

Dialectic Freedom: Between Positive and Negative Freedom

—A Philosophical Study of the Necessity of Political Freedom and Democracy Inspired by the “Dubai Experience”

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Abstract

This paper inspects the form of freedom that exists in Dubai to make people living in the city happy and satisfied. I ponder Berlin’s two notions of negative and positive freedom to see whether these notions can truly categorically exclude one another in the definition of freedom, and if so, which one applies in Dubai. I base my research on the assumption that the aim of every political/economic system is to make people happy and that the way to people’s happiness is through the satisfaction of their desires of survival and well-being. The results I succumb to show that Berlin’s two notions of freedom are intricately related on many levels: both partisans of positive and negative freedom seem to disregard the fact that, the subjectivity suggested by negative freedom does not exclude the presence of an objective element in negative freedom and, consequently the objectivity suggested by positive freedom does not exclude the presence of a subjective element in it. *The categorically dualistic conception of freedom suggested by Berlin would thus be incomplete and the necessity of freedom would dwell in a form of a dialectic synthesis between negative and positive freedom, that which I call Dialectic Freedom.* This is the form of freedom that prevails in Dubai.

Keywords

Positive Freedom, Negative Freedom, Dialectic Freedom, Coercion, Democracy, Autocracy, Well-Being, Happiness, Desires, Commodious Desire

1. Introduction

As a Lebanese expatriate, living in Dubai, this relatively new born luxurious city where people live with a very little margin of political freedom, has opened my

eyes to a very peculiar phenomenon: it is the fact that people of Dubai, despite this very little margin of political freedom, are very well satisfied and happy. In Lebanon however, with a relatively high level of political freedom people are neither happy nor satisfied because of the severely deteriorated economy and corrupt politicians, our ratio of public debt to GDP is the third highest in the world. Therefore, interest payments consumed 48% of government revenues in 2016, thus limiting the government's ability to make needed investments. The "Dubai experience"¹, as it is called by the many, makes one wonder what is the true definition of freedom that makes people happy?

Considering Berlin's concepts of positive and negative freedom, living in Dubai made me ask the questions: what is the kind of freedom that exists here? It is surely not negative freedom since, despite the significant margin of individual freedom and the prevailing free market economy that ensures the aspect of non-interference, it is improbable for this freedom to be a negative form because of the in-existent democratic aspect which *prevents* the citizen from taking part in the polity of the state (Kramer, Hayek, Miller) and does not *guarantee* the independence of the citizens from the exercise of arbitrary power. (Petit) On the other hand, the non-interference aspect of the individual freedom in Dubai rules out a positive categorisation from the picture since, such freedom is not a guided freedom: the government does not interfere with the individual freedom of its citizens.

To better inspect the form of freedom that exists in Dubai to make people happy I was intrigued to meditate on Berlin's two notions of negative and positive freedom to see whether these notions can truly categorically exclude one another in the definition of freedom, and if so, which one applies in Dubai. Living in Dubai has proved to me that democracy and the right of voting and expressing one's political opinion are not, as previously thought to be, a natural right without which one cannot live happily. With a very little margin of political freedom, people in Dubai are happy. I have come to realize that, maybe the aim of every political and economic system should be to make its subjects happy in as much as this can be possible. Since happiness is the most basic of human desires, I base my research on human desires. I base my research on the assumption that the aim of every political/economic system is to make people happy; the way to people's happiness is through the satisfaction of their desires. Hence, my research starts from the most basic human desires of survival and well-being. These two desires are the universal human desires by excellence. Every person wants to live and wants also to live well regardless of their interpretation of well-being. When a person can live and live well, they will be happy.

The results I succumb to show that these two notions of freedom are intricately related on many levels. In its most preliminary form, the definition of freedom reads as such: freedom is the state of liberty *from* all restraining forces *in order*

¹In a research administered by the ministry of Happiness in Dubai, the rate of how happy the people are 8/10; 10 being the most happy and 0 being the least happy. *Gulf News, Society* (2018), "How Happy are the Residents of Dubai", January 2018.

to be happy. Such a definition cannot be the target of any negative nor positive criticisms since it entails both aspects under one definition. From there, I try to show that libertarians—partisans of the negative camp of freedom—disregard the objective mode of freedom that is the “freedom to”; whereas the egalitarians—partisans of the positive camp in their turn, disregard the subjective mode of freedom which is the “*freedom from*”. Thus, I put the emphasis on the subjective aspect of positive freedom, and on the objective aspect of negative freedom. That is, I attempt to show that, both partisans of positive and negative freedom seem to ignore that, the subjectivity suggested by the negative freedom does not exclude the presence of an objective element in this concept of freedom and, consequently the objectivity suggested by the other concept (positive freedom) does not exclude the presence of a subjective element in it. The categorically dualistic conception of freedom suggested by Berlin would thus be incomplete and the necessity of freedom would dwell in a form of a dialectic synthesis between negative and positive freedom.

2. A Historical Synopsis of the Definition of Freedom

The distinction between positive freedom and negative freedom probably dates back to long before Isaiah Berlin in the 60s, but it was he who put significant effort to delve into these notions and give a categorical definition to the terms. Berlin categorizes freedom into two concepts: negative freedom which is the absence of restraints and, positive freedom which is the presence of control to reach self-mastery (Berlin, 1960). Henceforth, these two concepts, like a pebble thrown in stagnant water, have created a whole series of deflative philosophies that either echoed Berlin’s concept, criticized one concept in favor of the other, or sometimes tried to reconcile the philosopher’s dichotomy. In the classical period some were with the idea of negative freedom, Spencer (Spencer, 1884), Mill (Mill, 1859) and Humboldt (Humboldt, 1969) to name but few, and on the other side of the spectrum we see the notion of a guided positive freedom permeating the philosophy of Marx (Marx, 1867), Hegel (Hegel, 1896), Rousseau (Rousseau, 1762), T.H. Green (Green, 1986: p. 200), Dostoevsky (Dostoevsky, 1879). Of the most famous champions of negative freedom in the twentieth century would probably be Hayek (Hayek, 1960), Oppenheim (Oppenheim, 1961), Miller (Miller, 1983), Steiner (Steiner, 1975), Arendt (Arendt, 1973), and Rand (Rand, 1957). Partisans of this kind freedom consider that freedom should be regarded as a goal off and by itself and not a way, or a tool or vehicle used to reach to a certain end.² The only valid reason to limit freedom is in order to preserve it (Berlin, 1960). This kind of freedom supposes that people are rational and if left alone will eventually work a way to do what is right for themselves without hurting others (Hayek, 1960). This, according to this line of thought, would consequently succumb to a

²On the other hand T. H. Green says: “Doing what one will with one’s own, is valuable only as a means to an end is what I call freedom in the positive sense: in other words, the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good. No one has a right to do what he will with his own in such a way as to contravene this end.” *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings*, p. 200.

form of a multi colorful pluralism that is apt to encompass many human values that are rather ignored, significantly minimized or oppressed with positive freedom.

Nonetheless, many critics vehemently attack this kind of freedom on many accounts. Some see in the negative definition of freedom a void concept with no content (Dewey, 1963), others see that it entails a certain inherited rationality and wisdom on the part of the subject which is very difficult to be realized, and some others see that the human nature is limited by many factors which makes the act of choosing freely becomes obsolete.

Partisans of positive freedom do not consider the multiplicity of choices as a manifestation of real freedom, freedom, to them, resides not in how many choices one has but in how significant the choices are? Thus, from this side of the spectrum, as Berlin defines it, it is the freedom *to* self-mastery and realization. The best way to reach self-realization, for advocates of positive freedom, should be paralleled with a guided form of freedom that will walk the person through a set of rules, regulations and limitations to their personal freedom only for the sake of championing their long-term fulfillment and accordingly their happiness. This camp denies the relation between one's desire for freedom and one's freedom since freedom to them is an instrumental concept used to reach the end of living well and being happy.

On the other hand, critics of positive freedom regarded it as a form of green light for the state or any authority to infringe and encroach on the personal civil liberties of individuals and thus expose them to arbitrary use of power and eventually a totalitarian set of rules that would negate the whole concept of freedom altogether. "If negative freedom is void of content," Putterman says, "positive freedom has the defect of having too much content". (Putterman, 2006: p. 421)

Many others tried to reconcile the two extremes claiming that the true concept of freedom can very well be that the state promotes positive liberties on certain levels of the subject's life, specifically not enforcing patterns of behavior. The levels of the state interference can include education, taxation, medical insurance. (Christman, 2005)

Others like Skinner and Pettit remained more faithful to the negative side of the spectrum, however, and in an attempt to emancipate negative freedom from the content-void criticism, they added that true freedom is not only non-interference but also there should be conditions for this non-interference to become freedom. The conditions include but not limited to, Democracy safeguard for arbitrary use of power from the government. Thus, to be free is to enjoy the rights of one's republican citizenship (Pettit, 2001).

Pettit saw that only arbitrary power is inimical to freedom, not power as such. Therefore, under this definition, one can enjoy non-interference without practicing non-domination since domination of a republican constitution can be empowering and life enhancing and is not to be put in the same condemned cell as arbitrary power.

Of those who attempted to endorse the concept of freedom with both extremes of Berlin's definition, the positive as well as the negative sides are Nozick (Nozick, 1974) and Rothbard (Rothbard, 1982) confirming the idea of Mac-Callum (Mac-Callum, 1991). This latter talked of a form of freedom that is compatible with both negative as well as positive freedom. He claims that to be able to define freedom one should ask the following questions: who is free? Free from what? And free to do what? Hence, an act of freedom for Mac-Callum is an act that encompasses an agent or a subject, a constraint and a goal. One cannot be free unless all three aspects of this relation are guaranteed.

With all the definitions of freedom hitherto presented, none could eschew the misfortunes of negative freedom leading to minority oppression, free-market oppression and populism, neither did they succeed to prevent positive freedom from encroaching on civil liberties, controlling private property or practicing arbitrary use of power. Moreover, most importantly, no one theory could present a definition of the concept of freedom that is apt to comprise the totality and the complexity of human behavior. As for theories that present a holistic concept of freedom, reconciling theories, those have a true but incomplete definition. In my opinion, these reconciling theories fail to encompass the grandeur of subjective choices that compose positive freedom, which leaves their reconciled concept lacking the necessary aspects of an appropriate content that freedom should entail. These theories of compatibility between the two camps of Berlin's freedom lack as well the necessary dynamism adequate and worth of the myriad of options that a person can do with his freedom. Consequently their theories are tinted with a rigid objectivity that might negate the content of the definition of freedom altogether.

3. Some Preliminaries of the New Approach to Freedom

Considering the nature of negative freedom as the absence of restraints, I will stand firm on my position and say that this freedom is a content-less concept simply because it is the freedom from something. It is defined as the absence of content, specifically absence of restraints. Negative freedom is thus, a content-free concept. Nonetheless, instead of disdaining the ascription of emptiness to the concept of negative freedom, in this research, I will highlight the importance of this void as a necessary space, or margin that allows the relativity and complexity of the positive content to manipulate within its limits. I will have thus presented a new concept of freedom that comes to light only with an interactive relation, a dialectic relation, between positive and negative definitions of freedom.

Hence, the search for a clear definition of the concept of negative freedom does not involve a search for content since negative freedom is the absence of content. Nonetheless, the difficulty of the task increases exponentially when trying to endorse positive freedom with a concept since the nature of its content is relative and varies with the variation of societies, historical periods, geographical areas as

well as individual subjects. Every one of us wants to be free from restraints (regardless of their nature) to do or be something. Yet, each one of us sees their positive freedom in a different manner than the other. If a person wants to be free from X in order to be or do Y, Y here can be an entire spectrum of activities ranging from complete indolence to running for presidency. Whereas X can simply be defined as the absence of whatever is impeding their way to do Y. Thus if we succeed in giving clear guidelines for Y that could enclose all the subjective activities, then we will have succeeded in creating a fully rounded definition of freedom.

Notice the novelty presented in this research: firstly, the idea of considering the content-less aspect of negative freedom as necessary for the concept of freedom (as mentioned before), and secondly, where partisans of positive freedom saw this concept as an objective content that can fit all wants, on the contrary, in this research I consider positive freedom as the bearer of subjectivity since it is highly dependent on the subject and their relevant ambiance of time and place.

Before I go into the details of this new dialectic concept of freedom presented in this paper, and to have a clearer comprehension of its dynamism, I will briefly map out Berlin's (and others) definition of freedom depicting it as a linear progression of a spectrum of two extremes as opposed to the circular perception of the dialectic freedom under discussion.

4. The Linear Conception of Freedom

After Berlin's distinction of negative and positive freedom, the general trend of depicting these two notions in political theory has always been a linear spectrum of two extremes: negative freedom being on side of the spectrum and positive freedom on the other side, or as a linear equation of two variables as what we see with compatibility theories. In any case the spectrum would be as it is in **Figure 1** below.

Negative Freedom-----Individual Freedom-----Positive Freedom

Figure 1. Linear depiction of individual freedom.

The real concept of individual freedom has always been seen as dwelling on either side of the spectrum or, in some scenarios, as a combination of both sides.

When projected on the political level, each element of the above is seen to have necessarily developed (or metamorphosed) into a political concept that has seemingly been considered as the natural outcome of its simultaneous concept on the individual level, as shown in **Figure 2** below.

Democracy-----Political Freedom-----Autocracy

Figure 2. Linear depiction of political freedom.

Political theorists and philosophers have hitherto agreed that, on the political level, democracy would be the natural and necessary development of a group of

individuals living under a system that maintains their negative form of freedom. Whereas, on the other side of the spectrum, autocracy would be the necessary outcome of the guided objectivity that positive freedom entails.

When projected on yet another social aspect of the human life, specifically the economic aspect, the linear dichotomy projected on the economic level would look like **Figure 3** below.

Free Market-----Economic Freedom-----Socialism

Figure 3. Linear depiction of economic freedom.

Thus, each of the extremes would camp on their side of the spectrum erringly believing in the righteousness of their position and fiercely defending it. The end result being that, not one side did or could (even theoretically) eschew major problems presented above.

5. The Dialectic Approach to Freedom

My approach in this paper is completely different from the traditional linear route exposed in the above section.

- The methodology of the new approach:

The methodology employed is different on several accounts: the first being that my starting point is nothing but the human desire to live well, to be happy, or what I call the natural commodious desire of living. Thus instead of quibbling over terminology and starting from the question “Is a democratic liberal system better than a socialist authoritarian one?”, I started from the very beginning by asking the question “how can a political system make people happy?” Instead of theoretically analyzing a recipe for collective happiness and painting all individual happiness with one brush—what champions of positive freedom do, and instead of focusing on subjective freedoms that might not lead its bearer anywhere if not taken with the appropriate objective in mind—what champions of negative freedom do, in this research I claim that the best system to govern is that which has the necessary dynamics to encompass the different subjective desires as well as the grandeur of the collective objective desires. And this is where the second account of difference of the methodology of my research comes to the picture in that it is a dialectic ever-changing development of the concept of freedom and not a stagnant linear spectrum with two opposite extremes and the different stages among them.

The aim is to make people live a commodious life, a happy life. This can be any state of being that a person classifies as their commodious state of being which brings them happiness. Be this state reading poetry, gambling or probably purchasing an extravagant item of luxury, the personal objective is the same, to be happy.

What is the best formula then, one might ask, that can present a definition of freedom that encompasses negative as well as positive freedom, endorse freedom

with a full content while at the same time maintaining in the definition the malleability necessary to include all contingent individual freedom to succumb to a true and informed free choice that best fits their desires?

➤ Dialectic Freedom on the Individual Level:

As previously mentioned, the axiom that I build my entire definition on is the human perpetual desire of a commodious life. If one's aim in life is to live and to live well or commodiously, then the role that individual freedom should play would be to cater to this desire of life and of commodious living. Instead of categorizing freedom into a concept that can be void on the one hand and another one that can be denying its subjectivity, freedom, as seen in this research, is the dialectic relation between two desires: the desire to be free from any external forces—in order to be happy. Thus, the first instance of freedom I see it as the desire to be free where the second instance is the desire to be happy. Both instances interact together to produce the concept of individual freedom.

Just as the negative freedom is an incomplete concept without acknowledging its object (the freedom to be happy), positive freedom is as well an incomplete concept when the subjective form of its object is pre-shaped: the state, or any other regulative authority designing a way for individual happiness. With both concepts considered in their singularity, people are not free, and the commodious desire will not be satisfied. With negative freedom that disregards people's want for happiness and considers freedom as the goal of and by itself people would be free of restrains but not necessarily happy since they might be in short of the necessary tools for happiness. With positive freedom that disregards the subjective wants of people, people would not necessarily be happy as well since this authority-guided freedom with a prolonged form of happiness would impede their subjective plans.

Having said that, true freedom would thus appear as the synthesis of an ongoing relation between a positive form of freedom that does not exclude the subjective happiness of every individual on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a negative form of freedom that does not exclude the object, that is the goal, of this un-interfered and uninterrupted freedom.

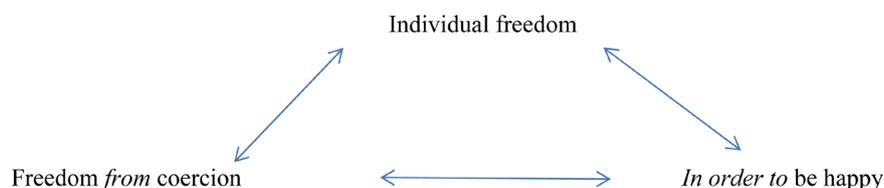


Figure 4. Dialectic depiction of individual freedom.

Notice that if we compare **Figure 1** and **Figure 4**, we notice that on the left side of **Figure 4** we have freedom *from*, which gives this instance of individual freedom a negative aspect, but the full concept of freedom remains incomplete until it goes through the second instance, which is “*in order*” to be happy. This would give the full meaning for the concept of individual freedom where it is

now a relation between negative and positive freedom. With such a relation, this dynamic concept of freedom, and by virtue of its object on the positive side, is not a void concept wanting freedom for freedom and leaving the bearer unhappy. Moreover, it is not a concept that disregards individual subjective happiness and imposes an objective pre-set recipe for happiness because its first instance prevents any form of imposed plans of the sort.

➤ Dialectic Freedom on the Political Level:

The same dialectic method can be projected on the political level. Thus going back to the most basic human desires, I consider that what one wants from a political system is to be free from arbitrary use of power (here I recall Pettit)—in order to live a commodious life. In its second instance, the desire of political freedom is a desire that wants plan, rules and regulations to ensure its security and its sustainability, and not only freedom from arbitrary use of power.

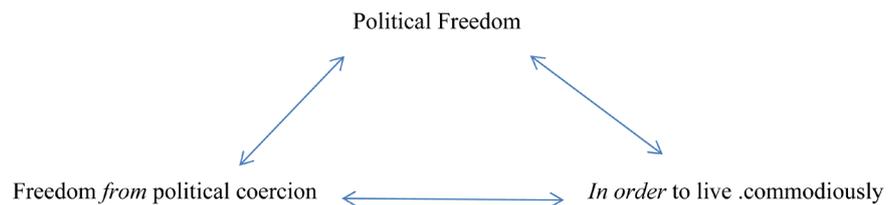


Figure 5. Dialectic depiction of political freedom.

When political freedom self-manifests in these two instances (**Figure 5**), many of the traditional negative-positive dichotomy's challenges would be avoided. Let us first consider the negative instance of political freedom in **Figure 5**: freedom from political coercion. This instance is negative par excellence. It safeguards its bearer from the political coercion that can control their life. It is worth mentioning here that this political coercion can very well be democracy's major pitfall, rule of the majority, or populism, and not only the arbitrary use of power by a totalitarian leader.

What makes this concept of political freedom a more worthy guarantee for the humans' happiness resides in its second instance as well: in order to live commodiously. Living in Dubai has proved to me that people look for political freedom only to live commodiously, that being their safety and their property secured. With the two-extreme traditional route of defining political freedom (**Figure 2**), this shortcoming of negative freedom cannot be avoided. However, with this dynamic political freedom introduced in its two instances, the positive side of political freedom would not be realized under the shortcomings of any political system that leaves its people miserable and unsatisfied. The Lebanese case would serve as a good example here: in a country like Lebanon where there is only one instance of political freedom—the negative freedom—but people are not happy. People can vote for whoever they want, there is freedom of expression, of belief, of membership to any organizations, is at its optimum, but people are not safe and not prospering because of the corrupt politicians and the ignorant vast ma-

majority that keeps voting for them. Thus, for a fully rounded concept of political freedom, this concept should be in its both instances: freedom from coercion in order to live well.

With this definition of political freedom introduced, the longstanding link between Democracy and political freedom is not necessarily valid anymore. Since, a striking advantage that this definition has resides in the fact that it can be very well put in action under any political system that guarantees both instances of the concept. For, under the righteous non corrupt autocracy where everyone is under the law, although denied the right to vote and be part of the political life, subjects will be protected from coercion and would be able to live well if the margin necessary for commodious life is procured (as it is more or less the case in Dubai).

➤ Dialectic Freedom on the Economical Level:

When projected on the economic life, economic freedom would also be the result of a dialectic synthesis between two instances of the desire of economic freedom: the first being the desire to live in a society that is free *from* economic oppression—*in order to* prosper and grow. I do not solely want to free myself from whichever agent economically oppressing me, I want to be free of this oppressive force because it is impeding my desire to thrive and prosper. Thus the full realization of this kind of freedom would be in a dialectic relation between the following concepts:

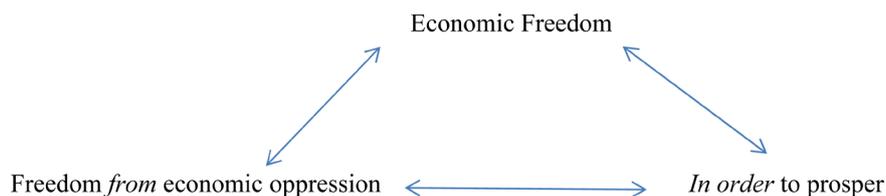


Figure 6. Dialectic depiction of economic freedom.

One more time the dynamics of the concept of freedom in such a definition prevent all sorts of oppression and leave the door open for economic prosperity. On the negative side of the figure (**Figure 6**) we see that the first instance of economic freedom is the freedom from economic oppression. This oppression can be state control under socialism or market or class oppression under capitalism. Regardless of what the economic system is, whenever it is oppressing its subjects in a way that puts rods in the wheels of their prosperity vehicle, then this would defy the true concept of economic freedom. The economic oppression can be class oppression or a free market monopoly, and it can as well be governmental interference in the private sector. In this sense freedom can be realized under a socialist regime if the system of taxation satisfies the collective desire to prosper and thus not oppressing them economically. One more time, the definition of economic freedom presented abolishes the necessity of a long established link, this time between socialism and economic oppression.

Bearing this concept of dialectic freedom in mind, I came to realize that the kind of freedom that exists in Dubai complies with this concept. For, as previously mentioned, on the individual level, people here are free to pursue their individual and subjective desires in order to be happy. Some of the sanctions and decrees that exist here might, according to the traditional concept of freedom, appear as oppressing or even verging on savagery. However, with the introduction of dialectic freedom, these practices would reappear as complying with individual freedoms and not going against it.

To better explain myself, I will give the example of wearing Hijab for women. Needless to say that, with the traditional definition of freedom, wearing Hijab cannot be identified as promoting individual freedom, it is regarded as a form of societal oppression over women. However, taken from a dialectic point of view, the picture would be painted differently. Dubai is a city of a vast majority of Muslim Sunnis believers as well as practitioners. For this vast majority, the wearing Hijab and covering their body is a favored practice in their religious book, the Qura'an, which they have the absolute belief that it is the unaltered word of God. Taken from this perspective, the Hijab would not be a source of dissatisfaction, on the contrary, these women have the absolute belief that this is what makes God happy and thus they cover up in order to be happy.

On the political level, the political freedom as seen by Berlin's definition would be non-existent since the system is a Monarchy and people (the local community) do not have the right to vote for their government. As regarded from the dialectic definition of freedom, this same autocratic system is a Constitutional Monarchy that is governed by the Sharia law (Islamic law), that which the majority of the people not only agree to but also are its solemn believers. This Monarchy provides for its people (expatriates as well as locals) the security, the peace and the equity needed in order for them to live well. Although the country, for cultural purposes, does not provide its residents with the Emirati passport, it does however provide them with much more than a passport to make them live commodiously. So, on the political level people here desire security and peace in order to live commodiously, and they get it.

As on the economical level, it is a free-market system here in Dubai. The government does not collect taxes, but the employee rights are always kept in check (medical insurance, minimum wages, yearly vacations and additional payment for working over hours). Dubai (and the GCC countries in general) has been criticized for employing cheap labor for its economic boost; these blue collars are usually paid an average of 700 USD per month. This can very well be considered as a form of economic oppression under the traditional definition of freedom since a laborer who is paid that little is usually financially oppressed and is inapt to actively engage in the economic prosperity of the country. Under the dialectic definition of freedom, this laborer was not forced to come to Dubai and work. They, however, chose to take this meagerly paid job in order to free themselves from the economic oppression existing in their own country so that they can

relatively prosper. Put in different terms, this 700 USD can make him and his family better prosper in their home country; so they do it.

6. Freedom: An End or a Means?

The novelty suggested by this dialectic concept of freedom dwells in the fact that it depicts specific guidelines of the true definition of freedom (a specific form) while at the same time allowing enough margin of malleability for subjective desires³ that which creates the content of freedom. Thus, with our new concept of Dialectic Freedom, freedom is no more an end of and by itself, it is a means to reach to human's commodious life and accordingly satisfy the desire of commodious living.

Hence, for the sake of an example, if we want to know whether a certain society has political freedom or not, we'd firstly ask if the society is free from political coercion; if this first instance is secured then we move to the second instance, are the people of this society living well? Here is where the malleability of this definition of freedom will come in to play: by deciding on what classifies a well living. With the realization that such a classification contains diverse contingencies in relation to the interpersonal-intrapersonal, inter-societal-intra-societal (only to name few variances) and much more, the dialectic definition of freedom was necessary to allow the concept of freedom to encompass the complexity of individual as well as society's experience of freedom.

➤ Criticisms Avoided with the New Concept of Dialectic Freedom:

With the novelty that this research adds to the concept of freedom major traditional criticisms of positive freedom can be avoided as well. With the dialectic conception of the term, freedom should not be a prescriptive power enforcing long-term noble ends negating with this its basic concept of setting people free. When an individual chooses to live on the margin of life, soaking with indolence and the triviality of providing their daily intake of food, this dialectic definition of freedom would not disdain him as a person enslaved by their laziness as would traditional positive definitions do. For, if according to this person, this life of indolence is what classifies as living well for them, then they are free, and the new concept of freedom would have by this respected each and every person's and each and every society's privacy.

This new dialectic approach would of course be a predicament regarding the view that takes human freedom as a value, a good and an end of and by itself. For example, we read Berlin creating an identified value of freedom that cannot be overrun by any other human concept of the sort. "Everything is what it is; liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience." Freedom as a source of value. The only sin for champions of this camp being limitation (Emerson, 1968). Thus, under this line of thought the Government's job would be to leave the citizen alone and to make sure that they are left alone by others (Murray, 1989).

³Subjective desire here can be the desire of a single individual or the subjective desire of a collectivity.

Another compelling argument that considers freedom as a form of a non-satiating good (Magri, 1998) where our desire for it is insatiable and regards freedom as a source value and not instrumental, comes from Tito Magri. Nonetheless, when closely examined, these theories fail to acknowledge the intra-human aspect of our desire to freedom⁴. For, I argue that freedom is indeed a non-satiating good only when there are other intelligent subjects around me (as the bearer of the insatiable desire for freedom) who have this same insatiable desire. Therefore, my insatiable desire for freedom at this point is the result of my presence around subjects sharing this same desire; it is in fact my mere presence among them that made me have this desire in the first place. Since, in this social context, if I do not desire my freedom, others' freedom would infringe on mine and thus leave me miserable. The aim is living well; therefore, this insatiable desire of freedom is an instrumental desire.

If however, my desire for freedom was truly insatiable and if freedom was indeed a non-satiating good, then this insatiable desire should persist with the same intensity when other insatiable subjects are not present; for example in the wilderness outside of society. But this desire does not persist. On the other hand, if this desire was truly insatiable and wants more and more freedom, then the general tendency of people in a society would have been to leave the crowd and go somewhere of optimal freedom; but they do not. If found in the wilderness outside a social group, a person, although enjoying their optimal form of freedom, they do not like it and would prefer to revert to life among the crowd where they can properly cater to their commodious desire (unless in rare cases, where life of the wilderness is the commodious life for its bearer). This would stand as evidence that freedom is not a non-satiating source value and that my desire for freedom is only insatiable inside a social context, and consequently, my desire of freedom is an instrumental desire in the service of our desire for commodious life.

Our desire for freedom might look insatiable because it is always paralleled with an insatiable desire. This however is a misconception since, as I see it, the insatiability that is omnipresent with the desire for freedom is an insatiability for a different property; namely for power. Put in a social context, the appropriation of freedom is directly proportional to the appropriation of power, freedom is an empowering property. The more freedom I have the more powerful I am. This in fact is a common acknowledgement in political theory. But, if we consider freedom in terms of the commodious desire's dialectic developmental scale, we would be able to continue the equation and say, freedom is desired because it is empowering for its bearer, and since it is empowering, it will help its bearer better satisfy their commodious desires and consequently reverting the role of freedom in the equation to the mere instrumental level. It is to be noticed here that we can always count on the human desire of happiness and commodious life to always employ their freedom in the most convenient way to satisfy their own desire and

⁴“It takes at least two before freedom can be discussed in a meaningful way”.

thus not sacrifice their freedom for a “lesser or bogus good.” (Putterman, 2006) As such the desire of commodious life will preserve the privacy and the subjectivity of such kind of freedom.

7. Conclusion

I have thus introduced a rather new concept of freedom that is characterized by dynamism and flexibility while encompassing aspects from traditional concepts. Before concluding my argument I will now discuss some criticisms that might be raised against the concept of Dialectic Freedom.

➤ Negative Freedom against Dialectic Freedom:

Some opponents of the negative camp of freedom consider that freedom lies in the myriad of choices that one has: the more choices or options one has the more free they are. This was severely criticized by advocates of positive freedom on the grounds that, under this definition, everyone is free: even a person at the gunpoint has the choice to die or to do what is told. In an attempt to save the day from such criticism Berlin added that freedom does not reside in making choice, it resides in making “unforced” choices (Berlin, 1960). This however was not convincing for the supporters of positive freedom since for them freedom describes a choice rather than is a choice. They saw the key effect on freedom is to see how “significant” the choice is, thus bringing back to life what is considered the core of their theory, the consequence of the freedom.

The question that this dialectic concept of freedom asks does not concern the number of choices available to one, but rather “how significant are these choices to one’s happiness?” For, I find it very important to specify what the free choice is significant for? Which is something that opponents of positive freedom fall short from doing?

➤ Positive Freedom against Dialectic Freedom:

Opponents of positive freedom would argue however, that dialectic freedom cannot prevent one’s significant choice from being detrimental to other people since it entails too much subjectivity with it and that the objective aspect which is usually employed through law enforcement to prevent such cases is inexistent.

To answer this criticism I evoke the *dialectic nature* of the concept of freedom introduced in this paper. For, this dialectic relation between my desire to be free and my desire to be happy is a dynamic relation that is incessantly developing by virtue of different relations between one human and another. Thus, if what is significant for my happiness is hurtful to someone else, and considering that I live in a dialectically free society, it is the collective happiness of others that would stand in the way and prevent me from doing it. Notice that the difference between this collectivity here and democracy is that this collectivity, since it is the outcome of the dialectic relation of freedom among people, it can cater to the individual’s desires better than democracy.

➤ Final Word:

It is to be noted that, with dialect freedom, I have introduced a new concept of

freedom that can very well exist under any political system in as much as this system is able to cater to the individual's desire of commodious living. The novelty suggested by this new system is that it regards freedom as a way to people's happiness and not the end that procures happiness. This, in fact, is a noteworthy difference between the dialectic concept of freedom and others that consider rigid laws and regulations as the only guardian of individual freedom (positive freedom) or those who consider that political freedom is the one necessary condition for the true concept of freedom to be realized (negative freedom).

With the new concept of dialectic freedom one can better understand why people living in Dubai are happy. The kind of freedom that prevails in this city satisfies citizen's desire of commodious living and thus makes people happy. It is a form of dialectic freedom.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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