

## **Give Me Liberty: Why It Is Important Not to Confuse Freedom and Other Educational Values**

**John H. Chambers**

*City College of the City University of New York*

Freedom as liberty, the absence of constraints by other people, is crucial in politics and education. Unfortunately, it is too often confused with such other conceptions as autonomy and ability. Freedom as liberty is justified both by Kant's Principle of Practical Reason and by Mill's four arguments. Moreover, the personal pursuit of other values normally presupposes, or empirically requires, freedom as liberty. The author proposes that freedom should be kept conceptually distinct from notions of autonomy and ability because freedom has a fundamental place in their achievement through education. Being in possession of abilities and powers is not being in possession of freedom and having freedom is not the same thing as acquiring ability. The onus is not upon persons to show why they should be allowed to be free and to do what they want to do, but rather upon those who set the constraints. If we make schooling compulsory and stop children from doing other things they might prefer, we do so only for good reasons of prudence or morality which justify such constraints.

La liberté, cette absence de contraintes provenant de d'autres personnes, est essentielle en politique et en éducation. Malheureusement, il y a trop souvent de confusion entre cette dernière et d'autres réalités comme l'autonomie et la possibilité d'exécuter. En tant que réalité, la liberté se justifie par les Principes de la raison de Kant et par les Quatre arguments de Mill. De plus, la recherche personnelle de d'autres valeurs suppose normalement, ou du moins nécessite la présence de la liberté. L'auteur propose que le concept de liberté soit perçu différemment des concepts d'autonomie et de possibilité d'exécuter parce que la liberté est nécessaire à leur actualisation par le truchement de l'éducation. En effet, posséder des capacités et du pouvoir ne signifie pas qu'on est en possession de liberté et devenir libre n'est pas la même chose qu'acquérir des capacités. Il n'appartient d'ailleurs pas aux personnes de démontrer pourquoi elles devraient être libres. C'est plutôt à ceux qui imposent les contraintes que revient cette tâche. Par exemple, si nous rendons la fréquentation scolaire obligatoire et ce faisant empêchons les enfants de faire ce qu'ils préfèrent,

c'est que des raisons, de prudence et de moralité, nous obligent à imposer ces contraintes.

Freedom is a crucial moral-social-political-educational principle and ideal. In everyday discussions of freedom, and in too many discussions in educational theory, several different concepts quickly become confused, with conceptual, empirical, and value issues mingling in wild profusion. But freedom and the matters with which it is confused are far too important in social, political, and educational life for us to be sanguine about such confusion.

In this article I argue for one basic meaning — the meaning espoused particularly by Mill (1974), but also by Locke (1967) and such other writers as de Tocqueville (1945) and Thomas Paine (1943), of *freedom as liberty*. This is the meaning central to the tradition of British, North American, and Australasian individualism and liberalism. It is also the meaning which should be central to educational discourse. Raphael (1981) calls this "the commonsense meaning" when he says that of the two rival concepts of freedom, one (namely, liberty) "is the commonsense meaning of freedom ... while the other is a peculiar meaning largely invented by theorists because of their objection to the commonsense idea" (p. 81). I believe Raphael is right in suggesting that the other is a "peculiar meaning largely invented by theorists" (such as Milton (1940), Rousseau (1935), Marx (1930), and modern Marxist-Leninists), but that there is more than one such invented concept, namely, freedom as ability, freedom as autonomy, and freedom as ability and autonomy.

I argue that (a) freedom as liberty is often confused with the quite different matter of our abilities and autonomy; (b) use of the mischievous phrase *freedom to* has at least three different meanings; (c) extending people's abilities or powers through education is *not* extending their freedom, but rather it is doing what it says, or else extending their autonomy; (d) such writers as T.H. Green (1889), Bosanquet (1919), Dewey (1928), and Hobhouse (1964) construe freedom as choice and power to act, or as effective reason, and thereby unfortunately confuse the issue; (e) it is mostly abilities, powers, and autonomy rather than freedom which philosophers like Dewey and many modern curriculum theorists think

important; and (f) so-called "positive freedom" by which someone can be "forced to be free" is a morally and educationally disastrous and totalitarian notion and not freedom at all, but a variety of control.

### *Liberty as the Basic Meaning of Freedom*

There is nothing especially complicated about the fundamental meaning of freedom. *Freedom is the absence of constraints by others.* We have freedom to the extent that we are not stopped by other people from doing what we want or choose to do and we are not compelled by others to do what we do not want or choose to do. I use both *want* and *choose* because at times people choose to do what they believe to be right — as in conscientious objection — although (because of the unpopularity of the choice) they do not want so to choose. Freedom is always a matter of degree, never of absolutes. People are free to the extent that no other person, authority, or state is stopping them from choosing between their own goals and forms of conduct, and to the extent that no other person, authority, or state is constraining them to act or stopping them from acting as they would otherwise choose. Thus, it is common for teachers and educationists to be using the word freedom while discussing something which is valuable but is other than freedom.

Why claim that liberty is the fundamental meaning of freedom? First, as Partridge (1967, p. 467) indicates, there is a good *ordinary language reason* for keeping to this view of the meaning of freedom. Adapting his argument I may ask, "Am I free to stroll into the headquarters computer room of the C.I.A. in Washington?" The question is unambiguous and the answer seems to be clearly, "No." But if I ask, "Do I have freedom to fly by my own efforts?" then this question appears peculiar and the answer would seem to be, "Yes, you have the freedom to, but you are unable to. In short, no one is stopping you, but you still cannot do it." In contrast, if I ask the question, "Did the Greek god, Mercury, have freedom to fly by his own efforts?" (assuming the cogency of the mythology), the answer seems to be, "Yes, he had the freedom *and* he had the ability." But the freedom was not the same thing as the ability. Thus, the application of ability *presupposes* the existence of freedom as liberty.

The second justification resides in the importance of separating meaning and value. In pedagogical talk about freedom the value and the meaning may be confused, as occurs when it is suggested that, because freedom is so important, it cannot consist in mere absence of constraints; it must be positive and because of this it must mean doing worthwhile things to people. But if it is stressed that freedom means absence of constraints, then it is clear where the value lies: It lies in the lack of constraints. It lies either in not being constrained by others, in which case it is intrinsic, or else it lies in the other values it makes possible, in which case it is instrumental. Thomas Paine declaimed, "Give me liberty or give me death!" thus bringing together both instrumental and intrinsic values of freedom. Freedom is negative in meaning but its negative meaning is not negative in value.

Third, it would appear to be a psychological and linguistic fact that, in whatever way the word freedom or its cognates, free, freeing, etc. are being used (and commonly, by my interpretation, misused), all such uses carry with them denotations of lack of constraint of some sort. For instance, when totalitarian true believers force us to be free, they believe that they free us from the constraints of our former (as they construe them) intellectual illusions. The fourth and fifth reasons are even more compelling.

Fourth, in his account of the third formulation of the Categorical Imperative, Kant (1948, p. 69) argues that the whole class of rational beings may be considered collectively as a community of independent and equal judges and legislators of conduct, on the grounds that each will interpret and offer as universal those maxims that each autonomously approves for him/herself. To limit the community of persons either in legislating or applying principles would be to limit the very possibilities of reason. The British educational philosopher, R.S. Peters (1966a, 1966b), has developed such Kantian ideas in showing how the principle of practical reason requires the existence of freedom as liberty. For when people seriously ask what they ought to do, they *presuppose* a search for the best answers to their questions about practical reason. They further presuppose that they should be allowed freely to act upon the best answers to the

questions (or else why bother to ask them?). They therefore presuppose that prior to the answers being provided, no persons are to be excluded from the discussion. Moreover, given the social situation in which such questioning occurs, it would be inconsistent and arbitrary and a philosophical fault for us to agree that all of this applies only to ourselves and not to persons in general. Without such presuppositions there would be no point in asking what I ought to do. Peters's argument links nicely with Mill's (1974) four famous reasons for freedom of opinion and free expression of opinion in his *On Liberty*: (a) suppressed opinion may indeed be true — constraint on alternative opinion implies our own infallibility; (b) though not wholly correct, an alternative opinion may contain a portion of truth; (c) being challenged and thus being forced to reflect upon our opinions improves our understanding of them; (d) without challenge, opinions become enfeebled. Thus, it is clear that freedom as liberty is the meaning necessary for these two fundamental moral arguments to be possible: the *argument from practical reason* and the *arguments against suppression* of opinion and expression.

Fifth, and of extreme importance in any society, the personal pursuit of many other values commonly presupposes, or assumes, or empirically requires freedom in the sense of liberty.

### *Freedom From and Freedom To*

If I am free from restraint and coercion by others then I am free to do those things which I choose. To complicate matters, however, there are three rather different ways in which the phrase, *freedom to* is used. The first is merely an alternative way of referring to *freedom from*, or liberty. The phrases *free from* and *free to* merely refer to different aspects of the same situation. If the highway is free from obstructions, then I am free to drive my car along it. If reluctant pupils are free to do as they please, then they are free from the constraints of their teachers.

The second use of *freedom to* is more complex. Despite its widespread use by such leading philosophers as Dewey, this use is misleading, at times obfuscating, and sometimes even morally dangerous. So it is better

replaced by more accurate descriptions such as ability, or ability to, or autonomy, or some combination of these which express in an improved form the core of the concept actually being applied. It is autonomy which best captures the content and spirit in most of what is called freedom to in this sense. In passing I should point out that autonomy is itself a most appropriate aim of education. It is in part from our belief in the principle of benevolence that we want children to become educated and autonomous. So another important reason for keeping notions of freedom (liberty) and autonomy conceptually distinct is that freedom has an important place in the achievement of autonomy through judicious mixtures of freedom and control in education.

Thus, *freedom to* either means freedom from, or else it is a misleading way of pointing to other values important in education.

### *Freedom as a Matter of Degree*

We are more free or less free. A person's freedom is really as wide-ranging as the potential constraints which are not placed upon him by other persons. People have freedom to the extent that they are not restrained by others. It is often only after a constraint or restriction is placed upon us that we become aware that we were formerly free. If teachers are suddenly forced to write at least two behavioral objectives for each lesson, they become aware that under the previous superintendent they were free from this constraint, though they were scarcely conscious of this at the time. Children on summer vacation are free from the expectations of their school teachers to do homework. They are at the same time, however, constrained by the expectations of their parents. And if someone persists in asking them whether they are less free during the school term than when on vacation, that person seems to be asking something about the relative importance to them. So as Feinberg (1973) points out, if I am to avoid a vitiating circularity in argument, my standard of importance has to be other than that it is conducive to freedom (p. 18). This again shows the significance of keeping the meaning of freedom separate from other values.

### *The Idea of Positive Freedom is Obfuscatory*

An important reason for using the word freedom only in its meaning as liberty derives from the confusions involved in the alternative uses. I have already distinguished two alternative meanings of the phrase freedom to. The third, however, is by far the most subtle and potentially dangerous because it espouses the confusing idea that liberty and control are not opposed notions. This obfuscatory view began with Plato, was developed by Rousseau, was taken on by Hegel, was applauded by Marx and Lenin and Hitler, and has been and is being applied with splendid totalitarian zeal by hundreds of millions of ideologues in our own time.

"I believe in freedom!" says the patriot. Presumably the patriot means freedom from oppression by others. In contrast, "I shall increase your freedom!" says the totalitarian and the religious or political ideologue. And what the totalitarian and ideologue mean is something quite different. They have seized upon one version of freedom to, of so-called positive freedom (the third use), the version which says that it is possible to do things to people and thereby make them more free whether or not they desire the change. So the totalitarian and the ideologue mean they are going to do things to you whether you like it or not because it is good for you, or good for their view of what society should be like. This may involve taking away your freedom, your liberty, by constraining you, by stopping you from doing some things you wish to do, and by making you do other things you do not wish to do, so that they can mold you in *their* image of what is good. Words themselves, such as *true* and *right* and of course *free* are redefined in the terminology of the totalitarian ideology, "in terms of the only activity recognized as valuable, namely, the organization of society as a smoothly working machine providing for the needs of such of its members as are permitted to survive" (Berlin, 1969, p. 25). As Jacka, Cox, and Marks put it:

The trick ... is to manufacture a range of words (or re-define old ones by statement and repetition) so that a deliberate effort at persuasion and enlistment can be passed off as neutral description .... Independent thought is impossible when using these words; the

answers are built in from the beginning. (1975, p. 40)

Challenge to the ideology thus becomes more and more difficult. All this is included in Raphael's (1981) clause, "a peculiar meaning largely invented by theorists" (p. 81). If the ideologue just happened to be a Nazi SS officer in Hitlerite Europe this "peculiar meaning" might involve your being placed in a gas chamber to be entirely removed. Until the last few years, if the ideologue just happened to be a Soviet psychiatrist, this "peculiar meaning" might place you in an insane asylum. As Anatoly Koryagin said in an address at Columbia University in 1989, "Scores of dissidents went into hospitals even without the formality of being evaluated ... and were treated with all manner of psychotropic drugs, electroshock, and insulin coma."

What is more, once we allow freedom to mean doing things to people we become involved in interminable arguments about the *best* kind of freedom, with each view claiming that *it* promotes the true freedom. However, if we call a spade a spade and argue that what is occurring is not freeing but is confining, or sermonizing, or propagandizing, or indoctrinating, or conditioning, or brain-washing, or torturing, we are free from this difficulty.

So there are crucially important moral, social, political, and educational issues involved in keeping to this meaning of freedom as liberty. If we allow that freedom may *mean* having constraints then we have opened the way for both innocent confusion and deliberate double-talk which may play into the hands of the enemies of freedom. As Berlin says, there will then "be a danger of confusion in theory and justification of oppression in practice, in the name of liberty itself" (1969, p. xxxix). Once we have allowed that freedom may imply, even paradoxically, some kind of constraint, we have performed a great service to the bureaucrat (negatively conceived) and the dictator.



### *Ability*

Educational and political theory are only as good as the concepts which they make use of. Unfortunately some ways of saying things mask rather than maximize clarity. Freedom does not consist in abilities or powers. Being in possession of abilities and powers is not being in possession of freedom.

Second World War Canadian, American, British, and Australian airmen incarcerated in Colditz Castle still had the ability to navigate and fly planes, but they lacked freedom. When Mandela was in his South African prison he still had the ability to sway large crowds but was not free to do this. People can be able, can have abilities, but can lack freedom.

Conversely, people can be free but not able. This is the error made by a variety of moderns, such as the "hippies" of the 1960s, many present-day teenagers (I read of one who wanted to be free from his medical doctor's advice!), "progressive" educators like A.S. Neill, and deschoolers such as Ivan Illich. Unlike people who confuse being able with having freedom, they confuse having freedom with being able.

Neither is freedom the ability of children to do what they wish. The ability to do what one wishes is just that — the *ability* to do what one wishes.

### *Autonomy*

At times freedom is also confused with autonomy. It may be that the idea of autonomy was first applied in respect to the relations between city states in Ancient Greece. A city was autonomous when it was not ruled over by a neighbor. Thus, Athens lost its autonomy first to Sparta and later to Alexander. (Autonomy in the person is also an early Greek notion, as in the case of such characters from drama as Antigone.) If we consider the example of political development from colony to independence, we can see the manner in which political autonomy is made possible. There is something parallel in the growth of a person. The

autonomous person will emerge from a particular kind of education: A pupil becomes a student becomes a scholar; autonomy in things intellectual gradually evolves and emerges. The emergence is not spontaneous, or a product of nature, but is the product of learning, of encouragement from other persons in a liberal culture.

Perhaps no person is autonomous all the time. Like having freedom, autonomy is not like being insured, being 140 pounds, or being a member of the Republican Party; rather it is like being fat, being conscientious, or being critical; it is a matter of degree. It also has something to do with what people do in the important dimensions of their lives (Dearden, 1972, p. 63), such as in morality. We should hardly call a woman autonomous if she reacted meekly to every pressure from others in her profession, her marriage, her political life, although she was continually and aggressively self-assertive and rationally critical in the way she cleaned the house or walked down the street. This would still be so even if by some metaphysical or Einsteinian sleight-of-hand these latter activities could occupy a much greater part of her time than the former.

As Kant (1948, p. 52) so emphatically said, rationality is central to autonomy. The autonomous person questions epistemic and social authority; where these have to be accepted, there is still an attempt to filter the epistemic authority through the person's own net of experience and judgment and to search out the reason for the social authority. Autonomous reason is also personal: Arbitrariness and dictation by others are anathema and there is cognitive individuality. Autonomous thought is independent: It must be the person's own. What is done is done on the basis of one's own carefully-examined and consistent values. Autonomous persons are not easily deceived by others. They are also self-aware and do not deceive themselves. They understand their real situation in the world. They are autonomous to the extent that their plans and purposes are achieved independent of pressure from others. They have a realistic grasp of a wide range of understanding and they apply these relevantly. They take responsibility for their choices and actions. And although critical reflection can hardly occur in every case and with respect to every thought, it is for the autonomous person a permanent disposition. Moreover,

because such persons continually use their own independent judgment and because they continually apply their own critical criteria, "a distinct identity and style of life will in varying degree be revealed" (Dearden, 1975, p. 7). Such people have, as we say, minds of their own; they are their own persons.

From Kant's point of view an action is morally right if and only if the agent in doing it is following a rule autonomously. Kant claims that a rational entity whose being consisted only of rationality would have a holy will. Such an entity would act morally. It would remain untempted. Indeed, that very term would be inappropriate, for there would be no moral imperatives for such an entity. Always rational, always acting rightly, having no interest in the immoral, encouragement to do the morally right thing would itself be otiose. Though all the persons we actually know do not possess holy wills, it is conceivable that such entities might exist somewhere in the universe — out past Barnard's Star or Betelgeuse. But the reason for mentioning Kant is to emphasize that Kant's argument rests upon the distinction being stressed in this article (i.e., that freedom is different from autonomy). Such Kantian autonomous action presupposes freedom (though is not equivalent to it).

The more we know of the genesis of our behavior, the more autonomous we can be. Hence the need for education and for accuracy in this knowledge. In his *Authority, Responsibility and Education*, Peters makes the important point that Freud's discoveries about our subconscious and Marx's claims about the effect of the means of production on other aspects of our social and personal world do "not in fact provide us with a blank cheque drawn on the Bank of Exonerating Circumstances ... a revelation of the causes of our actions should increase rather than decrease our responsibility for them" (1966a, p. 59).

It is easy to confuse autonomy and freedom. For freedom as liberty will be a necessary (not sufficient) condition for the development and expression of autonomy in children and adults. Attempts to tie autonomy and freedom more closely together only lead to some notion of positive freedom, the conceptualization of which has already been challenged above.

Some Existentialists have held the misleading belief that to be autonomous one must be spontaneous. In the Sartrean view (1957, 1977) we seem to have *autos* but not *nomos*. Consider the analogy with the political development of a colony from dependence and direction to independence and autonomy: There we can see the manner in which autonomy is made possible. Equally, if we think about the nature of education, it will become clear how autonomy will gradually develop in individuals.

In the light of what has been said about autonomy, it should be noted that many claims made about freedom require modification or challenge. For instance, Dewey (1928) writes:

Without genuine choice, choice that when expressed in action makes things different from what they would otherwise be, men are but passive vehicles through which external forces operate .... [Further, this claim] ... at least contributes an element in the statement of the problem of freedom. (p. 265)

Dewey thus sees choice as part of freedom. He says, "Just what is signified by that participation by the human being himself in a choice that makes it really a choice?" and "Choice is more than just selectivity in behavior but it is *at least* that" (1928, p. 265) [*italics added*]. But these passages are misleading in several ways. If people make choices and no one interferes with the implementation of those choices, then people have freedom. But such choice is choice, it is not freedom. Choosing is not freedom; to be operative it merely presupposes an environment of freedom. What (to use Dewey's wording) "makes it really a choice" is that it is autonomous.

Secondly, it is sometimes false to say, as Dewey says above, that a genuine choice is one which, "when expressed in action makes things different from what they would otherwise be." Genuine choice (choice not restricted or constrained, that is, autonomous choice) may well result in the status quo. Autonomous people may well choose the same things that they would select under constraints of various kinds. As Dearden (1975, p. 8) properly points out, what is essential to autonomous choice is not

originality but origination — namely, how it came about that the person's views, wishes, choices, points of view, etc. came to be the person's own. It is quite conceivable that a person could be autonomous and yet seemingly rather conformist. But such persons are not just conforming. They are reaching their own conclusions and making their own choices; these just happen to coincide with those of heteronomous and unthinking people.

### *Further Justification of Freedom, Ability, and Autonomy*

Insofar as the principles of freedom, fairness, and benevolence can be justified as fundamental moral principles, and I believe they can (Peters, 1966b; Phillips-Griffiths, 1967; Chambers, 1989), there exists an overarching justification for freedom in general, for the development of the abilities of children and adults, and for the promotion of their autonomy.

Freedom is justified because in a Millian (1974) and Popperian (1966, 1968) sense it allows both persons and societies to be pragmatic and to learn from their mistakes. Having freedom to modify our conceptualizations of the world is of immense empirical, moral, and educational significance. This view is pungently supported by such people as Feyerabend (1975, 1978, 1981a, 1981b) in the philosophy of science. In a similar fashion in relation to science, it is cogently argued by Polanyi in his *The Logic of Liberty*, for example, "Optimum coordination [is] achieved here by releasing individual impulses" (1980, p. 34). Perkinson (1971, 1980) actually suggests that there is a whole theory of education to be derived from the freedom to learn from our mistakes. Such points of view are alien to bureaucratic and totalitarian minds and to Berlin's "terribles simplificateurs," to those who already consider that they hold the truth in their program or ideology, and to those who see the world by way of "some fundamental category or principle which claims to act as an infallible guide both to the past and the future" (Berlin, 1969, p. 1). Freedom as a principle assumes that we cannot know the final truth, but must continually learn, must continually adjust, must continually educate ourselves.

When ideological systems exhibit empirical mistakes (as they necessarily do), such mistakes have to be laid at the feet of individual scapegoats because the ideology, though actually faulty in various places, is officially sacrosanct and thus removed from genuine challenge. So it is that libertarian political, scientific, social, and educational systems, in their emphasis on freedom and potential falsifiability of claims, are not merely empirically superior but show at least in this respect a moral superiority.

The principle of fairness would seem to imply that there is something unfair in either stopping people from acquiring those dimensions of character, personality, and understanding which allow them to be autonomous, or in hindering them from exercising these dimensions once, through education, they have acquired them (the principle of freedom also appears to be implied in this latter feature). Insofar as the autonomy of individuals is a situation implied by the principle of fairness, here too there is general justification for autonomy. The principle of benevolence would also appear to justify the promotion of autonomy. But because the relationship between the principle of benevolence and the promotion of autonomy is rather complex, the development of autonomy is not quite a straightforward application of the promotion of benevolence.

There is, furthermore, much empirical and conceptual evidence to show that autonomous action provides human beings with great satisfaction. From their earliest days, children take considerable pleasure in doing things for themselves and react with a range of emotions to being constrained. So do teenagers and adults.

Autonomy would also seem to be justified as a very utilitarian quality. It enables individuals to cope with the seemingly ever-increasing range of choices offered them in an advanced technological society. It enables them to scrutinize critically the blandishments of advertisers and the lures of politicians and ideologues — such as the (paradoxical) *empiricist* television evangelists. And for democratic society it makes for more intelligent involvement in the responsibilities of citizenship and for more discriminating voting.

Magna Carta, The "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 against James II, the English and American Civil Wars, the American Revolution, the writings of Locke and Mill and Jefferson, the continual founding of new settlements across the continent in North America and around the coasts of Australia and New Zealand, have over the last few hundred years burned a sense of liberty deep into the Anglo-American-Canadian-Australasian soul. Thus, there is a widespread presupposition undergirding our thoughts and actions, the presumption of allowing persons to do what they want or choose to do as long as this does not obviously interfere with the wants and choices of others. In such a society the onus is always upon those who wish to interfere with others to show why this should be allowed. The onus is not upon people to establish a case to show why they should be allowed to do what they want to do. A good example of this point is the situation of children in schools. If we make schooling compulsory and stop children from doing other things they might prefer, we do so only for good reasons of prudence or morality which justify such interference with their liberty.

The early theoretician of liberty, John Locke, says that to turn a child loose before he has reason as his guide is not to give him freedom, "but to thrust him out amongst brutes and abandon him to a state as wretched and as much beneath that of man as theirs," and that

we are born Free, as we are born Rational; not that we have actually the Exercise of either: Age that brings one, brings with it the other too, and thus we see how freedom and subjection to parents may consist together. (1967, p. 47)

Locke here has confused freedom and autonomy. I understand his real argument to be that autonomy develops through education and that without it freedom is of limited value. With that sentiment I agree.

There is also something to be said about the relation between freedom and the conditions within which people become educated. For we should also notice the empirical fact that too much freedom may lead to too little. As Locke writes, "I find that a general freedom is but a general bondage, that the popular assentors of public liberty are the greatest engrossers of it too" (Cranston, 1966, p. 70). For instance, when teachers or police

abdicate control in the school or the city, the bullies and the gangs take over.

This so-called "paradox of freedom" provides another reason for confining the meaning of freedom to liberty or "freedom from." For then the paradox of freedom is only a paradox of implementation or maximization, it is not a paradox of meaning. It is only because we know that freedom means an absence of constraints that we are able to make the empirical observations necessary to demonstrate that general lack of constraints leads to the rule of the strong. Only when we allow the word *freedom* to draw its meaning from that version of the positive sense of freedom to, which has been seized upon by the totalitarian and the ideologue and confused despite good intentions by Greene (1975, 1988) and Dewey (1928, 1969) and others, is there also a paradox of meaning. For then the word *freedom* must sometimes mean an absence of constraints and must sometimes mean the placing of constraints. As already suggested, such a situation allows for morally and politically dangerous equivocation and obfuscation.

Freedom is clearly necessary if someone is to exercise autonomy. But is freedom also necessary for autonomy to *develop*? Yes and no. As Dearden (1975, p. 11) mischievously points out, A.S. Neill, the headmaster of the "progressive" Summerhill school, was not himself educated at Summerhill. And the strict, teacher-centered, British "public" (i.e., private) schools have turned out large numbers of autonomous leaders. On the other hand, numerous valuable lessons can only be learned in conditions free to the extent that it is possible to make mistakes and to learn from them. But although the development of autonomy requires allowing people to pursue their own initiatives and to learn from their mistakes, too much freedom, in education as in society, leads to too little; with too much freedom in education, autonomy will not develop because abilities will be unable to be acquired or utilized.

It is indeed very simple to confuse maximization of freedom with maximization of autonomy. Greene says that her "interest is not so much freedom *from* [*italics added*] ... as it is in the deliberate creation of the



kinds of conditions in which people can be themselves" (1978, p. 33). Though I am very much interested in freedom *from*, I am also interested in helping people to be themselves, to be autonomous, and this is why I want to keep the two notions of freedom and autonomy separate. Once they become confused, it is impossible to trace causation. Confused concepts do not just make appropriate educational and political action difficult, they make it unlikely. When we are clear about what we mean by autonomy then we can see that it is hardly something which comes naturally and that many practices in most societies will be anathema to it. As so many teenagers demonstrate, what comes much more naturally and socially is either acting upon impulse or acting because of group pressure.

For clear thinking about freedom and autonomy and for their maximization, it is important to keep the two ideas conceptually separate. A certain amount of freedom within which to make and act upon their own choices and decisions is necessary for the development of autonomy. But such added freedom and responsibility must of course be accompanied by the intellectual tools which make such added responsibility realistic. Thus it is that the abilities and autonomy of any individual person must have a history which includes not merely the acquisition of the intellectual tools just mentioned but also continual encouragement from other minds and from a culture and society of educated persons which value such excellence. If there is to be autonomy then there must be experience and knowledge, together with intelligent insight. There must be standards in thinking. These are to be gained when people are introduced to the variety of thinking and the variety of criteria which are involved in the disciplines of knowledge. This does not imply epistemological authoritarianism. Far from it. There can be standards to be attained without the preempting of credible alternative points of view (Hare, 1979, 1985) and without stopping people from making their own independent use of these standards. Indeed, the point is much stronger and more positive: It is because students are provided with the grounds for knowledge and for making informed judgments in the disciplines that genuinely alternative views become possible.

## Conclusion

It has been claimed that it is educationally and politically important to distinguish freedom from ability and autonomy. It is also important to remember that freedom, ability, and autonomy are subsumed under the three fundamental moral principles of freedom, fairness, and benevolence as worthy of pursuit. For then we shall be aware of their logical genesis and status and the promotion of freedom or ability or autonomy in education will not occur at the expense of the promotion of other important values.

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