



What is freedom?: an analysis of modernity to communitarianism.

¿Qué es la libertad?: un análisis de la modernidad al comunitarismo.

DOI: 10.32870/sincronia.axxv.n79.8a21

Ignacio Garcia Solano

University of Guadalajara (MEXICO)

CE: Ignaciogarciasolano@gmail.com / ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4358-5198

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCoercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Received: 30/09/2020

Reviewed: 03/11/2020

Accepted: 17/11/2020

ABSTRACT

What are the interpretations of the idea of *liberty* that are presented in the current discussions within political philosophy? This concept, being too vague, tries to delimit itself in the three most relevant proposals within current philosophical and political debates. Two of them are given through modernity, which can be subdivided into *universals*, which are based on prohibitive laws and, secondly, *individual*, who are based on the selection of permissive laws. The third contribution is given by the communitarians, who begin to speak about the need for a liberty of *plurality*.

It is not an objective to take any position on these proposals, therefore, defending them is something that will definitely be omitted. The objective really raised is only to present the discussions that exist around these three interpretations on *liberty*, arguing by thesis that, all of them become an aporia in terms of the advantages and disadvantages that theyself generate, being, therefore, fallible. Also, reconciling all these proposals is difficult, since their objectives start from opposite sides that, in trying to do so, would become counterproductive.

The work is presented in three sections. The first part is dedicated to explaining the delimitation of the issue that arises and then moving on to the particular issues. The second part dedicates a space to the analysis of the two main interpretations of the idea of liberty given in modernity. Finally, an alternative to this modern concept of liberty is presented, a plural one given from community thought.



Keywords: Liberty. Universalism. Individualism. Pluralism.

RESUMEN

¿Cuáles son las interpretaciones sobre la idea de *libertad* que se presentan en las actuales discusiones dentro de la filosofía política? Este concepto, siendo demasiado vago, pretende delimitarse en las tres propuestas más relevantes dentro de los debates filosóficos y políticos en la actualidad. Dos de ellos son dados a través de la modernidad, los cuales pueden ser subdivididos en *universales*, quienes se basan en leyes prohibitivas y, en segundo lugar, *individuales*, quienes se basan en la selección de leyes permisivas. El tercer aporte es dado por los *comunitaristas*, quienes comienzan a hablar sobre la necesidad de una *libertad de la pluralidad*.

No es un objetivo tomar posición alguna sobre estas propuestas, por tanto, defenderlas es algo que definitivamente quedará omitido. El objetivo realmente planteado es únicamente presentar las discusiones que existen en torno a estas tres interpretaciones sobre *libertad*, sosteniendo por tesis que, todas ellas pasan a ser una aporía en cuanto a las ventajas y desventajas que generan siendo, por tanto, falibles. Además, conciliar todas esas propuestas es difícil, pues sus objetivos parten de lados opuestos que, al tratar de hacerlo se volverían contraproducentes.

El trabajo se presenta en tres secciones. La primera parte, se dedica a explicar la delimitación del tema que se plantea para luego pasar a los temas particulares. La segunda parte, dedica un espacio al análisis sobre las dos principales interpretaciones de la idea de *libertad* dadas en la modernidad. Por último, se presenta una alternativa a este concepto moderno de *libertad*, uno *plural* dado desde el pensamiento comunitario.

Palabras Clave: Libertad. Universalismo. Individualismo. Pluralismo.

1. What is freedom?

Talking about *freedom* as such, would generate a great problem because of its ambiguity, because this concept can be understood in different aspects. One of them is, when one speaks of *freedom* as a motor capacity that allows men to act under their own conviction. The existence of *freedom* can also be discussed from the deterministic aspects, who wonder if all men are really free to act or are determined by certain causalities that prescribe our actions. Perhaps if we continue reviewing we will



find many more meanings for this conception, however, the discussion that interests us here is to talk about political *freedom*.

This theme, also within political philosophy, has been taken up several times and all understood again in various senses, therefore, the concept must be even more limited, since it has been worked from ancient Greece to the present, resulting in an enormous amount of answers. Thus, it has been decided to start from the conceptual problem taken up in modernity. Some may say that modernity also gave different answers for each author who wrote on the subject, however, here it has been possible for me to synthesize it into two different panoramas, those who seek a *universal freedom* and those who seek an *individual freedom*. The same will happen with the conception given from communitarianism, having for each author different answers, however, it has also been possible to synthesize it in a freedom of *plurality*.

Before moving on to the particularized definitions of the concept of *freedom*, it is necessary to define other secondary concepts that arise here. By "modernity" it should be understood as, that historical period where reason begins to be a means to justify the beliefs of man, making a break with an outdated or traditional period, where his beliefs were based on magic or myth: "Here are the processes that entail, for example, trade and consumption, reason and science, industry and technology, the nation-state and the citizen-subject, public spheres and private spaces, secularized religions and disenchanted knowledge." (Dube, 2009, p. 179).

By "reason" or "rationality" one must buy that capacity of man to plan actions that are a means to obtain certain expected ends:

It acts with rationality that considers the action as aimed at achieving a result [...] who directs his action towards an end, towards some means and towards the collateral consequences, rationally weighing the means in relation to the ends, the ends in relation to the collateral consequences and, finally, the different possible ends among themselves. (Weber, 2005, p. 103).



Here three ideas on the concept of *freedom* have been retaken, two versions seated in modernity and one in communitarianism, because to this day they are the most prominent in philosophical or political debates. In addition, all of them have sought to plan a theory of "justice", because they consider that an orderly society will be that society that will allow the greatest possible degree of freedom for all men.

2. Freedom in modernity

The beginnings of discussions on the idea of modern *political freedom* began to take relevance during the Enlightenment period, when philosophers discussed other forms of government opposed to absolutist monarchism. These monarchies were elected by two rights. First, the *divine jus*, where some man was chosen by God's design to be ruler among the rest of men: "God, then, is the author and dispenser of happiness, he is the one who distributes the earthly kingdoms to both good and bad, since He is the only true God." (Agustín, 2007, p. 190). This right was accompanied by another so-called *naturalism*, to which, resorting to the policy of Aristotle, it was affirmed that every person was born to obey or was born to command, but they were not born with both qualities, or they were slaves or were masters: "In fact, he who is able to foresee with the mind is a boss by nature and a natural lord, and he who can with his body accomplish these things is the subject and slave by nature [...]." (Aristotle, 1988, p. 47). Thus, the monarchs had the belief of possessing a divine origin and natural gifts that made them the legitimate rulers of the kingdom.

For the English philosopher John Locke, it should be man's reason that governs the state, not divine or naturalistic beliefs, and although he also talks about "natural law", it has changed its meaning. *Jus naturalism* are those inalienable rights with which every man is born, such as the right to private property, free choice, free expression or life. Monarchies will be analogously a paternalistic government, where every immature man must be cared for by the father, for which reason he must submit to his law. Locke will object by saying that all men, by the simple fact of being born rational, possess a capacity (or a natural right) of choice, then everyone can be free to choose what he wishes.



Thus, for the liberal state, men capable of reasoning are capable of emancipating themselves, of governing their own lives. (Locke, 2004).

This liberal model would be joined by a useful tool for modern politics that would come to displace absolutist governments, it would be contractualism. According to contractualists, the state should not be run by one person, but, by majority vote, the citizens of a certain state should be able to rationally choose under which government or under which laws they should be governed. Depending on whether they lived under a representative democracy (where citizens select a representative) or participatory democracy (where citizens must select their own legislation). Nicola Matteucci defines it as follows: "[...] a tacit or express agreement between several individuals, an agreement that would mean the end of a state of nature and the beginning of the social and political state." (Matteucci, 2015, p. 351). This contractual project can also be known as democracy.

Democracy, according to Alexis de Tocqueville, would begin in the United States of America, where the founding fathers, inspired by the European and American Enlightenment, would initiate the first liberal model that, even Europe itself, until that moment, had not managed to achieve. (Tocqueville, 1984). Groups of English Puritans, who were looking for a place to have religious freedom, decided to leave for the colonization of North America, being nicknamed "pilgrims". Once settled, they founded in Massachusetts one of the first English colonies in the New World, where they began to devote themselves to the countryside and trade. The United States founded by various Protestant religions that escaped the restrictions of Rome, the papacy and Catholicism, instilled in their generations the ideal of freedom that, after their war for independence, would manage to form the first democratic constitution in the world. (Tocqueville, 1984).

Many intellectuals wrote about this contractualist project, however, there are two pertinent here to mention. The first would be the Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, the second the English thinker John Locke. At this point modern freedom would be broken into two models. One would propose the selection of universal laws where every citizen would be governed equally. In the other, particular laws would be chosen so that each individual would be able to make his or her own decisions.



2.1 universal freedom

I have decided to call this first group of liberals "universalists", because they intend to generate a State with a social contract, where freedom is governed by the free election of the citizen for the direct selection of laws under which, when selected by majority vote, they must be used to govern all men equally. I call them "universalists" precisely because of that very idea. The law will work for everyone in general without exceptions, in addition, it will start from the idea that every man is equal and, therefore, there should not be a law that is unjust if it was selected by the majority. Some even come to accept the inequality of men, but they start from the majority who decide what is best for them and others. Even so, it is still a liberal model, since legislation is always made under free decisions and electorally.

This contractual model would have its bases in the thought of Rousseau, who would propose from the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Among Men* (1983), that this began when it was believed that man had the individual right to appropriate whatever he wanted, forgetting that the earth belongs to no one but to everyone:

The first man who, fencing a piece of land, came up with the thought of saying this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders; how many miseries and horrors would have been avoided to mankind by one who had shouted at his fellowmen, tearing the stakes from the fence or covering the moat: "Be careful to listen to this impostor; you are lost if you forget that the fruits belong to everyone and no man's land!" (Rousseau, 1983, p. 30).

His democratic theory, to which the origins of participatory democracy can be attributed, drafted in the *Social Contract* (2014), was based on the idea that all citizens of a certain population should meet to make a contract, where everyone would agree on what was agreed and not a single person would oppose it. As long as someone opposed the contract should be restarted, because then it would be an unfair contract, because at least for one, it would generate inequality and limit their *freedom*. This



would help to create a series of laws with perfect justice, since no one would ever vote for a law that would put them at a disadvantage. However, these laws would be general, that is, *universal*, for everyone since no one could be exempt from them. Although the vote is particular and rationalized, the agreements will always be general, no one can force another to choose a vote, but it is possible to reach agreements where everyone is satisfied and there is free choice:

For the same reason that sovereignty is inalienable, it is indivisible, for the will is general or it is not; it is that of the body of the people or only that of a part. In the first case, that declared will is an act of sovereignty and makes law. In the second, it is nothing more than a particular will, or an act of magistracy; it is at most a decree. (Rousseau, 2014, p. 278).

This group of *universalist* thinkers could be joined by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. In his work *Towards Perpetual Peace* (2014) he would call this democratic model "republicanism". However, unlike Rousseau, for Kant, the legislation would not be carried out by the majority vote of the people, because where the majority rules, many rule over some, breaking into the autonomy of these few. The universal vote of the citizens would only guarantee the representation of the sovereign who would select the appropriate legislation to fulfill a general will. Therefore, the representative government is the one who should legislate the will not of one, but of all. Even the minority of sovereigns who govern the state is a greater guarantee for this general will, since it is less sovereigns who will dispute opposing laws that oppose a generalization. Kant, like Rousseau, also bets on the equality of people and, therefore, concludes that everyone must be governed under the same laws without distinctions or exceptions:

[...] democracy is, in the genuine sense of the word, necessarily a *despotism*, because it founds an executive power where everyone decides on and, in any case, also against one (who, therefore, does not give his consent), with which everyone, without being all, decides; this is a contradiction of the general will with itself and with freedom.

Every form of government that is not *representative* is in reality a *non-form*, because the legislator cannot at the same time be executor of his will in one and the same person [...]. It can be said, therefore, that the smaller the number of people in state power (the number of



sovereigns) and the greater their representation, the more open the constitution is to the possibility of republicanism [...]. To the mode of government that conforms to the idea of law belongs the representative system, the only one in which a republican mode of government is possible and without which the government is despotic and violent [...]. (Kant, 2014, pp. 313-314).

Another philosophical school that can also join this group of *universalist* liberals is the utilitarian one. Jeremy Bentham, who is credited as the founder of this philosophical thought and inspired by the school of Epicurus, defined as "utility" everything that was capable of generating the happiness of men, but, in addition, the happiness sought by utilitarianism would not be particular happiness, but general happiness:

Public happiness is the object of the legislator, whose science consists in knowing the good of the people and finding the means of realizing it, and the invariable rule of *general utility*, which is the principle of reasoning in legislation, must be followed for this purpose. (Bentham, 1839, p. 1).

Bentham was aware that a law could be an evil for some people, because not everyone would benefit from it. In addition, no one is equal to feel pleasure with the same action and reduce their degree of pain, since that generates happiness, therefore, the law should not be thought to eradicate all evil but to eradicate an evil greater than the evil that it should cause:

Every law is an evil, because every law is an infringement of freedom. Thus, in order to give a law, it is necessary to make sure before that what one wants to avoid is really an evil, and that this evil is greater than the evil of the law. (Bentham, 1839, p. 26).

Therefore, it is possible to infer that as long as this evil affects a majority, an affected minority should submit under that same law, since it would be the most useful law that could be achieved.

John Stuart Mill, another utilitarian who will define pleasure in the same sense as his mentor Jeremy Bentham: "By happiness we mean pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness the pain



and lack of pleasure." (Mill, 2014, p. 60). You will also recognize the principle of greater pleasure where there are pleasures more useful than others. But how to establish which pleasure is most valuable would ask the author, to which he will respond by stating that, the greatest pleasure is that preferred by the majority: "Of two pleasures, if there is one to which all, or almost all who have experienced both, grant a decided preference, regardless of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the most desirable pleasure." (Mill, 2014, pp. 63-64). Therefore, it can be reformulated that the concept of utility for him is, the greatest pleasure for as many people as possible. Being, therefore, the best law, the one that benefits a majority and, all must be governed by it.

Now, someone might ask, "What kind of laws would be universal?" To answer this, I decide to call them "prohibitive laws." This classification of laws are those that apply both to those who wish to follow this legislative model, but also affect those who wish to have a *freely* different choice. At present there are, and it is general knowledge, conservative political groups (associated with right-wing political currents) who seek to legislate laws that penalize any decision regarding individual political rights and that, for *freedom*, everyone should have the right to decide. For example, the criminalization of abortion, the use of narcotics, marriage equality, among others. These laws do not allow the individual *freedom* of the subject, but guarantee that since everyone is equal then they must omit that each person has desires or needs different from the rest; oh well, they must accept a majority will being subjected to it involuntarily and, there is the problematic thing in this *liberal* model.

Perhaps the prohibition in utilitarianism is a bit confusing, because it always seeks the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, but; the ban is still present. To explain it better I give two examples. Imagine a society made up of a majority group Y and a minority group X, where Y would benefit from the disappearance of X, then Y would have the right allowed to disappear X, either exiled or killed him, so X would be forbidden to reside within that society or would be forbidden to live. Now suppose that the legalization of soft drugs causes pleasure to the majority of citizens, however, a minority group of people begin to have problems due to the use of such narcotics and family members decide that they should stop using them, but, they would be forbidden to avoid it



because, for those people, despite their addiction problems, they are a minor problem compared to the larger problem in case of banning the drug, therefore, the right of choice for someone to be banned from narcotics would be considered null and void.

2.2 Individual freedom

Individualism would be the *liberal* vision where each subject is free to make his own decisions, but this *freedom* must be limited to where the *freedom* of another begins. Here we could mention the work of John Locke, the *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (2004), written to defend democracy and counter the absolutism of his time, by proposing another type of social contract. The author begins this writing by mentioning that the ultimate state of nature for men is the state of perfect freedom: "[...] that each one may order his actions and dispose of possessions and persons as he deems appropriate, within the limits of the law of nature, without asking permission or depending on the will of any other man." (Locke, 2004, p. 36). Although he defines that everyone by nature has an equality over his right to freedom, he sets the limits through what he mentions as "natural law": "[...] no one should harm another as regards his life, health, liberty, or possessions." (Locke, 2004, p. 38).

Another natural right of man is, says Locke, the acquisition of private property, since this is basic for the conservation of man, therefore, in addition to being natural, it is a rational right: "[...] once they are born, men have the right to their self-preservation and, consequently, to eat, to drink, and to benefit from all those things which nature procures for their subsistence [...]". (Locke, 2004, p. 55). However, he considered that no man was interested in working more than he could keep, therefore, the limits of his acquisitions would naturally be limited to the limits of his working capacity, then no man could have the right, even if he so wished, to obtain too much, for his own capacities would limit him and, by natural law, they would not have the right to invade the alien: "The plot that a man carved for himself was clearly visible; and it was useless and dishonest for him to till too much ground or to take more than he could meet his needs." (Locke, 2004, p. 75).

Now, Locke would not fall into the naivety of believing that a society could be composed absolutely of totally *individual* subjects, however, the formation of a civil society would not affect the



individuality of each person. Men at birth naturally *free* are equally threatened by these extremes of *freedom*, running the risk of being attacked by someone else, so individuals must socialize by abandoning that natural condition in coexistence with more people:

This leads to wanting to abandon a condition in which, although he is free, constant fears and dangers take place; therefore, it is not without reason that he is willing to unite in a society with others who are already united or who intend to be united in order to preserve their lives, their freedoms and their possessions, that is, all that to which I give the generic name of "property". (Locke, 2004, p. 134).

And although Locke considers that the "natural right" is something inalienable, he is also aware that there must be a law of criminalization for those who abuse and want to go beyond their limits of *freedom* generating harm to other people. Therefore, men must associate themselves with the intention of creating a social contract, abandoning the natural state to form the state. But it must not deprive men of the *freedom* permitted, but must guarantee it. Thus, the only laws chosen should be those that guarantee individual rights by penalizing those who harm other individuals, having a series of laws that should only be dedicated to safeguarding *freedom* and ensuring vigilance for the sake of its prosperous conservation:

Thus, the State originates through a power that establishes what is the punishment that corresponds to the different transgressions of those who, among the members of a society, think that they are worth committing; this is the power to make laws, and to it must be added the power to punish any harm done to a member of society, committed by someone who does not belong to it. (Locke, 2004, p. 103).

This *individualist* movement would begin to be very convenient for the economic systems that began to develop during the industrial revolution, capitalism, which would be the development of political economy, being from then on difficult to separate one or another practice. One of the classic contributions made to this system is that proposed by the Scottish philosopher and economist Adam Smith. Centered into ethical questions, he would write a book entitled *The Theory of Moral Feelings*



(1978), which would be in the future a pillar basis for his economic theories. For him, like Locke, social relations arise in the need to live with each other for the sake of human survival, however, this feeling of survival, says the author, is an act of selfishness, because each man seeks his own benefit, curiously, to achieve it he must do it with the help of someone else, therefore, in order to obtain help from another person, he must also be willing to benefit that other subject, being then a reciprocal benefit:

[...] society becomes a necessity for him, and whatever tends to social support and welfare, is considered as something that remotely fosters his own interest; on the contrary, everything that threatens to disturb or destroy society, considers to some extent harmful and pernicious to itself. (Smith, 1978, p. 139).

Smith's most important work is undoubtedly *The Wealth of Nations* (1995), in which the author devotes himself to describing the functions of the English economic system in his time. The idea of a free economy, says the author, is to generate the capacity of each man, so that he can get his own income and thereby pay for his own services and it is not the State who should have to provide them: "[...] that the people may obtain that income or that subsistence by themselves [...]". (Smith, 1995, p. 539). Once the state is able to provide these capacities to citizens, they must individually acquire under labor, the capacity necessary to subsist on their own means. This is where his moral theory comes into play, in a brief metaphor that has been known as the theory of the "invisible hand", where the benefit of a person in the acquisition of wealth ends up benefiting an entire society, achieving the fluidity of the currency so that it reaches any other hand:

To the extent that every individual seeks as far as possible to invest his capital in national activity and to direct that activity so that its production reaches the maximum value, every individual necessarily works to make the annual income of society the maximum possible. It is true that as a general rule he neither tries to promote the general interest nor knows to what extent he is promoting it. By preferring to engage in domestic rather than foreign activity, he only pursues his own security; and by orienting that activity in such a way as to produce a maximum value he seeks only his own benefit, but in this case as in others an invisible hand leads him to promote an objective that did not enter into his purposes. That this is not



necessarily bad for society. By pursuing his own interest he will often promote that of society much more effectively than if he actually tried to foster it. I have never seen many good things done by those who pretend to act for the good of the people. (Smith, 1995, p. 554).

More recently with Friedrich Hayek the theses of Locke and Smith would be reinforced with another formulation of *individualism*, founding a system of political economy that remains in force to this day, called by some the "neoliberalism". Like his intellectual predecessors, he will admit the necessity of the relationship of *individual* subjects in society, affirming that these personal practices are not intended to break social life, but on the contrary, it must be necessary to guarantee individual *freedoms*. He will also understand that, since every person is different from the rest, it must be necessary for each one to fight personally for his own interests and needs, the only equal thing for all men must be only the guarantee of his *freedom*, once this right has been granted, each one must with his own work be able to generate his own subsistence:

Here I may perhaps mention that only because men are in fact unequal can we treat them equally. If all men were completely equal in their gifts and inclinations, we should have to treat them differently in order to achieve any sort of social organization. Fortunately, they are not equal; and it is only owing to this that the differentiation of functions need not be determined by the arbitrary decision of some organizing will but that, after creating formal equality of the rules applying in the same manner to all, we can leave each individual to find his own level.

[Here I can however mention that only because men are in fact unequal can we treat them equally. If all men were equal in their abilities and inclinations, we would have to treat them differently in order towards some certain goals of social organization. Fortunately, they are not the same: and it is only because of this that the different functions need not to be determined by arbitrary decisions of some social organism, but to create equal forms of the rules applied in the same way so that everyone can individually seek their own place. (Hayek, 1948, pp. 15-16).



It is important to know the differences Hayek makes between the concepts of "liberty" and "liberties." The idea "liberty" is commonly used in the English language as a *universal freedom*, where everyone is treated equally and everyone is governed under the same sense of *freedom*, instead the idea of "liberties" is used in the same language, to refer to the individual *freedoms* that all men possess to develop *individually* from the rest:

But while the uses of liberty are many, liberty is one. Liberties appear only when liberty is lacking: they are the special privileges and exemptions that groups and individuals may acquire while the rest are more or less unfree. Historically, the path to liberty has led through the achievement of particular liberties. But that one should be allowed to do specific things is not liberty, though it may be called "a liberty"; and while liberty is compatible with not being allowed to do specific things, it does not exist if one needs permission for most of what one can do. The difference between liberty and liberties is that which exists between a condition in which all is permitted that is not prohibited by general rules and one in which all is prohibited that is not explicitly permitted.

[While the use of freedom is varied, freedom is one. Freedoms appear when freedom is lacking: they are the special privileges and exemptions that groups and individuals can acquire while the rest are more or less free. Historically, the path to freedom has led through the attainment of freedoms. But that one should be allowed to do specific things is not freedom, even if it may be called freedom; and while freedom is compatible with not being able to do specific things, it doesn't exist if you need permission for most of what can be done. The difference between freedom and freedoms is that which exists between a condition in which everything is permitted but prohibited by general rules and one in which everything that is not explicitly permitted is prohibited. (Hayek, 1960, p. 70).

To achieve this type of *individual freedoms* I have decided to determine that the laws selected for this political and economic model must be based on those that I call "permissive". "Permissive laws" are those that leave the individual to his free choice what action to take. Unlike the universal laws that apply to both types of subject, those who wish to perform an action or those who do not, these allow



the individual to have a criterion to make that decision. That is, they are those that allow abortion, the consumption of soft drugs, equal marriages, etc. Anyone who wishes to have an abortion, marry someone of the same gender, or consume certain narcotics is free to do so, as is free to refuse if that is not their decision. Obviously, these laws will always have their limitations, because there are things that should not be left to the discretion of the *individual* subject and that if they are done, measures required to punish and repress the individual must be taken, such as murder, rape, theft, among other rights that would put at risk the *freedom* and *individual guarantees* of others. Here a great difference is marked between individual freedom and the *universal one* proposed by utilitarianism, where even if these penalized acts cause pleasure to the subject, he will not be able to perform them for the simple fact of breaking into the natural right of someone else, that is, the right to life or to the conservation of his integrity. However, no sooner this version of *freedom* may seem, it will not remain infallible, being one of the interpretations most questioned by the communitarians.

3. Freedom for communitarianism: a concept of plurality

Communitarianism will discuss just with the two *liberal* models presented in the philosophy of "modernity", both universalists and *individualists*, since it will consider them exclusive models. One of the basic problems to discuss will be that idea that all individuals should be equal and treated as such, however, individualists had already analyzed this objection, but for communitarianism, *individualism* will also be another model of social exclusion, and inconsistent, worrying about seeking a community based on ideas of social plurality. It is important to mention that communitarianism, despite its criticisms of *modern freedom*, will not discard all its proposals, but it will find several inconsistencies with which it will discuss.

For the philosopher Michael Walzer there are three serious errors of liberalism: reason, politics and passion. The concept of rationality would affirm that every man is free and capable of making his own decisions and that is one of the great lies of *liberalism*, because all men are determined by a social environment governed by rules and although this is free to leave to choose another environment, the most he will achieve is to change his social environment for another equally



dominated by those same rules, for this reason, there is not a single subject who can be totally free, but only free to choose a different environment: "Could we imagine individuals who had no links of any kind? Individuals who were not determined by class, religion or gender, but lacked identity and were completely free?" (Walzer, 2004, p. 35). Therefore, Walzer understands that absolute or individual freedom is not possible, all people lack an identity or a logos of their own, since these are put by the same society where each subject has been developing throughout his life, however, he does not rule out a small freedom, when someone who lives in a society involuntarily, you can change it:

[...] We move in the direction of freedom when we allow someone to leave: to divorce, convert to another religion, retire, move to opposition, or denounce a contract, etc. We move in the direction of freedom when we open paths for social change in involuntary associations and for the reordering of status among involuntary associations. (Walzer, 2004, pp. 39-40).

As for representative democracy, for Walzer, there is a risk caused in proselytism, that political parties have as their only interest to win elections, here again a kind of social separation is generated in small groups that must support, based on certain ideologies acquired in their environment, one or the other side. However, society becomes a non-free means, since it is in use to reach certain ends that will greatly benefit the winning party:

The democratic path to victory implies that people are politically formed, organized and mobilized [...] always against something. The 'plus' is what legitimizes victory, and although legitimacy is favored when good arguments are provided for substantial issues, victory rarely achieves good arguments. (Walzer, 2004, p. 61).

But, he also fails to find a solution in participatory democracy, since these despite trying to include the subject more in political decisions, the organization among a large number of people involved in a society is simply not possible: "I do not mean by this that ordinary men and women do not have the ability to argue rationally; but, quite simply, that 100 million people, or a million or, only 100,000, cannot 'discuss together' [...]". (Walzer, 2004, p. 69).



His latest criticism of passion lies in how impulsive people can be when they are convinced by the passionate discourse that politicians usually offer, acting on several occasions irrationally: "Politics usually has to do with people who bring together the two things, convictions and passions, reason and enthusiasm, in a single unstable relationship." (Walzer, 2004, pp. 83-84). Looking at it this way, passion and proselytism are two ideas that are linked, both instead of being guided by a rational argument, they prefer to awaken certain passions that liberate the irrationality of men causing an impulsive social act.

His political proposal will be based on a concept called "complex justice", a form of redistribution of social goods, not in a traditionally liberal sense, where everyone makes their own acquisitions, but in an equitable way according to the needs not only of the subject and his environment, but of the social needs themselves based on their various contexts that force them to have different solutions to various problems. That is where the *plural* proposal of communitarianism begins. A subject in a wheelchair will have different needs to someone who can make good use of their legs, this second subject will not require a house enabled so that the chair can pass anywhere, as it happens with societies. Societies found in different climatic mediums will not be able to grow the same foods. If society were considered equal, as if men were considered equal, the man in a wheelchair would be required to walk up the stairs of any house like any healthy person, just as any country would be given an equal distribution of seeds to sow without taking into consideration whether the environment of the place to which they belong allows it or not:

Simple equality is a simple distributive condition, so if I have 14 hats and someone else also has 14, we are on an equal footing. And all the better if hats are predominant, for then our equality will spread across all spheres of social life. From the position I assume here, however, we will only have the same number of hats, and hats are unlikely to be predominant for long. Equality is a complex relationship of people regulated by the goods we make, share and exchange with each other; it is not an identity of possessions. It then requires a diversity of distributive criteria that reflect the diversity of social goods. (Walzer, 1997, p. 31).



Walzer will also speak of a politics of recognition, where every man will be recognized for his differences, that is, a politics of inclusion. However, the recognition of these diversities will not imply the individuality of the subject, since autonomy is not sought outside society itself, but that each one is accepted as he is within a social group, in which no one seeks to be superior or dominate over others:

The citizen who respects himself is an autonomous individual. I don't mean autonomous in the world, because I don't know what that would entail. He is autonomous in his community, a free and responsible agent, a participatory member. I imagine him as the ideal subject of the theory of justice. He is at home here, and he knows his place, "reigns in his own [company], not elsewhere," and does not "desire power over the whole world." It is the complete opposite of the tyrant, who uses his noble cradle, his material wealth or his office, even his celebrity, to claim goods that he has not earned and to which he has no right. (Walzer, 1997, p. 290).

As for Taylor's community philosophy, it will start with a critique of individualism that he has chosen to call "atomism." An analogy in which a society ordered by atoms allows them to act autonomously and selflessly from the rest: "Often this atomism becomes visible through a plea in favor of what is called 'methodological individualism', which urges us to treat collectivities as composed of individuals." (Taylor, 1997, p. 178). To object to this position, he will make a brief analysis of the conformation of the language, since it depends on the environment where the subject develops. Although all men possess individual ideas, the only way in which these can be expressed is through intersubjectivity, the subjective relationship of one subject with another, given through language, a means with which it is possible to express those internal ideas that each one possesses. In addition, the internal ideas that each one has regarding the world do not remain intact through linguistic communication with other people, but always complement each other, therefore, here is a gnoseological positioning, because the knowledge of each person depends on his not only personal relationship with the world, but also on his relationship with someone else. In the same way, the language will always be in various constant changes depending on the culture where it is developing,



so that even the language itself is not immovable when there are human relationships: "[...] a language is created and sustained in the continuous exchanges that take place in a given linguistic community. This is its *locus* and this is what ultimately excludes methodological individualism." (Taylor, 1997, p. 183).

As with language or knowledge, so it is with communities. Every community is made up of social relations, but it only manages to sustain itself when the members of this society manage to subsist with each other, achieving this only by seeking the common welfare. In a community people will need both the butcher, as the butcher of the peasant and the peasant of the merchant:

Common compressions cannot be decompressed and this is due, as I have just said, to the fact that it is essential to be what they are that they are not only for me or for you, but for us. That we possess a common understanding presupposes that we have formed a unity, a 'we' that understands together and that by definition cannot be decompressed analytically. If it were, understanding would not be genuinely common. A friendship relationship is an example of one that rests on a common understanding and is therefore not amenable to atomistic analysis. (Taylor, 1997, p. 189).

Taylor will see a risk in multicultural societies, since they have divided societies again, as with *individualism*, into small social fragments, each with a personal identity separated from the rest: indigenous with indigenous, feminists with feminists, homosexuals with homosexuals, etc. "And in the demand it appears in the foreground, in many ways, in current politics, formulated in the names of minority or 'subaltern' groups." (Taylor, 2009, p. 53). It's not that Taylor has anything against cultural diversity, but that he only finds it dangerous for these societies divided into diverse identities to work in isolation from the rest of a community instead of working together, without needing to lose that identity. The community must not forget that every identity given, whether personal as talking about my own identity, or a social identity like me belonging to a certain group, is always granted socially and not in isolation. When a person forges his own way of being, he does so within his coexistence with someone else, just as when he decides to always belong to a group, he does so



after socializing with that group. Just as it happens with language when it is developed through a certain cultural environment, the same happens with identity: "[...] the tion of my own identity does not mean that I have elaborated it in isolation, *but that I have negotiated* it through dialogue [...], with others." (Taylor, 2009, p. 65).

Taylor will not fully confront classical *liberalism* either, but he will not see a state governed by a representative democracy as viable, although he will see viability in a participatory one, differing here from Walzer. For Taylor, this will not only allow the subject to become more involved in the decisions and needs of society, it will also allow a greater respect for cultural diversity, having in it, a proposal guided towards *plurality*:

Freedom was understood as a citizen freedom, the freedom of the active participant in public affairs. The citizen was 'free' in the sense of having a say in the decisions of the political domain, which makes up the life of each one. To the extent that participatory self-government is itself habitually realized through common actions, it is perhaps normal to see it as authentically animated by common identifications. Since we exercise freedom in common actions, it may seem natural that we value it as a common good. (Taylor, 1997, p. 253).

The risk that Taylor finds in an individualistic liberalism is the fragmentation of subjects into particular goals forgetting to also have common goals. He believes that a federative system is a good alternative to return democratic power to society and limit the political powers of government. This is one way to achieve a subsidiary company:

What can help mitigate this feeling is the decentralization of power, as Tocqueville observed. And so, in general, devolution or division of powers, as in federal systems, especially those based on the principle of subsidiarity, can be good for regaining democratic power. All the more so if the units to which that power is returned already appear as communities in the lives of those who compose them. (Taylor, 1994, p. 144).

At this point it is important to mention what kind of laws would be suitable for a state (or a community) made up of community thinking. The only alternative would be a series of "relative laws"



that allow each cultural diversity to govern itself under its own social standards, but without isolating itself from the rest. Who are the thinkers of modernity to establish an ideal model for any culture? How can they justify that their moral value is better than another moral value? Communitarianism, therefore, must seek a community centered on two multicultural aspects, otherness and solidarity, recognize the differences of the "other" and still work in community.

It is known that throughout the world and in its history, there have been and still are cultures that may seem strange to those who have developed in a world governed within modern thought. However, these cultural diversities show that the world is not only of a single morality, but that there can be different moralities, of which it can hardly be argued that one of them is better than another, since every society always acts under the belief that it is doing the best for itself. The philosopher James Rachels who has worked on cultural relativism mentions:

These customs cannot be said to be 'right' or 'wrong' because this implies that we have an independent criterion of correctness or incorrectness with which they can be judged. But there is no such independent criterion; each criterion is linked to a culture. (Rachels, 2006, p. 41).

But, the same author will find certain deficiencies in these arguments, because the consequences could be negative, for example, no one could criticize other cultural practices just for being different from their own, if so, then no one could criticize the extermination of the Jews for having a different perception that must be respected because the thought of the Nazis would be violated:

Not condemning *these* practices does not seem progressive; on the contrary, slavery and anti-Semitism seem wrong wherever they occur. However, if we take cultural relativism seriously, we will have to see these social practices as immune to criticism." (Rachels, 2006, p. 46).

Conclusion

The problem generated by a *freedom* based on the belief that everyone is equal, is precisely to believe that all people should be treated equally, without considering what needs or desires different from



the rest each subject may have. An alternative to this problem was sought by giving people an *individual* right of choice, where everyone could choose what they want according to their own interests and without having to depend on what others think. However, the *individual* struggle of each one, led to a survival of the most suitable to the social environment, regardless of the disadvantages that another person might have, or the asymmetry of *freedom* generated, where some would have the opportunity to enjoy more freedom than others, for example, those who were born in a family economically better positioned than the rest. On the other hand, the communitarians who would seek a *freedom* based on *plurality*, that is, otherness and collectivity, fall into the problem of relativization. Generating diverse realities where all must be respected for the simple fact of being different from the rest, would cause any objection to a certain lifestyle or a certain culture to be considered violent, because according to this relativism, it would seek to repress other thoughts, regardless of whether these same put at risk the freedom or life of other people, for example, one could not object to a misogynistic or racist culture.

Why are these three aspects of *freedom* the most relevant issues currently within politics or philosophy? The most important political groups within politics can be divided into a left that will always defend the political *freedoms* of citizens, nevertheless and contrary to its political philosophy, the same left will seek an economy not *free*, but welfare for its citizens, seeking through taxes to generate the greatest amount of social services but, limiting economic *freedom* by restricting the market or trade with these same taxes, being just one example of other types of possible restrictions that can be generated in this type of economic systems. On the other hand, the right that denies the *political freedoms* of the citizen always finds itself in support of a free *market*. Therefore, one could speak politically, about the existence of mixed states, where political *freedom* is defended but not economic freedom, or vice versa, but freedom is never defended in both social sectors.

Currently, there are indigenous groups that govern themselves autonomously based on systems similar to participatory democracy, since all the members of these communities hold periodic meetings in which the same members decide which laws should be agreed for the common welfare. The problem would arise in knowing whether such socialization is possible in an entire nation, where



millions of subjects would seek to decide their own legislation. Another problem would be, if a general decision is not possible and, therefore, it is chosen to take into account the majority decision, how to avoid that this majority decision falls on the so-called "dictatorship of the majority".

The issue of *political freedom* has made great strides in moving from an absolutist to a democratic system of government, when previously it was not believed that another form of government was possible. However, the classical thought of *liberalism* has shown itself to have certain fractures, taking for granted the need to seek better liberal alternatives. Thus arise these progressive thinkers, thinkers who unfortunately have not shown themselves to be infallible either, which is why the idea of *freedom* continues and will continue to be discussed always in a sense of progress, being in a constant becoming trying to achieve the highest degree of *human freedom* that is possible to acquire, because it is clear that absolute *freedom* is not possible, since, if it existed, there would always be those who would try to abuse it to repress the *freedom* of someone else. But not for this reason, thinkers have limited themselves to a single idea of *freedom* and always continue in their search towards utopia.

References

- Agustín, S. (2007). *The City of God* (Tr. Santos Santamarta del Río and Miguel Fuentes Lanero). Madrid: Tecnos.
- Aristotle. (1988 version). *Politics* (Tr. Manuel García Valdés). Madrid: Gredos.
- Bentham, J. (1839). *Compendium of the Treaties on Civil and Criminal Legislation*. Madrid: Librería De La Viuda Calleja e Hijos.
- Dube, S. (2009). Modernity. (Tr. Jorge Andrade). In Szurmuk, M. and Irwin, R.M. (Coords.), *Diccionario de Estudios Culturales Latinoamericanos* (pp. 177-182). Mexico: Siglo XXI.
- Hayek, F. (1960). *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago: The University Chicago Press.
- Hayek, F. A. (1948). *Individualism and Economic Order*. Chicago: The University Chicago Press.
- Kant, I. (2014). Towards Perpetual Peace. (Tr. Jacobo Muñoz). In, *Kant II*. (pp. 299-248). Madrid: Gredos.



- Locke, J. (2004). *Second Treatise on Civil Government. An Essay on the True Origin, Scope and End of Civil Government* (Tr. Carlos Mellizo). Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Matteucci, N. (2015). Contractualism (Tr. Raúl Crisafio, Alfonso García, Miguel Martí, Mariano Martín and Jorge Tula). In Bobbio, N., Matteucci, N. and Pasquino, G. (Dirs.), *Diccionario de Política* (pp. 351-365). Mexico: Siglo XXI.
- Mill, J. (2014). *Utilitarianism* (Tr. Esperanza Guisán). Madrid: Alianza.
- Rachels, J. (2006). *Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (Tr. Gustavo Ortiz Millán). Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Rousseau, J. (1983). *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Among Men* (Tr. Ágnes Pumarega). Retrieved September 19, 2020 from: <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/rousseau/disc.pdf>
- Rousseau, J. (2014). The Social Contract (Tr. Consuelo Bergés). In, *Rousseau* (pp. 255-370). Madrid: Gredos.
- Smith, A. (1978). *Theory of Moral Feelings* (Tr. Edmundo O'Gorman). Mexico: Editorial Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Smith, A. (1995). *The Wealth of Nations* (Tr. Carlos Rodríguez Braun). Madrid: Alianza editorial, colección el libro de bolsillo.
- Taylor, C. (1994). *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Tr. Pablo Carbajosa Pérez). Barcelona: Paidós.
- Taylor, C. (1997). *Philosophical Arguments* (Tr. Fina Birulés Bertrán). Barcelona: Paidós.
- Taylor, C. (2009). *Multiculturalism and "the Politics of Recognition"* (Tr. Mónica Utrilla De Neira, Liliana Andrade Lianas and Gerard Vilar Roca). Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Tocqueville, A. (1984). *Democracy in America Volumes I and II* (Tr. Ceded by Alianza Editorial). Madrid: Editorial Sarpe of the collection the great thinkers.
- Walzer, M. (1997). *The Spheres of Justice. A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Walzer, M. (2004). *Reason, Politics and Passion. 3 Defects of Liberalism*. Lecture presented at Max Horkheimer Conferences. Frankfurt am Main in 1999. Madrid: La balsa de la medusa.
- Weber, M. (2005). *Fundamental Sociological Concepts* (Tr. Joaquín Abellán). Madrid: Alianza.