

'Liberty' in its general sense means 'absence of constraint' (a relevant contrast is 'presence of assistance'). The issue here is interpersonal liberty: the absence of constraints on people by each other (not any natural constraint, whether *intrapersonal* or external). But what is it, most generally, that we want other people not to constrain? That general thing appears to be the satisfaction (i.e., fulfilment or achievement, *not* a psychological sensation) of our wants, or preferences, themselves. However, simply failing to assist someone's want-satisfaction (not providing a benefit or gain) is not equivalent to initiating a constraint on that want-satisfaction (initiating a cost or loss). Therefore, this abstract liberty can be theorised as 'the absence of interpersonal initiated constraints on want-satisfaction'. But for brevity we may use 'no initiated imposed costs' to mean the same thing. This also solves the problem of what, in abstract principle, constitutes '(inflicted) harm' from a libertarian viewpoint. This euletherology is the theory of abstract perfect, or complete, interpersonal liberty-in-itself that libertarianism implicitly presupposes. This is a descriptive *theory* of libertarian liberty that is falsifiable by counterexample or sound criticism (e.g., showing that it is somehow incoherent, or that it cannot explain some aspects of libertarianism, or that another theory of liberty fits libertarianism better). It is not a definition (as the non-philosophical, in particular, may mistakenly view it), whether stipulative, persuasive, or about usage. However, any theory can also be used as a definition.

There are three general theoretical problems with applying this account of perfect liberty: clashes, defences, and rectifications. 1) What if our want-satisfactions clash? I want to do something which, unintentionally, would initiate imposed costs on you (e.g., my starting a fire would cause you obnoxious and hard-to-avoid smoke), but to stop me would also initiate imposed costs on me (I want a fire for warmth and cooking). The most libertarian option is to minimise overall initiated imposed costs, with situation-specific compromise or compensation. Thus, we see the error in assuming that libertarianism is absolutist: that individual liberty can always be perfect and without any infractions. 2) How far can one go to defend oneself from initiated imposed costs? Not so far as to initiate them oneself by overall exceeding any that are threatened (e.g., putting landmines in one's garden to stop children using it as a shortcut). 3) If an initiated imposed cost occurs, then what would rectify it? Restitution matching the degree of cost, including retributive-restitution and any risk-multiplier proportional to the chance of evading rectification. Therefore, we see that some broad interpersonal comparisons of normal initiated imposed costs are sometimes necessary to solve these problems. But these three solutions are only about the liberty of the people directly affected, although that could be indefinitely many people. They do not amount to collective libertarian consequentialism (with the local-knowledge problem and perverse incentives probably causing self-defeating unintended consequences). This is an individualistic liberty-maximisation theory.

If such liberty were to be observed in a state of nature, then what general things would this entail? Primarily, people want to have initial ultimate control of the bodies that they more or less are. They do not initiate imposed costs on other people by having this, unless trivially and reciprocally by merely existing and being composed of resources now unavailable to other people. Therefore, liberty-maximisation entails that they have this initial ultimate control of their bodies. Next, people want to have initial ultimate control of any unused resources they start using, and thereby closely involve in their want-satisfactions (the resources they use for clothing, tools, habitation, etc.). They do not initiate imposed costs on other people by having this, unless trivially and reciprocally by their chosen use and those resources now being unavailable to other people. Therefore, liberty-maximisation entails that they have this initial ultimate control of their used resources. Otherwise, and consequently, all interpersonal interactions and resource-transfers need to be consensual or they are likely to significantly initiate imposed costs. These three principal, positive, *prima facie*, libertarian rules of liberty-in-practice fit abstract liberty-in-itself almost perfectly. They maximally internalise externalities with respect to want-satisfaction, and are thereby economically efficient (in the sense of maximising general want-satisfaction). To break any of these three positive rules infringes interpersonal liberty *prima facie*. However, problematic cases may require the abstract or maximisation theory.

In a hypothetical world of perfect libertarians, those three practical rules and three solutions to application problems might be enough for libertarianism to function. But in order to better protect and promote liberty-in-practice in the real world, these positive rules and solutions can be instituted as enforceable private property and legal remedies. As a result—strictly speaking—self-ownership, such private property, and such legal remedies are not *inherently* liberty-in-itself or even liberty-in-practice (as propertarian theories of libertarianism sometimes appear to assume). Otherwise, we risk conflating liberty and property into an unfalsifiable theory (or even a mere stipulative definition). Nevertheless, once libertarian legal principles have been thus derived, then 'initiated imposed costs' can normally be interpreted in terms of breaching them: there is no need to return to the abstract theory and pre-legal implications except for philosophically problematic cases. This is why private-property libertarianism alone has so much intuitive verisimilitude and cogency; and it is, therefore, sometimes mistaken for the necessary and sufficient totality of libertarianism.

It is a further completely separate and normative matter whether this overall positive system of liberty-in-practice is moral, just, rights-observing, valuable, etc. Only after deriving the positive account is it possible to ask normative questions about it. As a result—strictly speaking—self-ownership, such private property, and such legal remedies are not *inherently* moral, just, rights-observing, valuable, etc. (as moralised theories of libertarianism sometimes appear to assume). Otherwise, we risk conflating libertarian law and morality into an unfalsifiable theory (or even a mere stipulative definition). Nevertheless, correctly interpreted—philosophically and empirically—deontology, consequentialism, and contractarianism (the three main moral theories) all point towards libertarian liberty-in-practice as the outcome: the real top of Derek Parfit's moral mountain. However, libertarianism can simply be morally posited and defended in itself without requiring that it follow from any allegedly more-fundamental moral theory. (For this theory in more context see [here](#); for more philosophical detail see [here](#).)