Islam (Hansen, 2006a; Hansen, 2006b; O’Leary, 2006; Rose, 2010). It is with this position

⁴ For an overview of the debate, see for example Lindekilde, Mouritsen, et al., 2009. The most famous cartoon depicted Muhammad with a bomb in his turban, inscribed with the Muslim confession of faith. Another showed him with devil horns that formed a halo; a third with ‘barred’ eyes, a sabre in his hand, and two fearful niqab-clad women behind him. A fourth cartoon displayed a group of suicide bombers who, when arriving at the Gates of Heaven, are met by Muhammad exclaiming ‘Stop, stop, we ran out of virgins!’. Yet another cartoon showed what resembled the heads of women with headscarves and the text ‘Prophet! Daft and dumb, keeping woman under thumb!’. Several other cartoons, however, depicted Muhammad in a more neutral manner. Two of the cartoons focused on the possibility of the drawings provoking violent repercussions from Muslims; while another cartoon made fun of *Jyllands-Posten* by displaying Muhammad as a cheeky schoolboy who writes ‘the editors of *Jyllands-Posten* are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs’ on a blackboard, in Persian. One last cartoon presents a line-up of turban-clad people, including Pia Kjaersgaard, the leader of the Danish People’s Party, a nationalist party with an anti-immigration agenda. See the cartoons at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyllands-Posten_Muhammad_cartoons_controversy.

that my paper is concerned, for it is here that scholars have suggested that we find a form of liberal fundamentalism rooted in the project of the Enlightenment.⁵

A common conclusion in analyses of the debates surrounding the cartoons is that the latter were defended as a way to integrate allegedly irrational, or even medieval, Muslims into the supposedly 'rational, enlightened, evolved West' (Berthaut, Boe et al., 2007: 59).⁶ Sune Laegaard for example notes that the most vehement defenders of the cartoons saw liberalism as a comprehensive and 'militantly progressive, even proselytizing fighting creed', the ultimate goal of which was to combat 'irrational religion' with 'rational enlightenment' (Laegaard, 2009: 319). Tariq Modood similarly claims that a central notion for the defenders of the cartoons was that 'religion represents Europe's pre-enlightenment dark age of superstition and clerical authoritarianism and so has to be constantly kept at bay' (Modood, 2006: 6).

The most elaborate account of enlightenment liberalism in the context of the cartoons has been offered by Christian Rostbøll. According to him, the defenders of the cartoons believed 'that the reason why we ought to have freedom of expression is that it has the good consequences of promoting critical self-reflection'. Since they further believed that Muslims failed to live up to this ideal, it only seemed right to publish the cartoons in order to make them 'critically assess their faith'; or at least in order to reveal that Muslims 'hinder the type of public discourse that autonomous people have among themselves' (Rostbøll, 2009: 629, 643). In other words, the culprit in the cartoon controversy, in Rostbøll's view, was the ideal of autonomy:

The underlying norm was that one ought to keep a critical distance to one's commitments, particularly if these are religious commitments. The defenders of the cartoons could thus be seen as promoting what has been called Enlightenment liberalism, the core principle of which is autonomy (Rostbøll 2009: 626).

Rostbøll concludes that the cartoon controversy shows that 'Galston and other "anti-autonomy" liberals are right: a commitment to enlightenment values and (a specific use of) autonomy can lead to disrespect for religious minorities' (Rostbøll, 2009: 631).

I should note that I will not take issue with the argument in favour of another conception of autonomy that Rostbøll also puts forward in the same article. Nor will I question the widespread, but admittedly far from unanimous, conclusion that the cartoons were indeed disrespectful towards Mus-

⁵ For a brief discussion of the seemingly oxymoronic notion of 'liberal fundamentalism', in the context of the cartoons, see Kunelius and Eide, 2007: 17.

⁶ Also see Craft and Oyedemi, 2007: 181; Hervik and Berg, 2007a: 37; Kunelius and Eide, 2007: 12.

lims.⁷ Assuming that the cartoons were in fact disrespectful, I will instead question whether we should understand them as a case of disrespect fuelled by enlightenment liberalism, or by something else.

Political, not comprehensive, enlightenment ideals

Galston repeatedly equates the ideal of autonomy that enlightenment liberalism wishes to promote to the process of reflection, and often to self-reflection specifically (Galston, 1995: 522-525; Galston, 2002: 21-24). It is also this ideal of autonomy that Rostbøll claims to have found at the centre of the cartoon controversy. The cartoon defenders, he contends, believed that they needed to teach Muslims to ‘critically reflect on and choose their own way of life’. The cartoons were meant to reveal this alleged lack of autonomy; and if possible to provoke such self-reflection (Rostbøll, 2009: 643). This conclusion Rostbøll in turn builds upon the following observations.

The main editorial in *Jyllands-Posten* on the day it first published the cartoons was called ‘The threat from the dark’. Its content criticised the ‘politically correct’ fear of offending Muslims who espouse a worldview from the ‘dark middle ages (...) a world view we in the Western world left during the Enlightenment’. Later, the Danish Prime Minister also claimed that ‘The Enlightenment (...) has been the driving force behind European development and decisive for why we have come as far as we have. Therefore, we have something here (i.e. freedom of expression), with regard to which we cannot give one millimetre’. Other top politicians, finally, defended the cartoons on the grounds that it is essential that ‘the values of the Enlightenment take hold of more Muslims’; and that Muslims must be made to understand that ‘satires and caricatures of religious and political authorities are not expressions of disrespect for or ridicule of groups because of their faith or beliefs’.⁸

These examples certainly show that Muslims were expected to understand the *cartoons* in an ‘enlightened’ way. They do not, however, reveal that Muslims were expected to learn the virtue of autonomous self-reflection, nor apply it to their own faith, as Rostbøll nevertheless concludes. When the Prime Minister argues that the Enlightenment is the foundation of Danish society, and others note that Muslims must internalise enlightenment values

⁷ If we by disrespect mean the failure to live up to the Kantian requirement that we treat others as ends in themselves, I think we should agree that the cartoons were disrespectful. The reason is that if we take Kant’s requirement to mean that we must operate on the assumption that everyone has what they consider good reasons for what they think, then it seems to me that we must invite even those with whom we cannot sympathise to join us in reasoned deliberation. By insulting and ridiculing them, by contrast, we fail to treat them as autonomous moral agents. This is not to say that it is always necessarily wrong to be disrespectful; sometimes there might be other over-riding values that justify disrespect. My point is simply that, even if this is so, disrespect has a certain moral cost. For a longer discussion as to why the cartoons were disrespectful or not, cf. Carens, 2006; Laegaard, 2007; and Rostbøll, 2011.

⁸ The quotations are taken from Rostbøll 2009: 625-626, since my concern lies with his conclusions.

and ‘understand’ that religious satire is not equivalent to insulting individuals, the values they refer to are clearly political, such as freedom of the press, and freedom of speech. They do not invoke autonomy in the sense of self-reflection; in fact, they do not invoke the need for reflection at all.

Nor can we conclude that the cartoon defenders exemplified enlightenment liberalism simply because they were hostile to religious faith as such; because most often, they were not. Many were in fact positive towards Christianity, but dismissive of Islam. It was even argued that Islam was problematic precisely because it is purportedly not spiritual or mystic enough, and understands religion as a political rather than an otherworldly affair (Sløk, 2009; Rose, 2010: 321). Either way, the main claim was that Muslims have the wrong *political* values, not that they have the wrong conception of the good life. The problem, in other words, was that Muslims supposedly fail to acknowledge the societal separation between religion and politics; not that they lead a life of faith rather than reflective reasoning.

Thus, while the cartoon defenders certainly expressed the wish for Muslims to value the political arrangement of what they called enlightened societies, there is nothing in Rostbøll’s examples to suggest the agenda of provoking the particular enlightenment ideal of autonomous self-reflection, a comprehensive as opposed to a political ideal.⁹

This is not to say that Rostbøll is necessarily wrong in his conclusions. However, if enlightenment liberalism, and not just vague references to the Enlightenment, did indeed play a role in the defence of the cartoons, it seems that we must dig deeper than Rostbøll does in order to reveal this.

Flemming Rose, a neglected key actor

If we really want to get at the arguments invoked in defence of the publication as such, it seems best to go back to where it all started, to the editor of the culture section in *Jyllands-Posten* at the time of the cartoon publication, and thus the person who commissioned the cartoons in the first place: Flemming Rose.

Rose took it upon himself to be the main defender of the cartoon publication in the ensuing global debate. He continues to insist that, by publishing the cartoons, he was taking a stand not only for a political but a moral ideal. This becomes particularly clear in *The Tyranny of Silence*, his book from 2010. If we are to find a stance of enlightenment liberalism in any defence of the cartoons, it thus seems most likely to find it here, in Rose’s argumentation. Yet, previous research has neglected to carefully analyse his position.¹⁰

In the following section, I will therefore scrutinise the values that Rose draws upon in defending the publication of the cartoons. Note that since my

⁹ As Rostbøll himself observes (2009: 626), it is nevertheless this commitment that characterises enlightenment liberalism in Galston’s account.

¹⁰ See references in note 2.

concern lies not with intentions, but arguments – for example, arguments from autonomy or diversity – I will leave aside the question of Rose’s true motivation, and focus solely on the reasons he wishes to present as the ones that led him to publish the cartoons.¹¹

Flemming Rose’s position

The ‘immediate cause’ for the cartoons, Rose states, was the refusal of several artists to illustrate Kåre Bluitgen’s children’s book about the life of Muhammad (Rose, 2010: 63). The cartoons, Rose has insisted all along, were a way of addressing self-censorship in dealings with Islam, which he saw as a worrying tendency in Danish cultural and public life, and indeed also in other European countries (Rose, 2005; Rose, 2006; Rose, 2010: 22). But why, we may ask, is he so troubled by self-censorship?

Self-expression and disrespect

Part of Rose’s argumentation is political. Self-censorship, he clearly believes, represents a crucial step towards facilitating a totalitarian state. Holding back one’s opinions and emotions, either out of fear or what he sees as misguided respect, is very likely to undermine what he considers to be the fundament of liberal democracy, namely freedom of expression and tolerance of dissent. This much he claims to have concluded from his time as a Danish reporter in the Soviet Union (Rose, 2010: 18-19).

So far, his argument could in principle be agreed upon independently of one’s comprehensive ideals in life; all one needs to acknowledge is the political value of avoiding totalitarianism. However, this is far from the full story.

The cartoon crisis, Rose (2010: 443) also tells us, went beyond the scope of a political crisis; it had to do with a moral need for human beings to tell their story. Expressing ourselves is a human need, a fundamental activity for understanding ourselves, Rose states:

In that sense freedom of speech became not only a political right in a democracy. It came to involve something more fundamental and existential, independently of a society’s political regime. The right to tell one’s story was a part of what it means to be human, and so offenses of free speech became not only political crimes, but assaults on human nature (Rose, 2010: 442).

Self-censorship, in Rose’s view then, is not only politically perilous – it also constitutes a threat to human flourishing. Rose here follows a notion of human nature that he attributes to Salman Rushdie:

¹¹ Galston is clearly concerned that *arguments* from autonomy will drive many ‘potential allies’ of liberalism into opposition (Galston, 2002: 25-26).

According to Rushdie, throughout our lives we all use stories in order to understand and define ourselves. The phenomenon springs from a universal instinct for language and a part of human nature. Because of this, attempts to limit this expression do not only represent censorship and political attacks on freedom of expression. No, they are also a form of violence against human nature, an existential assault, which transforms people into something that they are not, Rushdie said (Rose, 2010: 14-15).

The need to tell one's story that Rose stresses seems to have little connection to autonomy, to stepping back from one's immediate impulses and reflecting upon whether they are rational or not. Instead, the importance of such self-expression stems from Rose's belief that human beings need to 'understand and define' themselves: we must each tell our own story, not because it is necessarily more true than anyone else's, but because it is our own and thus constitutes the only way of creating our identity (Rose, 2010: 256-257).

Indeed, after having stated the human need for defining oneself by self-expression, Rose goes on to say that his entire book does in no way pretend to tell the 'objective' story of the Muhammad cartoons, but only his story. The book itself, he says, conveys *his* personal attempt to create coherence and meaning of the cartoons, *his* experience of the events, and *his* values (Rose, 2010: 17).

Rose does not seem to concern himself, then, with communicating a universal truth or universal values to those he thinks are objectively mistaken – as would make sense if his argument relied on the ideal of autonomous self-reflection. On the contrary, his message seems to be that sharing our point of view is of utter importance for human beings, precisely because it does not mirror an objective truth, but expresses our unique version of it.

Nor does the ultimate goal with self-expression seem to be that it will enhance an enlightened debate that in turn promotes autonomy. Rose's very goal seems to be a provocative public debate, including mockery and ridicule, quite independently of whether or not this might further autonomy. Consider for example how he depicts the problem that the cartoons supposedly addressed, here in the article that accompanied the original publication of the cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005:

Frank Hvam, the comedian, recently admitted that he does not 'dare piss on the Quran on television'. An illustrator of a children's book with pictures of the prophet Muhammad wishes to remain anonymous. The same wish is expressed by several West European translators of a collection of essays critical towards Islam. A leading art gallery removes a piece of art from fear of Muslim reactions. During this theatre season, three plays ridiculing the President of the United States, George W. Bush, are being played, but not a single one on Osama bin Laden and his allies. During a meeting with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, an imam requests that the government influence Danish media, so that they convey a more positive picture of Islam.

The above examples give reason for concern, independently of whether the experience of fear is warranted or not (Rose, 2005).

If Rose was worried about a lack of critical debate that might foster autonomous self-reflection, then surely it would have made more sense for him to begin with, for example, the case of the lecturer at the Niebuhr Institute at Copenhagen University, who was assaulted for reading the Quran out loud during a lecture. This happened around the same time as many of the other events Rose mentions (Hervik and Berg, 2007a: 30). Yet, Rose's article bears no mention of the assaulted lecturer. Neither does it complain of a lack of scholarly or more generally intellectual critique of and engagement with Islam; rather, he laments the fact that those who like Ali's translators do engage in such criticism do not dare openly display their names.

Most importantly, Rose begins by lamenting the lack of freedom for a stand-up comedian to publically urinate on the Quran, despite the fact that he is probably well aware that this act would not be likely to instil autonomous self-reflection and self-questioning among Muslims, nor among anyone else. He also tries to defend the cartoons with the claim that they did *not* hinder Muslims from exercising their religion (Rose, 2010: 277), and that their effect on Muslims has been exaggerated (Rose, 2010: 114). Muslims, he points out, were free to choose whether to see the cartoons as offensive, or rather as a welcome attempt to integrate them in a Danish tradition of religious satire (Rose, 2010: 120). Moreover, he suggests we ought to engage not in sensitivity but '*insensitivity training*' towards the opinions of others; indeed, all of us – not only Muslims – ought to acquire 'thicker skin' (Rose, 2010: 24, emphasis added).

All this suggests that Rose sees disrespect and provocation not as lamentable side effects of promoting autonomy, but as valuable forms of self-expression – quite independently of whether or not they might make Muslims, or anyone else, more prone to self-reflection. For Rose, the notion that a comedian who wishes to urinate on the Quran must restrain himself from doing so appears deeply troubling in and of itself. This, it seems, has to do with the fact that self-restraint stands in opposition to self-expression, an urge that Rose believes every human being – artist or not – has within herself, much like a force of nature. If we try to hold ourselves back, he notes, it will only end in violent assertion of the self we have tried to restrain: 'If words stop, if you don't have the possibility to express your emotions and thought and words, then the next step is often violence' (Rose, 2010: 284, 452).¹²

Indeed, as we shall see in the next section, Rose is not only convinced that self-expression of this kind is one of the most natural human activities – it is also the path to self-respect and dignity.

¹² Also see Rose, 2010: 260-263.

Authenticity and dedication

In his concluding chapter, Rose notes that his book on the cartoon controversy is, among other things, about:

How to handle diversity and difference; how life confronts people with choices and dilemmas and questions on who they are, who others are, where they come from, and where they are going. How people with different backgrounds, history and religion can co-exist peacefully, how one remains true to oneself without pushing others away (Rose, 2010: 442).

Rose, it here seems, has gone a long way from the mere political argument that the cartoons were a way of discussing self-censorship that might ultimately undermine democracy. He here portrays the cartoon crisis as a question of how to live one's life morally. Handling diversity, it seems, is ultimately about remaining 'true to oneself', about being authentic, admittedly with the addendum of not pushing others away.

The importance Rose attributes to what we might call authentic self-expression becomes even clearer in the light of his long descriptions of dissidents, and especially those who defied the Soviet Union. Since the very beginning of the whole affair, Rose has repeatedly brought up the example of Soviet totalitarianism in his defence of the cartoon publication. He acknowledges that there are crucial differences between himself and the Soviet dissidents, but nevertheless claims that they are his 'role models' in life, and that the cartoon crisis reminded him of their example:

(...) my thoughts about them regarded the fact that they stood firm on their beliefs, independently of what their environment said, and independently of how high a price they had to pay. The price I paid was insignificant in comparison to theirs, but the principle of standing firm on what one believed and held to be right I had learnt from them. The worst thing I could imagine was to defer to intimidation and to express something else than what I meant – independently of whether the intimidation stemmed from circles of political correctness that labelled me a racist or a xenophobe, or from religious fanatics, who placed a bounty on my head (Rose, 2010: 204-205).

Rose's book on the cartoon controversy is full of similar passages, portraying the heroic act of standing up for one's ideals, independently of the consequences, as the ideal towards which we should all strive (Rose, 2010: 303, 351-352, 366-367). Indeed, a great part of it consists of recapitulations of interviews with and stories of dissidents of various kinds, all of whom Rose admires greatly:

Their unyielding example was a role model for me. They went to prison with their heads held high. Their sense of dignity and faith in what they believed was more important than to adjust to a criminal regime, which they deeply despised. They practiced what they preached. In their case, there was no dif-

ference between words and deeds. They were, as one of them put it, ‘happy political prisoners’ (Rose, 2010: 204).¹³

In Rose’s view, it seems that if we stay true to ourselves and refuse to ‘give in to fear’, if we proudly sacrifice convenience, even safety, to uphold our integrity, then we can flourish even within a totalitarian regime. This, he thinks, is the only path to a truly dignified life. Had he not defended the cartoons, Rose (2010: 205) evidently thinks he would have failed to stand firm on what he believes, and thus lost both ‘self-respect and dignity’. In a similar vein, he also states that he sees ‘existential honesty and decency as a precondition for personal growth and self-understanding’ (Rose, 2010: 202).

Rose also recounts several stories of Soviet dissidents who describe their own experiences in a very similar way: taking a stand and expressing oneself is a form of ‘catharsis’, ‘a step towards inner liberation’ (Rose, 2010: 320). Deciding to refuse to pretend, to no longer play the game of the regime and give in to its intimidation, ‘had an enormously liberating effect’ (Rose, 2010: 325).

It is clear that Rose agrees with these views, not least from how disdainfully he describes those who do not have the courage to express themselves. For example, he describes the cartoonists and artists who refused to draw Muhammad, out of what they said was respect for Muslim sensitivities, as cowards and hypocrites (Rose, 2010: 224-225).

Rose also invokes Solzhenitsyn’s appeal to every individual’s responsibility to ‘refuse to live with the lie’, to ‘choose between the lie and truth’. Responsibility, interestingly, suddenly has little to do with one’s relation to others, but here rather applies to an internal relation between one’s inner conviction and one’s actions. To be responsible is to be sincere and true to oneself, it seems. Rose thus has great esteem for what he calls ‘the personal refusal to partake in the lie’, for the decision to say: ‘Let the lie be everywhere... but do not let it govern through me!’. For as soon as one stops expressing one’s opinions, ‘the slow and steady breaking down of oneself begins’ (Rose, 2010: 319-320).

In conclusion, Rose portrays the publication of the cartoons as a matter of setting a moral example. The courageous Soviet dissidents, who refused to give in to intimidation, inspired him to do the same, he says (Rose, 2010: 204, 447). The cartoons, he claims, were meant to combat a worrying tendency towards self-restraint, which is not only a threat to democracy, but ultimately ‘eats up people’s soul and makes them lose their dignity and self-respect’ (Rose, 2010: 331).

To refrain from expressing what one feels – whether out of respect for others, or regards for consequences, or some other reason – is here equated to a failure to live up to the principle of standing firm on one’s beliefs, to let

¹³ Also see Rose, 2010: 447.

oneself down (Rose, 2010: 205). Our most important duty in this view is to ourselves, to display what we authentically think and feel – sometimes, it seems, even at the cost of martyrdom. This, Rose suggests, is the path to human flourishing: even prisoners can be happy if they proudly stay true to themselves.

Neither enlightenment nor reformation liberalism

How should we categorise Rose's position? The expectation from previous research, we have seen, is that he defends the cartoons with recourse to autonomy, and thus exemplifies enlightenment liberalism. Rostbøll puts it in the following way:

If we believe that the reason why we ought to have freedom of expression is that it has the good consequence of promoting critical self-reflection, then we will feel encouraged to use the right to attempt to make others critically reflect on their deepest convictions. If one in addition thinks that Muslims do not hold their beliefs autonomously, then one will feel encouraged to express oneself in ways that one believes will make them critically assess their faith (Rostbøll, 2009: 629).

Rose, however, does not seem to think that the ultimate reason for having free speech is that it brings about autonomous self-reflection. Nor, one might add, does he invoke the value of diversity, which would make his position a defence from reformation liberalism. Indeed, if certain uses of freedom of speech, such as ridicule and mockery, would eventually lead to the demise of certain cultures or religions altogether, Rose seems willing to welcome such a turn of events – while a reformation liberal would lament the resulting lack of a plurality of life styles (Galston, 2002: 265, 391).

By contrast, we have seen that Rose's defence of freedom of speech draws on the value of fearless expression of one's innermost feelings and convictions. I suggest we call this the ideal of authentic and dedicated self-expression. For Rose, this ideal stands out as a universal good, grounded in the human need to create one's identity. It is an 'existential matter' and 'a part of what it means to be human' (Rose, 2010: 442). Rose thus seems to think that everyone, including not only Danes or seculars but also Muslims, should strive to express their authentic selves through various forms of speech (Rose, 2010: 440, 446).¹⁴

In my reading, it was this ideal of authentic and dedicated self-expression that Rose was trying to exemplify, and inspire others to follow, by publishing the cartoons. His defence of the publication and freedom of speech, as we have seen, celebrates un-questioning dedication, emotional fervour, and the spontaneity of feeling. These ideals are clearly different from, and some-

¹⁴ Also see Rose, 2010: 384-387.

times in conflict with, the ideal of autonomous self-reflection (Rose, 2010: 205).

Rose's main concern with Muslims, moreover, is not that they hold their beliefs with too much fervour and too little self-distance, as previous research would lead us to assume. It is rather that they purportedly fail to respect freedom of speech, and the modern separation between politics and religion – that they fail to live up to a certain political ideal connected to the Enlightenment, not a comprehensive one (Rose, 2010: 271, 346, 382).

In fact, Rose's discussion revolves less around Muslims than non-Muslims, whom he blames for holding their beliefs with too *little* fervour and too *much* self-distance. For example, he appears more troubled by the behaviour of the great majority – those who 'are able to live with the lie and not say what they think' – than he is by the behaviour of the minority of 'true believers who commit to their beliefs with sincere hearts', even if the latter are religious fundamentalists (Rose, 2010: 328-329).¹⁵

The most dangerous fundamentalism in our time, Rose also says, is neither political nor religious, but what he calls 'the fundamentalism of offence', the notion that those potentially offended should have the privilege to restrain those who might offend them from expressing themselves (Rose, 2010: 174). The target of the cartoons, in Rose's view, is thus not religious zeal, or zeal of any kind, it seems – but rather what he perceives of as a trend towards less and less authentic and dedicated self-expression. In what follows, I shall suggest that this reasoning is distinctly romantic.

Romantic liberalism

Attempts to capture the essence of romantic thought often begin with the declaration that this is close to an impossible endeavour (Lovejoy, 1948; Riasanovsky, 1992: 69; Berlin, 2001: 1) My intention here is certainly not, however, to define romantic thought, but to offer an admittedly simplified description of some of its most recurrent *individualistic* ideals. For while Romanticism is perhaps best known for its political links to conservatism, nationalism, and even fascism, there are also important strands of romantic thought that idealise individual freedom and thus appear as more natural allies to liberal politics (cf. Larmore, 1996). As we shall now see, Rose's defence of the cartoons invokes many of the most salient ideals in this tradition.

¹⁵ Together with one of his interviewees, Afshin Ellian, Rose (2010: 360) also seems to lament that the West suffers from a 'sickly' current of self-doubt and self-hate; it gives in too easily to the demands of the offended. In constantly apologising for itself and not standing up for its ideals, the West loses dignity in their eyes.

The romantic origins of Rose's ideals

Romanticism is often described as a fatal attack upon the idea that virtue consists in knowledge of, and obedience to, the true nature of things – a fundamental assumption in most previous moral thought, including that of the Enlightenment. The Romantics replaced the ideal of the self that submits to science with a celebration of the indomitable will, which *creates* rather than finds moral values. Above all, they celebrated the ego, the unyielding will that strives towards self-assertion rather than submission (Rorty, 1989: 7; Berlin 2001: 119; Schmitt, 2011: 18).

While the philosophers of the Enlightenment believed that our identity lies in what is universal, such as our shared reason; the Romantics objected that it lies in the particular, in that which sets us apart from each other. Many of them thus believed, like Fichte, that it is only in opposition, only when we meet resistance, that we become fully aware of our true self. Like Julien Sorel, Stendhal's protagonist in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, we must come into conflict with society in order to experience our true individuality (Rosenblum, 1987: 32; Berlin, 2001: 94-97).

A crucial role model in this tradition is the artist or poet, both of whom epitomise creative expression, and more specifically self-expression, a central virtue in the romantic tradition (Abrams, 1975: 21-22; Schmitt, 2011: 18). Nancy Rosenblum (1987: 5) in fact notes that there is a constant 'romantic preoccupation with individuality and self-expression'. Charles Larmore (1996: 3) similarly observes that, for the Romantic, artistic creativity through self-expression is the mission of not only the artist, but everyone. Berlin (2001: 58) concurs: Herder, he for example notes, believed that to not express one's true nature is to restrain, or even maim oneself.

The self-expression celebrated by the Romantics was, moreover, often of a particular kind: authentic and dedicated. For the Romantics, authenticity, or being true to oneself, quite simply, is often equated to being natural, spontaneous and 'nonreflective' (Larmore 1996: 83). For a thinker like Thoreau (1960), the ultimate reason for civil disobedience lies here, in that the most important commitment of each individual is to his own conscience. The major duty, in other words, is to not betray *oneself*.

The truly heroic individual, finally, does not only express her authentic self. She also does so at whichever cost: fearlessly, relentlessly, even in the face of martyrdom. Motive, in other words, counts more than consequences, in this romantic tradition. This is what is meant by dedication, one of the most crucial ideals in romantic thought. The major sins for the Romantics, it has therefore been pointed out, are not vice, egoism or recklessness – but philistinism, hypocrisy, and cowardliness (Rosenblum, 1987: 19, 45-48, 117; Berlin, 2001: 139-141).

It is thus not very surprising that the Romantics also tended to reduce politics to a possibility for the ego to express itself, and in a provocative

manner. Whenever we are faced with a rule, romantic thinkers, such as Schlegel, urged us to ‘laugh at it, mock at it, be ironical, blow it up’, as Berlin puts it (2001: 117, 145).¹⁶ Carl Schmitt (2011: 162) therefore notes that political arrangements become ‘occasional points of departure for the romantic productivity of the creative ego’.¹⁷ From a more positive perspective, Rosenblum (1987: 117-118, 124) similarly observes that Romantics tend to cast the public sphere as ‘an arena for heroic self-display’. In sum, romantic thought tends to welcome rebellion and provocation; not because this necessarily improves society, but because it improves the individual, allowing her to cultivate her individuality (Berlin, 2001: 42-43).

Much of what we have seen in Rose’s position certainly resonates with these romantic themes. Rose seems committed to what Thoreau (1960: 226) calls ‘giving a strong dose of myself’. Just as the Romantics, Rose shows little but contempt for the moral cowardice supposedly exemplified by those who bow to demands for respecting religious sensitivities. In Rose’s view, just as for many Romantics, our main obligation is to remain true to ourselves.

We can now see that when Rose celebrates free speech not only as a political value, but as something more ‘existential’, as an opportunity to grow morally by expressing our true self, he presents liberal rights as a means towards a distinctly romantic ideal of the good life. When he assumes that identity is created in the act of telling one’s unique story, and that provocation and conflict are valuable aspects of public debate, because they give us an outlet for the almost irresistible human urge to express ourselves, we can now recognise that he espouses a romantic notion of human flourishing.

The concept of romantic liberalism

The up-shot of the above is that Rose invokes a distinctly romantic conception of the good life in his defence of the liberal right of freedom of speech, and of a certain use of it. He thereby exemplifies a position that I suggest we call ‘romantic liberalism’.

By calling his position not only romantic, but also liberal, I do not mean to deny that such a stance might sometimes serve illiberal purposes, such as nationalism with racist connotations. My goal here, however, is only to diagnose the position that Rose explicitly defends – and this position certainly qualifies as liberal in the minimal sense in which Galston and this paper use the term, i.e. as a defence of universal political liberties for the individual. Rose’s entire book about the cartoons is a vehement defence of freedom of speech, the liberal right *par excellence*, as many would argue. He here sides with Ronald Dworkin in advocating a considerably wide understanding of the limits of free speech (Rose, 2010: 23, 226-227, 274). That he does so for

¹⁶ Also see Schmitt, 2011: 7, 24.

¹⁷ Also see Schmitt, 2011: 130, 196-197.

romantic reasons does not make him less liberal in the minimal sense in which I use the word here; just like the fact that an enlightenment liberal understands liberalism as a way to promote autonomy does not make him any less liberal in Galston's view.

As enlightenment liberalism, romantic liberalism also places a certain conception of the good life at the centre of liberal politics. However, romantic liberalism gives pride of place not to autonomous self-reflection, but to dedicated and authentic self-expression. According to this romantic understanding of liberalism, the ultimate goal of individual rights and free public discussion is to further the ideal of the sincere and dedicated artist, who expresses his authentic self; an ideal that we are all expected to emulate, artists or not.

Rose's example shows that when religious believers, symbols, or traditions are perceived of as standing in the way of such artistic self-expression – because, for example, they ask us to restrain ourselves out of respect or even reverence – then romantic liberals tend to interpret this as a declaration of war on liberalism itself. Those who yield to such demands for self-restraint are believed to fail liberalism: they have not stood up for the very goal of freedom of speech, for example, and this at a time of need. For romantic liberals, such as Rose, it thus becomes a virtue to actively disrespect whomever, or whatever, it is that demands our self-restraint; to set the example of authentic and dedicated self-expression, and to remind other liberals that it is this ideal, supposedly, that liberal institutions should promote.

Just like Galston fears is the case with enlightenment liberalism, then, romantic liberalism too risks failing to 'recognize the need for respectful coexistence' with groups or individuals who do not give pride of place to the romantic ideal (Galston, 2002: 24). However, there are important differences between the two traditions. The disrespect we can expect from enlightenment liberalism, with its ideal of the dispassionate philosopher, consists in trying to liberate people by 'enlightening' them – sometimes against their will, but always for their own sake. By contrast, the disrespect invited by romantic liberalism seems not so much to be an unfortunate side effect of a misguided concern for others, but rather a virtue in which we should engage for our *own* good.

In the previous section, we saw that by idealising the provocative artist as a role model for everyone, artist or not, romantic liberalism casts the self as the moral protagonist in life. However, as Berlin (2008: 197) warns us, if I conceive of myself 'as an inspired artist', then I will see 'humanity as the raw material upon which I impose my creative will'.

In other words, romantic liberalism seems to risk reducing anyone else to an object against which the self can engage in honourable self-display. If the confrontation hurts or angers some, this is not a sad side effect of the process of liberation, but rather a welcome sign that I have succeeded in expressing my true, particular, identity (Rosenblum, 1987: 27, 46). For, if the primary

virtue in life is to express my true self without taking consequences into account – and what is my true self consists in that which makes me radically different from anyone else – then what could be a better sign of my virtuousness than the fact that I have insisted on self-expression in a way that disturbs someone else?

Because of its focus on the freedom of the artist, rather than that of the philosopher, romantic liberalism seems to differ from enlightenment liberalism in its ideal of public life. Roughly speaking, the enlightenment project emphasises that we must learn from each other, or at least deliberate with others, in order to get closer to the truth. The romantic project, by contrast, presumes that we already know the truth we need – the only one there is, perhaps – in ‘our heart of hearts’. In other words, while the ideal of autonomy is to be open to reason, strive for dispassionate dialogue, and widen one’s perspective; the romantic ideal of self-expression rather emphasises the display of one’s ‘inner truth’, the spontaneous outburst of one’s true feelings and thoughts, for the very reason that they are ours (cf. Berlin, 2001: 21-45). Rose, as we have seen, gives ample proof of this attitude in his insistence on each individual’s need to tell one’s own unique story.

In other words, while enlightenment liberalism stresses unity, temperance and sober-mindedness in public discussions, the romantic ideal of public debate rather celebrates the opposite. As we saw in the previous section, romantic thought does not encourage the creation of order and rules, but their breaking; it celebrates not unity and achieving consensus, but clashes between different points of view. Conflict and disharmony appear less as disturbing elements in public debate, and more as welcome signs of authenticity, vitality and courage (cf. Berlin, 2001: 113-117).

Finally, romantic liberalism also seems to have an inherent affinity to fundamentalism that enlightenment liberalism lacks. The ideal for enlightenment liberalism is to be distanced and reflective, open to the idea that one is wrong; even though in practice, this may be easily forgotten. The romantic hero, however, is essentially unreflective. Indeed, as Larmore (1996: 90) emphasises, ‘the importance of the Romantic theme of authenticity is that it disabuses of the idea that life is necessarily better the more we think about it’.¹⁸

Contrary to enlightenment liberals, then, romantic liberals do not ask us to be ready to change our mind as soon as we find a good reason for doing so. On the contrary, they would seem to encourage us to hold on to whatever is our original, unreflective and even intuitive will, because anything else would represent a failure to express our authentic self. Rose (2010: 327) thus appears to harbour more respect for those who stand up for ideals that he disagrees with, than for those who share his views but fail to assert them, out of convenience or fear. This stance brings to mind Thoreau, who claimed

¹⁸ Also see Larmore, 1996: and Rosenblum, 1987: 114.

that being called a fanatic was the greatest imaginable compliment (Rosenblum, 1987: 107).

All this suggests that, in romantic liberalism, as opposed to enlightenment liberalism, neither provocation nor fundamentalism is a potential perversion of the original message. Rather, they are something that we may, at least at times, admire and encourage. It is thus somewhat surprising that the concept of romantic liberalism that I have outlined here remains absent from most discussions on the contemporary sources of liberal disrespect.

I do not of course mean to claim that all links between romantic and liberal thought have been neglected in previous research. A recent article by Nomi Maya Stolzenberg (2009) for example suggests that legal discourses in the United States today have entered into a 'romantic state'. Her topic is a certain romantic mentality, a romantic view of the psyche, exemplified by metaphors of war and struggle in American discourse. While her argument is certainly thought-provoking, Stolzenberg does not, however, clarify precisely which empirical observations undergird her argument; nor does she specify her conceptual apparatus. Most importantly, she does not, as I have tried to do here, delineate a concept of romantic liberalism that allows us to describe existing understandings of liberalism as committed to promoting a romantic conception of the good life.

Nor, finally, does Nancy Rosenblum (1987), who offers the otherwise richest existing account of the overlap between liberal and romantic thought. Her goal is to recast both liberalism and Romanticism into what she suggests is a desirable combination. The category of 'another liberalism' that she proposes, therefore, includes not only romantic elements, but also the ideal of autonomy and self-direction, which Galston associates with enlightenment liberalism.

However, as this section has tried to show, it is important to distinguish between romantic liberalism and enlightenment liberalism. As Rose's defence of the cartoons vividly shows, romantic celebration of spontaneity, uncompromising fervour and dedication is in many ways opposed to the 'conscious critical reflection', common sense, moderation and self-direction that characterises enlightenment liberalism (Galston, 1995: 525). This, however, does not make romantic liberalism any less prone than enlightenment liberalism to invite disrespect, and even a certain fundamentalism, in the name of liberalism; but, on the contrary, even more so.

Concluding discussion

This paper has provided a first analysis of the arguments put forward by Flemming Rose, one of the key actors in the Danish cartoon controversy. My examination of his position has shown that, just as previous research has suggested, he defends the cartoon publication with a specific understanding of freedom of speech, one that invokes a conception of the good life. How-

ever, contrary to what previous research assumes, this conception of the good does not amount to autonomy; rather, it consists in dedicated and authentic self-expression.

Rose, we have seen, stresses the need to hold on to our beliefs rather than to question them, to devote ourselves forcefully to them rather than to step back from them in reflection, and above all to express them fearlessly – not because they are universally true and must be conveyed to others, but because they are ours. His hero is not the reflective philosopher, but the creative artist, ready to face martyrdom rather than to compromise his integrity. This runs counter to the assumption in previous research that the most vehement defenders of the Muhammad cartoons argued from the ideal of autonomy, and claimed that Muslims are insufficiently autonomous because they are overly emotional, irrational, unreasonable or incapable of reflection.¹⁹

My analysis instead suggests that, by publishing the cartoons, Rose argues that he was setting a moral example of how we should use freedom of speech; a message, it seems, that was directed just as much towards non-Muslims as Muslims, if not more. I have tried to show that, for Rose, disrespect of Muslim belief was not an unintended side effect of ‘enlightening’ anyone in the sense of making them more autonomous, but part of his goal. The very point of publishing the cartoons was to show that if religious sensitivities stand in the way of authentic self-expression, then the latter should prevail – because, as Rose believes, the ultimate goal of freedom of speech and other liberal institutions is to further this conception of the good life. It is this position that I have suggested we call romantic liberalism.

Although this essay has only scrutinised Rose, I believe there is reason to expect the concept of romantic liberalism to be applicable elsewhere as well. Others who defended the cartoon publication similarly argued that blasphemy has a ‘cathartic value’ value (Haarscher, 2007: 313), and that it is one of the few ‘therapies’ for allegedly suppressed liberals (O’Leary, 2006: 28). A typical distinction made by the defenders was also that between ‘fear and courage’, between being ‘brave or cowardly’ (Craft and Oyedeki, 2007: 184).

I would argue that all these concepts are more alien to enlightenment liberalism than they are to its romantic counterpart. If the goal of freedom of speech is taken to be autonomous self-reflection, it would seem to be neither here nor there that a certain use of this right constitutes a form of therapeutic release, or that a certain expression is courageous. However, if we take the goal of freedom of speech to be authentic and dedicated self-expression, then

¹⁹ Modood, 2006: 6; Berthaut, Boe et al., 2007: 59; Craft and Oyedeki, 2007: 181; Hervik and Berg, 2007a: 37; Hervik and Berg, 2007b; Kunelius and Eide, 2007: 12; Laegaard, 2009: 319; Rostbøll, 2009.

it certainly seems more relevant what is therapeutic or brings catharsis; as well as what acts are fearless and which are cowardly.

Indeed, some commentators seemed to reject the enlightenment notion that we must step back from our own viewpoint every once in a while and strive for autonomous self-reflection. For example, the political scientist Brendan O’Leary defended the cartoon publication by arguing that there are plenty of working class people who are not happy about multiculturalism, and that publishing the cartoons was a way of allowing them to voice their opinions:

Must we not listen to others who say they do not experience the benefits? Must we simply re-educate them? Must we require them as well as competing with other workers to respect their beliefs – when the respect is manifestly not reciprocated (O’Leary, 2006: 26)?

I would suggest that this stance seems rather far away from enlightenment liberalism, which need not be opposed to the idea of re-education at all. Instead, it rather exemplifies the romantic position that authentic emotion must be expressed, independently of consequences.

The same could be said for some of the negative reactions to the fact that *Jyllands-Posten* eventually apologised for having caused offense by the cartoons. Those who criticised this apology did not only point out that the apology seemed to be the result of political pressure. They also often expressed close to exasperation at the very idea of politeness. Being polite, it was argued, is just another form of not standing up for oneself, of yielding to others’ influence. Politeness was seen as dishonourable and cowardly (cf. Broder, 2006; Berthaut and Boe, 2007: 59-60).

In a speech with the title *The right to offend*, Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2006) for example insisted that ‘demanding that people who do not accept Muhammad’s teachings should refrain from drawing him is not a request for respect but a demand for submission’. Hirsi Ali suggests that liberals should not apologise, even for offense, for doing so is shameful; it means selling out, backing down, cowering with fear. In this account, it would seem that liberalism is at war. The task of a good liberal, then, is to be a good warrior, to fight and not surrender; far more so at least than to autonomously reflect upon her own situation, or demand anyone else to reflect on *theirs*, for that matter.

From the perspective of autonomy and enlightenment liberalism, it is not certain that refraining from doing something out of consideration for others is necessarily wrong. It need most certainly not be an act of submission of one’s principles, which, if they are about autonomy, concern *how* one holds one’s beliefs, rather than what one expresses to others. Perhaps then, at least in this case, Hirsi Ali is best described as a representative of romantic liber-

alism; not, as is often the case, as a supporter of ‘enlightenment fundamentalism’ (Ash, 2006).

This paper has focused only on one debate: the Muhammad cartoons controversy. Its conclusions nevertheless suggest that Galston’s dichotomy between a reformation liberalism that celebrates diversity and tolerance, and an enlightenment liberalism that emphasises reason, reflection and rationality, represents us with an overly simplified picture of contemporary liberalism (Galston, 2002).²⁰ It may in fact lead us to misdiagnose the sources of liberal disrespect in other contemporary cases as well, beyond the Danish cartoon controversy.

Consider for example the growing support among the liberal majority in many Western European countries for tougher immigration policies, a ban on head scarves or veils of different kind, and tougher citizenship tests. In the Dutch case, such citizenship tests include a mandatory video that shows men kissing, bare-breasted women and rock concerts. Christian Joppke has suggested that these are all examples of a perfectionist and ultimately repressive strand ‘inherent in liberalism itself’. This repressive liberal impulse consists in trying to make people ‘autonomous by illiberal means’; and Joppke (2007: 14-16) believes it can be traced back to J.S. Mill’s notion of limiting liberalism to ‘human beings in the maturity of their faculties’.

In a similar vein, Desmond King (1999: 8) associates what he calls repressive liberalism with the Enlightenment’s ideal of autonomy, its focus on ‘reasoning powers’ and a certain ‘ability’ to plan for one’s future – something that religious people, and immigrants in particular, are often popularly portrayed as lacking.

However, this one-sided focus on enlightenment liberalism seems to neglect that it is hardly the ideal of autonomy as rational self-reflection that is most salient for the liberal majority in many of these countries, as numerous sociological studies have shown (cf. Johnston Conover, Searing et al., 2001: 56-58; Flanagan and Lee, 2003: 238; Bellah, Madsen et al., 2008: 127-128; 333-334).

Indeed, I would suggest that in popular discourse, it is not always autonomy and reason that Muslims are held to lack and that veil bans or immigration tests are intended to further, but rather the values of self-expression and individuality (Wallach-Scott, 2007: 125-31).²¹ Future research might therefore find that the culprit in some of these cases is precisely the kind of romantic liberalism that this paper has analysed – a strand of liberalism that I have proposed is more open to fundamentalism and disrespect than enlightenment liberalism, ‘the usual suspect’ in previous research.

²⁰ A similar concern with enlightenment liberalism is also found in, for example, Lomasky, 1987; Kukathas, 1992; and Galston, 1999.

²¹ Although Wallach-Scott (2007) does not distinguish these values from autonomy, her material nevertheless shows that individuality and self-expression were often invoked in favour of a ban on head scarves in the French debate.

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