

Liberty as a Triadic Relation Assignment

Please read the selection from Gerald MacCallum's "Negative and Positive Freedom" (p. 176-9). Pay special attention to the first paragraph, reproduced below. After reading the entire selection, answer the questions that follow.

Whenever the freedom of some agent or agents is in question, it is always freedom from some constraint or restriction on, interference with, or barrier to doing, not doing, becoming, or not becoming something. Such freedom is thus always of something (an agent or agents), from something, to do, not do, become, or not become something; it is a triadic relation. Taking the format 'x is (is not) free from y to do (not do, become, not become) z,' where *x* ranges over agents, *y* ranges over such 'preventing conditions' as constraints, restrictions, interferences, and barriers, and *z* ranges over actions or conditions of character or circumstance. When reference to one of these three terms is missing in such a discussion of freedom, it should be only because the reference is thought to be understood from the context of the discussion.

—MacCallum, "Negative and Positive Freedom"

1. What is a triadic relation?
2. What three terms does MacCallum suggest makes up a question of freedom?
3. How do examples like 'free society' or 'free beer' challenge MacCallum's thesis that freedom is always a triadic relationship? How can 'free beer' be analyzed in a way consistent with his thesis?
4. What are some examples of cases where the second term is left out? How can we make sense of these cases?
5. Why is freedom from hunger consistent with someone being hungry who seeks to be so, like someone on a Gandhian hunger strike?

6. How does MacCallum's account suggest we should talk about, for example, an immigration restriction that prevented people from freely entering a country? How would we frame it as a triadic relation?
7. How would we analyze freedom as non-interference on this account? What about freedom as self-mastery? What about freedom as autonomy? What about freedom as non-domination?
8. Does MacCallum's scheme provide a helpful analytical tool for understanding liberty, or is it too artificial or constraining?