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<sup>b</sup>  
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in

**The Achievement of Women's Liberty  
as Self-Realization:  
from Masculinist Concepts of Freedom towards  
Feminist Neo-Republicanism**

Candidate:

NATASCIA LEOTTA-CASCONE

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. MARKUS STEPANIANS

University of Bern

Co-Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. MONIKA BETZLER

LM-Universität München

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*To my Mom,*

*whose boundless love and unconditional support have guided me through every choice, and who taught me the power of perseverance, the pursuit of dreams, the priceless gift of freedom, and the deep importance of respecting others.*

*To my Husband,*

*who has revealed to me the true depths of love, who from the very first moment has been my constant support, my source of joy and smile, and the unwavering strength that has carried me through the challenges of the past months.*

*To my Daughter,*

*who is now nestled in my belly, whose crazy movements have been my companion through the final steps of this dissertation. I will do my best to teach her the values of freedom and respect for all forms of diversities.*

*I can't wait for the day to hold you in my arms and love you wholeheartedly.*

*To my Destiny,*

*for blessing me with this life overflowing with Love, Happiness and Fulfillment!*

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## PREFACE

Since childhood, the themes of freedom and self-realization have been integral to my life, instilled by the values my mother taught me. These values drove me in 2007 to leave my hometown of Naples for a unique cultural exchange experience in Switzerland. In 2014, I made the definitive move to begin my master's degree at the University of Bern. The journey was challenging and filled with obstacles, but I never considered giving up. My desire to realize my potential and break free from cultural stereotypes was unwavering.

From the very first lecture with Prof. Dr. Markus Stepanians, I developed a profound passion for philosophy. It has taught me to enter a different dimension of thought, enriching both my mind and soul. The concept of freedom from obstacles imposed by others and those we impose on ourselves, without seizing the opportunities that society and life offer because we are prisoners of our own limitations, captivated me. This theme, particularly concerning the struggles and social barriers faced by women, became the focus of my research. Women often find it increasingly difficult to understand what it means to fulfill their true desires and be authentic. Through political philosophy theories and feminist studies, I decided to delve deeper into these topics in my dissertation.

Had someone shown me a crystal ball a few years ago, revealing how I would reach the end of this journey, I would never have believed it. Today, in 2024, I find myself living situations that were once mere theoretical examples in my thesis. In a few months, I will become a mom, and the dilemma between professional and domestic life, and what it means to be authentically myself, has often crossed my mind. Our society is still deeply stereotyped, with traditional roles assigning women to the domestic sphere and men to the professional realm. As I will discuss in this dissertation, it is crucial for the state, companies, and society to provide the necessary opportunities for individuals to make choices that best represent their authenticity. For instance, if a woman decides to work full-time, there should be

adequate childcare facilities available. Likewise, fathers should have the option to work more from home or reduce their working hours without jeopardizing their careers. Achieving a work-life balance is vital today, and I am fortunate to have favorable conditions, thanks to a husband with whom I share an equal partnership and a workplace that supports family needs.

On this journey, and in the future endeavors that await me, I wish to express my gratitude to:

My supervisor, Prof. Dr. Markus Stepanians, for his constant trust and support from the very first day until now. A person who exemplifies not only competence and professionalism but also exceptional humanity and understanding.

The Graduate School Gender Studies, which provided a feminist perspective and helped me develop solid arguments and respond to various feminist critiques.

The team at the CCDI of the University of St. Gallen, who gave me trust, valued my skills, and helped broaden my vision on gender equity in business and power dynamics.

My family and my best friends, who have always encouraged me with their admiration and support.

My mom, who taught me the value of freedom and authenticity, helped turn my dreams into reality, and stood by me during difficult moments. She guided me to see the gaps in my thinking of this dissertation and loved me unconditionally through it all.

My husband, who quickly understood all my needs without ever making me feel a burden. He has been my unwavering support, filling my days with energy and love. This is just the beginning of our wonderful life together, where my admiration and love for you will only grow exponentially.

My little girl Marea, who will be born in a few weeks, whose movements over the past months have filled me with the strength and energy to conclude this journey in the best possible way. I hope to become a mother who can teach you the values of freedom and respect for all diversities, just as my mom did for me.

What can I say more? Today, there is only one feeling that can encapsulate this moment: I have achieved my liberty as self-realization.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. *Masculinist* concepts of freedom

Since ancient times the discussion about the meaning of *freedom* has been present in the philosophical debate.<sup>1</sup> This *term* often figures in political discussions as though it is an idea with a single transparently clear meaning, but this is far from being the case. Together with the ambiguity of the term in its popular usage, a vast disagreement among political philosophers arises over its different meanings. The concept of freedom is complex due to the several aspects and dimensions it embodied, each of which is at least somewhat open to rival interpretations. What adds significantly to this complexity is the fact that these various dimensions fail to follow a clear demarcation that distinguishes one concept from another.

Throughout history several competing definitions of *freedom*, or *liberty* have been proposed.<sup>2</sup> There is a vast literature concerning these concepts and their interpretations, but the most widely used contemporary categorizations of freedom is the dichotomy between *negative* and *positive* notions. The idea of distinguishing between these two distinct concepts is defended in depth by Isaiah Berlin in his famous work “*Two Concepts of Liberty*”.<sup>3</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the main philosophical collection on social and political freedom, see Carter Ian; Kramer, Matthew H. & Steiner, Hillel (eds.) (2007). *Freedom: A Philosophical Anthology*. Blackwell. In this anthology several extracts from numerous works are assembled: from the main authors who address the difference between negative and positive freedom (main focus of this dissertation), going through the concept of freedom associated to morality, autonomy or coercion.

<sup>2</sup> As commonly used by most political and social philosophers, in this dissertation I will refer to the terms *liberty* and *freedom* interchangeably. Although some attempts have been made to distinguish their meanings (see Hiruta, K. (2014). The Meaning and Value of Freedom: Berlin contra Arendt. *The European Legacy*, 19(7), 854–868; Pitkin, H., 1988, ‘Are Freedom and Liberty Twins?’, *Political Theory*, 16: 523–52; Williams, B., (2001), ‘From Freedom to Liberty: The Construction of a Political Value’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 30: 3–26.) generally speaking, these have not caught on. In one of the masterpieces about liberty, Isaiah Berlin argues that both terms are synonymous (Berlin, I. (1969a). Two Concepts of Liberty. In I. Berlin, *Four essays on liberty*. Oxford University Press, p.121). See also Carter, Ian, Positive and Negative Liberty, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>3</sup> Berlin’s work clearly aligns with key principles of liberalism, which emphasizes protection of individual rights and the limited government intervention. Indeed, his idea of negative liberty refers the absence of coercion and interference in individuals’ lives by the state or other entities. His critique of totalitarianism, as I will amply discuss later, solidified his reputation as a liberal thinker (Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 1969, Oxford University Press: 118-172)



describes negative freedom as *non-interference*, where people are free to the extent that their choices are “not interfered with”; in other words, if they are prevented or limited by the presence of *external* obstacles or constraints.<sup>4</sup> For negative-liberty theorists, the focus relies on whether an individual is prevented from “doing something”, as well as whether various courses of action are “open to people”.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, for those theorists who support positive freedom, the question whether those courses of action have been taken or not is not the main aim to reach. What is relevant is the manner in which an individual has chosen an action or a course of action. According to Berlin, positive liberty consists in *being one’s own master*, which can be explained as making decisions in life that depend *merely* on oneself without any influence of *external forces of “whatever” kind*.

In the philosophical literature, many different accounts of positive freedom have been proposed, ranging from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Georg W. F. Hegel and Karl Marx to James Mill and Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>6</sup> Besides classical philosophers, numerous scholars have given their contribution in defining positive liberty. Thomas Hill Green, for instance, characterizes it as the achievement of “harmony with the true law of one’s being”<sup>7</sup>; while Bernard Bosanquet examines it as the outcome of reaching one’s real or ideal self.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing the valuable insights and contributions of these philosophers in the analysis and distinction of positive from negative freedom, Quentin Skinner argues that individuals can achieve their full potential and realize their ideal of *self* only by following the most fulfilling way of life.<sup>9</sup> Skinner interprets Berlin’s notion of positive freedom “as *self-realization* and above all as *self-perfection*”, suggesting that an individual’s freedom lies in their fullest realization of themselves.<sup>10</sup> This idea is clearly supported by Berlin’s claim that “whatever is the true goal of man...must be identical with his freedom”.<sup>11</sup>

Despite Skinner’s effort to provide an exhaustive definition of positive liberty, its demonstration remains elusive. Skinner briefly touches upon the notion of self-realization but lacks a thorough explanation of its significance. To contrast, Berlin includes multiple dimensions into his concept, extending beyond mere notions of self-realization and self-

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<sup>4</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.122

<sup>5</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.122

<sup>6</sup> Christman, J. (2020). Autonomy in moral and political philosophy, and Buss, S., & Westlund, A. (2018). Personal autonomy, both in E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

<sup>7</sup> Green, T. H. (2007). On the different senses of freedom as applied to will and to the moral progress of man. In I. Carter, M. H. Kramer, & H. Steiner (Eds.), *Freedom: A philosophical anthology*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, p. 30

<sup>8</sup> Quentin Skinner refers to Bonanquet’s analysis as influenced by T. H. Green’s concept of positive freedom, (Skinner, Q. (2001). A Third Concept of Liberty. Proceedings of the British Academy, p.117)

<sup>9</sup> Skinner, A Third Concept, p.240

<sup>10</sup> Skinner, A Third Concept, p.239-240

<sup>11</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.133

mastery. However, the complexity of Berlin's positive liberty relies not only in the challenge of defining *self-mastery* but also in the implications it carries. Indeed, the positive conception of liberty poses a danger of authoritarianism because it *may* require individuals to align their *true* will with that of the society as a whole.<sup>12</sup> Due to the lack of individual responsibility and rational self-perfection, Berlin argues there is a risk that the state could force people to follow *rationality* and thus to realize their true selves. In doing so, the state could liberate them from their merely empirical desires. Despite the *apparently* noble ideal of freedom as self-mastery and self-realization, such justification of oppression in the name of liberty could inadvertently foster totalitarian regimes, acting in the name of a collective role. This is precisely the outcome Berlin seeks to prevent by omitting the promotion of positive liberty from his framework.

Contrary to Berlin's perspective, positive liberty is not solely burdened with negative consequences for individuals but can also be interpreted as an additional value. In this direction, Charles Taylor offers an alternative explanation of positive freedom, defined as an *exercise-concept*, which avoids the dangerous implications of authoritarianism. According to Taylor, positive freedom is concerned with a view of liberty that involves the *exercising control over one's life*, *i.e.* a person is free "only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life".<sup>13</sup> In this framework, a person's level of freedom, understood as *self-realization*, is directly linked to their ability to shape their life according to their own design. To put it differently, individuals achieve a personal level of self-realization, and hence freedom, by retaining and exercising a certain level of control over her life.

If on one side Berlin categorically rejects the promotion of positive liberty within this theory due to its potential to foster authoritarianism through the endorsement of collective rule; on the other side, the perspective advocated by Charles Taylor, which frames positive liberty as self-realization, as supported by Charles Taylor, loses this danger. In this dissertation, I will extensively explore these distinctions and will offer comprehensive explanations to support my argument against the traditional reliance on Berlin's classic formulation of positive liberty. Instead, I will advocate for Taylor's formulation as *exercise state*, which links an individual's freedom to their sense of self-realization.<sup>14</sup>

After providing an overview of what the concept of positive liberty implicates, I now

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<sup>12</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.184

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, Taylor, C. (1985). What's Wrong with Negative Liberty. In C. Taylor (Ed.), *Philosophy and Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, p.213

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*

turn my attention to the other side of the same coin, namely on negative freedom. As mentioned earlier, Berlin considers freedom as *non-interference*, indicating that individuals are free to the extent that their choices are “not interfered with” or that they are prevented or limited by the presence of *external* constraints. In addition to this perspective, another significant interpretation to define negative freedom, which has reserved huge literature in political philosophy, derives from neo-Roman republicanism with its notion of freedom as *non-domination*.<sup>15</sup> The pioneer of this theory is Philip Pettit, who interviews his republican notion of liberty with some elements of negative liberty but by creating a completely new and nuanced concept of freedom.

According to Pettit, Berlin’s distinction between positive and negative freedom as non-interference overlooks a crucial aspect. Instead of solely focusing on freedom as the absence of *actual* intervention, Pettit defines freedom as absence of *arbitrary power* and as *non-domination*. Domination arises not only from actual interference (by the state or by some other powerful entities) but also from the maintenance of conditions of intimidation, manipulation and control. The central concern in his theory is ensuring that individuals does not live at the whim of a *master*. This entails the absence of the absence of the *capacity* to interfere in others’ affairs on an arbitrary basis, thus preventing anyone from living under the dependency of the will of others.<sup>16</sup>

Thanks to scholars like Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner, the republican understanding of freedom has revived the discussion of liberty over the last two decades by providing political philosophers with an alternative account on individual liberty different from the traditional view of non-interference.<sup>17</sup> Pettit emphasizes that the concept of non-domination is more adequate and robust than non-interference, as the latter leaves room for someone to wield arbitrary power over another.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> While neo-republicanism shares many core principles with traditional republicanism, it offers additional insights to address contemporary challenges in democratic societies. A key difference between republicanism and neo-republicanism, which is central to this dissertation, lies in their approaches to freedom. Traditional republicanism emphasizes civic virtue and active participation in government but does not prioritize individual freedom to the same extent as liberalism. (For further details on the role of civic virtue in republican theories, see Duhamel, J. (2015). The uses and abuses of virtue in contemporary republicanism: Philip Pettit and the temptation of perfectionism. *Revue française de science politique*, 65, 5-25.) In contrast, neo-republicanism addresses this gap and argues that protecting citizens from domination is essential for achieving a genuinely free and democratic society (For more historical context on this difference, see the Introduction “The republic, old and new” in Philip Pettit (2012a). *On the People’s Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1-25).

<sup>16</sup> Philip Pettit describes in detail his concept of freedom as absence of arbitrary power and as non-domination in several articles and in his two main masterpieces: Pettit, Philip, 1997, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford Political Theory, Clarendon Press: 51-79; Pettit, Philip, 2012. *On the People’s Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 26-74

<sup>17</sup> Quentin Skinner deeply develops his theory of freedom in his article “Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power”, 2008 *Republicanism and Political Theory*, Blackwell: 83-101

<sup>18</sup> Pettit, Philip (2011). The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference: The Case of Isaiah Berlin, *Ethics* 121 (4): 693-716

The neo-republican notion of liberty aims to eliminate domination by addressing the root causes of dependency and vulnerability. Pettit's critique of Berlin's idea of freedom as non-interference highlights the potential limitations of the latter, which may overlook various forms of obstacles and power dynamics experienced by individuals. In this dissertation, I advocate for the neo-republican current of thought, which prioritizes the absence of domination and dependence on others' arbitrary will and argue against views that reduce freedom to a mere absence of actual interference.

The negative concept of freedom, whether defined as non-interference or as non-domination, is considered the most widespread way to identify freedom in political philosophy. To contrast, advocates of the positive conception of liberty have generally been in the minority. The primary reasons why political philosophers have preferred to *exclude* the *positive* notion within a theory of freedom can be summarized in three points.

The first reason is related to the challenge to define *its* meaning, given the multitude elements placed under the umbrella of *positive freedom*, including self-realization, self-determination, psychological liberty, autonomy, self-consciousness, and more. There is a lack of consensus on the precise definition of positive freedom and which of these elements it embraces. Additionally, another issue arises from the difficulty in clearly explaining each of these expressions. For instance, one example for this confusion and imprecision is the definition offered by Berlin, which I will focus in the first part of *Chapter II*.

The second complication arises from the widespread belief that a political philosopher should solely focus on the negative aspect of freedom. According to this view, their primary concern should be the extent to which individuals or groups within a society experience limitations on their liberty imposed by external entities.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, advocates of positive freedom argue that attention should also be paid to internal factors influencing someone's actions, such as the psychology or morality of each individual. This ongoing debate between supporters of negative and positive freedom theory remains one of the most contentious issues in political philosophy, raising questions such as: Is positive freedom a political concept? Is it feasible for the state to actively promote the positive freedom of citizens? And if so, is it desirable for the state to do so?<sup>20</sup> I will address these questions throughout the entirety of this dissertation.

The third and final reason why most political theorists have refrained from

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<sup>19</sup> Carter, I. (2022). Positive and negative liberty. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition)

<sup>20</sup> Selection from the list of questions provided by Ian Carter in his article, *Positive and Negative Liberty* (just mentioned above)

advocating for positive freedom is closely tied to the notion that this form of liberty presents inherent challenges. Those arise not only from the difficulty in clearly defining its essence or establishing its significance as a political and social ideal, as previously discussed, but also from the potential implications it entails. For instance, Berlin argues that the ideal of positive freedom can *easily* be exploited by governmental authorities to justify imposing significant constraints on citizens' negative freedom. This justification often revolves around the argument that individuals cannot achieve the level of being true masters of themselves through their own efforts alone.<sup>21</sup> In this scenario the danger of authoritarianism represents one of the primary concerns driving the reluctance to promote positive freedom.

My argument begins with the premise that positive liberty holds *intrinsic* value for individuals and therefore cannot be excluded from a *compounded* theory of freedom. Otherwise, such a theory would be incomplete. Building on Pettit's concept of freedom as non-domination, I will argue that his theory provides a more complete understanding of liberty by *expanding* the range of external constraints that may limit individual freedom. Thus, I agree that Pettit's republican model of non-domination is preferable and constitutes a more adequate form of negative liberty compared to the liberal account of freedom as non-interference. Despite the *superiority* of Pettit's perspective, I argue that his idea of non-domination does not represent a *complete* theory of freedom because it fails to incorporate the *active* promotion of positive liberty. Pettit suggests that achieving positive liberty might *derive* from promoting republican freedom. In his seminal work 'Republicanism', Pettit claims that "freedom as personal self-mastery ought to be *facilitated, if not actively promoted*, under a state that ensures freedom as non-domination".<sup>22</sup> While freedom as self-mastery is a richer ideal than freedom as non-domination, there can be non-domination without self-mastery, but "there can hardly be any meaningful form of self-mastery without non-domination".<sup>23</sup>

Despite Pettit's valuable attempt to include the positive notion, in this dissertation I aim to demonstrate that freedom as non-domination is unable to *sufficiently* ensure positive freedom, contrary to Pettit's claim. I argue instead that the attainment of positive liberty is crucial in people's lives and must be included in any theory of individual liberty. Specifically, I will show that although Pettit's theory shares some similarities with Taylor's theory, particularly regarding the role of political participation, it lacks a crucial element

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<sup>21</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p. 141-144

<sup>22</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*

indispensable in a *compounded* theory of liberty: the achievement of freedom as self-realization. Specifically, it fails to address threats to liberty that are not caused by others but arise from internal obstacles within oneself. We cannot think of freedom solely in negative terms, as it is essential to consider the individual inner aspect, when evaluating the worth of any theory of liberty. Therefore, I aim to address the limitations of the conception of freedom affirmed by most negative-liberty philosophers, particularly within Pettit's theory, and to promote self-realization as an indispensable element of individual freedom.

## 2. From male domination to feminist republicanism

The title I gave to the previous section characterizes the concepts of freedom as *masculinist*.<sup>24</sup> But why is this the case? These notions, as found within canonical texts of political philosophy, were not only developed and framed predominantly by white, male philosophers, but they also reflect the historical marginalization of women from philosophical and political discourse. This exclusion has profound implications, mainly because the classical notions of freedom fail to adequately capture or explain the unique and systemic nature of women's domination. Both liberal and republican traditional frameworks have thus been shaped by a distinctly masculine perspective, one that often overlooks or marginalizes the unique experiences and struggles of women under patriarchal dominance. In line with this argument, Lena Halldenius argues that Berlin's binary dichotomy of freedom represents a "trap for feminists" because it cannot fully address the myriad constraints women have historically faced.<sup>25</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir, one of the most influential authors of feminist literature, famously claimed in her treatise *The Second Sex*, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute. She is the Other".<sup>26</sup> With this dichotomy, Beauvoir illustrates the patriarchal structure prevalent in society where men are positioned as the primary or dominant subjects, while women are regarded as secondary, different and often marginalized in relation to men. Historically,

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<sup>24</sup> I have coined this term from Nancy Hirschmann's first chapter of her book *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.3

<sup>25</sup> Halldenius, Lena (2014). Freedom Fit for a Feminist? On the Feminist Potential of Quentin Skinner's Conception of Republican Freedom. *Redescriptions*, 17 (1), p.90

<sup>26</sup> *The Second Sex* was a pioneering and transformative work that had a profound impact on feminist thought and the broader struggle for gender equality. The book provided a comprehensive and systematic examination of the historical, social, and psychological factors contributing to women's oppression. Simone de Beauvoir explored how women had been relegated to a secondary status throughout history and very interestingly, with her famous quotation "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", she highlighted the role of socialization in constructing gender roles, challenging the notion that these roles were natural or biologically determined. (Beauvoir, S., *The Second Sex*. Parshley HM (trans and ed) New York: Vintage Books. Originally published 1949 as *Le deuxième sexe*, 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, p.26)

women have been dominated in all aspects of life, largely confined to the private sphere as bearers of children, while men occupied the public sphere. In this context, traditional religious and cultural norms reinforced this division, emphasizing the importance of women's roles within the family. Allowing women to participate in public life and granting them rights, such as the right to vote, was seen as a threat to the patriarchal order and the ideal of domesticity.

An exceptional figure in this regard is Mary Wollstonecraft, pioneer of the feminist movement in the 18th century.<sup>27</sup> Her contributions were significant as she tackled the conditions of women in her time, advocating for their entitlement to liberties and citizenship. I will deeply focus on this author, analyzed as the historical representative of republican ideology in feminist thought.

In the historical male-dominated society women's opportunities for an independent life outside the family were thus extremely limited. Consequently, feminist movement's initial demands focused primarily on political rights, eventually expanding to address issues in both the public and private spheres. They sought access to education, fought against domestic oppression within marriage, campaigned against sexist laws, and demanded political representation, equal pay, and equal labor opportunities.<sup>28</sup> The women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s marked a significant shift, as feminism began to influence society more broadly.<sup>29</sup> Feminists aimed to dismantle male hegemony and open all doors of society that had historically been closed to women. Nowadays, feminism is recognized as both an intellectual commitment and a social and political movement that seeks to end sexism and oppression in all forms, striving to achieve political, economic, personal and social equality for all genders.

Due to this advancement, it is evident that addressing freedom solely within the

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<sup>27</sup> *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft, is a groundbreaking work in feminist literature that critiques societal constraints on women and advocates for their education and equal participation in society. Wollstonecraft argued that women's perceived inferiority was due to a lack of education and socialization rather than biological differences, and she emphasized that empowering women through education would end their subjugation and benefit society as a whole (Wollstonecraft, M. (1998). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. New York: Norton. Original work published 1792)

<sup>28</sup> The struggle to achieve basic political rights during the period from the mid-nineteenth century until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 counts as "First Wave" feminism. Feminism waned between the two world wars, to be "revived" in the late 1960s and early 1970s as "Second Wave" feminism. In this second wave, feminists pushed beyond the early quest for political rights to fight for greater equality across the board, e.g., in education, the workplace, and at home (McAfee, Noëlle, Ann Garry, Anita Superson, Heidi Grasswick, and Serene Khader, *Feminist Philosophy*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2024 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.))

<sup>29</sup> "The personal is political" is a slogan from the feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, emphasizing that personal experiences, especially those involving gender-based oppression and discrimination, are linked to broader political and societal structures. This concept, developed during the second wave of feminism, highlights how personal issues like domestic roles, reproductive rights, sexual autonomy, and interpersonal relationships are influenced by and embedded in larger societal power dynamics and cultural norms (McAfee, Noëlle and Katie B. Howard, *Feminist Political Philosophy*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.)).

political sphere is too limited to encompass the full scope of women's struggle. The concepts of non-interference and non-domination, while valuable in certain contexts, do not fully capture the nuances of female subjugation. What becomes crucial in this context is thus addressing the internal realm and the development of true and authentic desires that lead to a certain action. It is inconceivable to discuss feminist freedom without considering their self-realization and overcoming of internal obstacles. In this dissertation I will show how women's domination supports my argument that a *compounded* concept of freedom needs to include both positive and negative notions of freedom. But which framework could better embrace these needs?

In the philosophical discourse, feminist theories have historically found more *alliance* with liberal ideologies than with republican ones. This is primarily because republican and feminist theories have encountered significant challenges due to their divergent ideologies. There are several reasons for this antagonism, but two are particularly noteworthy to give a general overview. First, liberal theories have placed a greater emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, which feminist theorists view as crucial for promoting women's autonomy and self-determination.<sup>30</sup> Second, most feminist theorists have criticized the republican focus on the political sphere, civic virtue and political participation, arguing that the public sphere has often excluded and marginalized women and other underrepresented groups. For instance, in historical republics like the Ancient Greek and the Roman Empire, in the time of Renaissance in Italy, and in the late eighteenth-century in America, citizenship and political freedoms were restricted to a relatively small subset of the population, limited to "properties males" and excluding "the others", referred to slaves and women.<sup>31</sup> This exclusion was perceived by feminist philosophers as perpetuating gendered stereotypes and expectations about women's roles and responsibilities.

The historical antagonism between republicanism and feminism in political philosophy mainly derives from feminists' disinterest in exploring contemporary applications of republican ideas. Many feminists probably were concerned that embracing the republican tradition would have carried "too much historical baggage".<sup>32</sup> However, in recent years, some feminist philosophers have attempted to bridge this gap, often referencing figures like Mary Wollstonecraft and incorporating the neo-republican ideology. Authors like Anne Phillips, Marilyn Friedman, Lena Halldenius and M. Victoria Costa have

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<sup>30</sup> For further details, see Baehr, Amy R., Liberal Feminism, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>31</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, viii; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.82

<sup>32</sup> Costa, M. Victoria (2013). Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, *Hypatia*, vol. 28 (4), p. 921-923



highlighted the positive implications of using the notion of freedom as non-domination to challenge patriarchal power structures.<sup>33</sup> However, I will argue that this exploration remains somewhat limited, overlooking key aspects of neo-republican theory and undervaluing Pettit's contributions.

Contrary to the current direction, this dissertation aims to demonstrate how Pettit's neo-republicanism can offer a different perspective and address most feminist critiques of classical republicanism. Furthermore, Pettit's theory can overcome its perceived masculinist bias and become more inclusive and *women-friendly*. Domination is a common element in both feminism and neo-republicanism, although they analyze it from different perspectives. While classical republicanism initially addresses domination primarily in the public sphere, Pettit expands his theory to include other spheres as well. The master/slave dichotomy is emblematic of this expansion, drawing analogies to husband/wife relationships and private domination. Pettit acknowledges women's challenges, acknowledging that feminists often frame their objections as opposition to the arbitrary interference women face from men.<sup>34</sup> He extensively references the experiences of women to illustrate that living under someone else's whims, even a benevolent master, is still a form of lack of freedom.

Despite this inclusion, Pettit fails to provide an extensive discussion of how his theory of domination might *specifically* serve feminist purposes. As briefly discussed, liberty should not only concern the absence of arbitrary interference with an individual's choices, but also ensure that those choices are true and authentic and free from any kind of domination. Despite his lack on positive freedom and the importance of self-realization, I will demonstrate that Pettit's theory has the potential to establish a foundation for a truly egalitarian framework that is well-suited to contemporary democracies and can enhance women's roles in society.

Another important element I will highlight in this dissertation is the central role that freedom should also play in feminist theories. Due to the masculinist roots of the concept, feminist scholars have emphasized the need to go beyond traditional liberal and republican understandings of freedom. Consequently, they have primarily focused on promoting equality and autonomy as key values for achieving gender justice. Although a few

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<sup>33</sup> Phillips, Anne, (2000). Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 279-293; Friedman, Marilyn (2008), Pettit's civic republicanism and male domination. *Republicanism and political theory*, edited by Laborde, Cécile and Maynor, John. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 246-268; Halldenius, Lena (2014). Freedom Fit for a Feminist? On the Feminist Potential of Quentin Skinner's Conception of Republican Freedom, *Redescriptions*, 17 (1), pp. 86-103; Costa, M. Victoria (2013), Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, *Hypatia*, vol. 28 (4), pp. 921-936

<sup>34</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.138-140

contemporary authors, such as Nancy Hirschmann and Linda Zerilli, have directly developed their theories around freedom – this perspective has generally been limited.<sup>35</sup> In this philosophical context, freedom has only played an indirect role in feminist literature. In contrast, I aim to show that Pettit’s theory is a valuable alternative, not only because it considers freedom as non-domination a central value, but also because it can address the core feminist values.

My aim to analyze feminist freedom thought a neo-republican lens is surely ambitious. Despite Pettit’s significant contribution, the last decades have seen a lack of scholarly work dedicated to exploring the alliance between feminism and neo-republicanism. My goal is to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis that highlights the compatibility and potential allyship between these two schools of thought. This will pave the way for further research and dialogue on creating an alternative framework that incorporates the strengths of both feminist and neo-republican theories.

### **3. Research question, methodology and other clarifications**

Throughout this dissertation, the questions I aim to address are the following: Is neo-republicanism as conceived by Philip Pettit with its negative concept of freedom as non-domination able to acknowledge the importance of positive liberty, and more specifically the vital role this kind of freedom plays in women’s self-realization? If not, which features must neo-republicanism include to make it more realistic, adequate and applicable to our actual societies, where the role of women is still challenged both in the private and public sphere? Is it feasible to rely on a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom to overcome this lack effectively?

When navigating feminist philosophy, we inevitably encounter a multitude of theories, encompassing a broad spectrum of perspectives and objectives.<sup>36</sup> As mentioned by Anne Phillips, “feminisms are various, ranging through almost every point on the

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<sup>35</sup> The emphasis on autonomy and equality thus has come at the expense of the concept of freedom and has only indirectly influenced feminist literature. In contrast to the traditional approach, in this dissertation I will refer to two authors who have analyzed their feminist theories with an emphasis on revitalizing and prioritizing freedom as the main value: Nancy Hirschmann in her book *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*, 2002, Princeton, Princeton University Press, and Linda Zerilli in *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, 2005, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

<sup>36</sup> For further details on the different approaches in feminist philosophy, see McAfee, Noëlle, Ann Garry, Anita Superson, Heidi Grasswick, and Serene Khader, *Feminist Philosophy*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2024 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.)

liberal/communitarian axis or every point in the modernity/post-modernity debate”.<sup>37</sup> If defining the concept of freedom poses challenges, diving into feminist theories seems to be even more complex. Consequently, despite the desire to acknowledge numerous influential feminist figures who have significantly contributed to the advancement of women’s emancipation, I faced the challenging task of narrowing my research and argument to merely focus on authors who I believe best serves my objectives. For this reason, in this dissertation I adopt a standard textualist methodology, closely analyzing key works by proponents of freedom such as Isaiah Berlin, Philip Pettit, Charles Taylor, Hannah Arendt, as well as classical and contemporary feminist philosophers, like Mary Wollstonecraft, Nancy Hirschmann, Linda Zerilli and many others. Given the extensive feminist literature and the profound implications of the historical and current subjugation of women, I had to narrow my attention on feminist philosophers who have engaged with or critiqued feminist approaches specifically within the framework of republicanism. My analysis includes also those authors who have offered both supportive and critical insights related to my argument for a feminist neo-republican notion of freedom. More precisely, I explore whether Pettit’s conception of freedom as non-domination aligns with or diverges from certain strands of feminist thought.

In addition to explaining the methodology and approach I aim to use in the following chapters, it is necessary to provide two further clarifications to address potential objections, that would - with no doubt - already arise from feminist philosophers: the definition of a normative and political notion of freedom and the role of intersectionality.

Regarding my focus on defining freedom, I will understand how this notion can be conceptualized and implemented from a moral and political perspective to promote values like social justice, equality, political legitimacy as well as self-realization. When arguing for a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom, this concept can be explored both politically and normatively.<sup>38</sup> On one side, I will describe how this kind of freedom should be understood and valued, identify the conditions necessary for individuals to be considered free, and outline the obligations of individuals and institutions in promoting and protecting

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<sup>37</sup> Phillips, Anne (2000). Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 8, no. 2, p.283

<sup>38</sup> Matthew H. Kramer shares a similar idea when highlighting the dual nature of freedom. He distinguishes between freedom as a normative condition, established by “authoritative norms, such as laws or moral precepts or institutional rules”, and freedom as a physical fact, concerning an individual’s ability to act without external constraint. Although I personally disagree with his view of freedom as *purely* negative, nor with his specific definitions of each form of freedom, I appreciate his recognition that these two aspects are often interconnected in discussions about liberty. Kramer emphasizes the importance of recognizing both perspectives in understanding the complexities of freedom and its implications for moral and political philosophy (Kramer, Matthew H., 2002, Freedom as Normative Condition, Freedom as a Physical Fact, *Current Legal Problems*: 55 (1): p. 43-63)

it.<sup>39</sup> On another side, I will also examine how feminist neo-republican freedom is practically protected and constrained within political systems and institutions.

At a first glance, some might argue that my argument seems to be purely normative because in the following chapters I do not extensively address the political implications of this notion. However, I can affirm this is not the case. To explain how these principles are applied and realized in political life and governance, I first needed to develop an alternative concept of freedom able to embrace women's needs and challenges both in private and political contexts. This allows me to provide a theoretical foundation, which I hope to be promising in philosophical literature. Only after establishing the clear components of a feminist neo-republican notion of freedom, I can effectively explain the practical implications of what the state and individuals should do to promote this value in the society. The lack of *equally* addressing both normative and political perspectives also derives from the fact that I acknowledge Pettit's contribution in developing political tools to ensure public non-domination and *partially* domination in the private sphere. Thus, I only mention what Pettit has already proposed, without repeating too much of what, I believe, he successfully discussed in his groundwork, "On the People's Terms". However, I will give my contribution on the role of the state in promoting women's self-realization, which is missing in Pettit's theory, in the final part of this dissertation.

To conclude this point, I believe that my interpretation highlights that we need to see freedom as both a normative and political tool, especially when analyzing the context of women's domination. Together, these perspectives contribute to a comprehensive understanding of freedom, integrating both normative and political dimensions.

The second point worth highlighting, as already emerged in the introduction of this dissertation, is my analysis of men and women as two homogeneous groups. Even without going into the specific arguments of this dissertation, this approach immediately raises the feminist objection regarding intersectionality. Feminist philosophy is not considered a monolithic or uniform field; rather, it is characterized by a variety of approaches and theories shaped by different historical, social, cultural and political contexts. Considering these different perspectives emphasizes the vital importance of intersectionality for feminist philosophers. This notion refers to the idea that women experience multiple forms of oppression and privilege based on their intersecting identities, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. Various feminist movements contribute to unique concerns and

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<sup>39</sup> I will align with what discussed by Frank Lovett and Philip Pettit in Neo-republicanism: A normative and institutional research program. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2009 12, 18-29.

priorities, resulting in diverse theories that address these complex interactions.<sup>40</sup> Feminist scholars often focus on specific groups of women in their theories, emphasizing the importance of context. For example, black feminists might highlight the unique experiences of black women, while postcolonial feminist scholars might critique Western feminism for often overlooking the cultural and historical specificities of women in developing countries. These scholars would argue for the importance of understanding how their history has shaped the current realities of *diverse* women.

My intention is however not to deny the importance of the specific experiences of oppression and discrimination faced by women. Nor do I want to overlook the significance of the context in which different types of domination operate. For instance, I agree that women in African and Islamic cultures face different challenges compared to those living in Western countries. In African cultures, women might deal with issues such as limited access to education, higher rates of child marriage and gender-based violence. In Islamic cultures, women might face restrictions on their mobility, limited political representation, and strict dress codes imposed by cultural or religious norms. In contrast, women in Western countries, while generally having more legal rights and social freedoms, often contend with issues such as a significant gender pay gap, underrepresentation in leadership positions, and workplace discrimination. These examples clearly illustrate the diverse and context-specific challenges that women face globally.

While feminist philosophers may use different theoretical frameworks and methods, and prioritize different issues and goals depending on their social and cultural contexts, they share a commitment to challenging the traditional philosophical discourse that have excluded women's experiences and perspective. What I want to highlight is the common struggle these scholars share to fight and end sexist domination. In this sense, I follow Hirschmann's definition of feminism "as a political and philosophical devotion to ending the oppression of people on the basis of gender and sex".<sup>41</sup> Despite their varied backgrounds, women face the common problem of being victims of a *masculinist* society and of experiencing domination. In this context, Friedman defines male domination as "as a type of action or pattern of behavior that individual males can enact toward individual females and as a behavioral pattern that can pervade whole societies".<sup>42</sup> Male domination derives indeed from

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<sup>40</sup> For further details, read section "Feminism and the Diversity of Women" in McAfee, Noëlle, Ann Garry, Anita Superson, Heidi Grasswick, and Serene Khader, *Feminist Philosophy, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2024 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.)

<sup>41</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.30

<sup>42</sup> Friedman, M. (2008), Pettit's civic republicanism and male domination, *Republicanism and Political Theory*, Cécile Laborde & John W. Maynor (eds.), Blackwell, p.247

historically established privileges attributed to men in both the public and private spheres.

Thinking in terms of a broad framework of domination means recognizing that these systems affect everyone in society, placing some people in privileged positions while others are in subordinate and vulnerable circumstances. This distinction seems to align with what Pettit defines as the master/slave dichotomy, distinguishing between those who *dominate* and those who *are dominated*. This same differentiation will be used when addressing women and men in the new framework of feminist neo-republicanism.

In our masculinist society, the argument that women are considered a dominated group in contrast to men as the dominating category does not undermine the validity of my point. Indeed, I do not aim to create a *universal* category of women, but to show that the concept of freedom in feminist neo-republicanism can be applied to *all* women and can address the intersectionality objection. However, my approach does not ignore the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences. Indeed, I hold that feminist neo-republicanism can be adapted and elaborated upon by various feminist theories to meet different needs and contexts, including for example those of trans and LGBTI individuals. By understanding the specific, concrete experiences of particular women in specific contexts, a more accurate and complete picture of their lives can be achieved. This approach would also address which kind of domination women in a given context might face, and address the way to address these unique challenges.

To conclude, I believe this new framework remains relevant and effective across different social and cultural environments while maintaining its foundational principles. With its core values and goals to flight male domination, feminist neo-republicanism represents a robust and versatile tool for promoting freedom in various settings.

#### **4. Structure and outline**

As highlighted in the subtitle of this dissertation, I will develop my argument by beginning with traditional liberal and republican understandings of freedom and then progressing toward defining the foundational principles for a new framework of feminist neo-republicanism.

In *Chapter I*, I provide an in-depth analysis of negative concepts of freedom: as non-interference, articulated by Isaiah Berlin, and as non-domination, advocated by Phillip Pettit. I conclude the chapter by demonstrating why non-domination is *better suited* than non-

interference as a negative approach for securing an individual's freedom.

In *Chapter II*, I explore the notion of positive liberty by focusing on Isaiah Berlin's formulation of self-mastery and Charles Taylor's definition as an exercise-concept. I will argue that Taylor's interpretation of positive liberty not only offers a clearer definition of liberty than Berlin's, but also removes its negative and potentially dangerous elements. In the final part of this chapter, I examine how the concept of non-domination might partially *incorporate* a notion of positive liberty, and in the meantime I highlight the limitations of his theory. I will conclude by emphasizing the importance for individuals to develop their freedom through self-realization.

*Chapter III* develops further my argument advocating for the relevance of positive freedom. I will explore the similarities and disparities between Taylor's concept of liberty and Pettit's freedom as non-domination. Using the illustration of women's subjugation across familial, social and public context will serve as an emblematic example to highlight what Pettit's notion of non-domination lacks in his theory, particularly concerning the overcoming of internal barriers hindering women's achievement of freedom as self-realization. I conclude this chapter by supporting a *compounded* concept of liberty, one that not only prioritizes freedom as non-domination but also enhances positive liberty.

*Chapter IV* focuses on the feminist critiques addressed against both republican and neo-republican theories. I will also explore attempts by feminist philosophers to overcome these criticisms, though their success has been limited. Despite this historical antagonism, I will show how Pettit's neo-republican concept of non-domination can effectively address many of these critiques, laying the groundwork for a *feasible* allyship between feminism and neo-republicanism.

In *Chapter V*, I establish the foundational framework for a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom. Additionally, I emphasize that the centrality of freedom as the primary value in feminist theories is crucial. I argue against their *narrower* focus on autonomy or equality, which does not adequately address the multifaceted challenges women face in both private and public spheres. Beyond traditional values such as social justice and political legitimacy, which Pettit successfully esteems, I will demonstrate *how* his theory can encompass positive liberty, empowering women to pursue self-realization.

Alongside summarizing the main points of my dissertation, the concluding section offers further insights into the state's role in providing support to women to develop their freedom as self-realization. I will briefly explore how this framework also applies to men, acknowledging their role as allies in advancing women's empowerment, whether in familial

dynamics or within the workplace. Moreover, I will acknowledge how men, like women, are also influenced by the prevailing masculinist societal norms, which shape their desires and ambitions due to traditional gender expectations. To conclude, I demonstrate how a feminist neo-republican notion of freedom is thus able to address the needs and aspirations of both men and women in their journey toward self-realization.

Through the new framework of feminist neo-republicanism, my aim is to offer valuable and alternative insights into philosophical discourse and feminist theories. This evolution aims to comprehensively address the challenges faced by women across *all* spheres of society, holding both the state and individuals, both men and women, accountable for the barriers to their empowerment. By illuminating these issues, I aspire to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable understanding of freedom for everyone.



## Chapter I

### NEGATIVE FREEDOM

#### 1.1 Liberal concept of freedom as non-interference

Isaiah Berlin's essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* is one of the most influential writings on the meaning of freedom in contemporary political philosophy.<sup>43</sup> It belongs to that class of texts which are intended primarily for a relatively narrow academic audience and yet succeed in reaching a much wider and more diverse readership. *Two Concepts of Liberty* highlights the dichotomy between positive and negative notions, aiming to explain the difference between two distinct approaches to political freedom. These contrasting perspectives were central to the ideological debates of Berlin's time and continue to be prominent in the current philosophical debate, representing "two rival and incompatible notions of liberty".<sup>44</sup> In his article, Berlin shows that a strong distinction needs to be marked between "not two different interpretations of a single concept, but two profoundly divergent and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life".<sup>45</sup> Despite the huge success of this article, the complexity of the text causes several difficulties in clearly defining important *components* of freedom, especially regarding the positive notion. However, in this chapter I will initially focus on the meaning and core assumptions of the negative notion of freedom, defined as *non-interference*, and explore why Berlin considers it a desirable aim to achieve in our society.

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<sup>43</sup> Isaiah Berlin (1909–97) was a naturalized British philosopher, historian of ideas, political theorist, educator, public intellectual and moralist, and essayist. He was renowned for his conversational brilliance, his defense of liberalism and pluralism, his opposition to political extremism and intellectual fanaticism, and his accessible, coruscating writings on people and ideas. His essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1958) contributed to a revival of interest in political theory in the English-speaking world, and remains one of the most influential and widely discussed texts in that field: admirers and critics agree that Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty remains, for better or worse, a basic starting point for discussions of the meaning and value of political freedom. Cherniss, Joshua and Henry Hardy, Isaiah Berlin, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>44</sup> Skinner, A Third Concept of Liberty, p.238

<sup>45</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.166

In Berlinian theory, negative liberty is understood as freedom *from*<sup>46</sup>, because it answers the following question: “What is the area within which the subject - a person or group of persons - is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference from other persons?”<sup>47</sup> The reason for using the label of being free *from* indicates that in this sense liberty is analyzed as mere *absence* of something (*i.e.* of obstacles, barriers, constraints or interference from others).<sup>48</sup> To put it differently, individuals are negatively free if they are not prevented by others from doing what they could otherwise do.

In accordance with classical liberals like John S. Mill, Benjamin Constant, and Alexis de Tocqueville, as clearly mentioned in his article, Berlin’s negative liberty as non-interference is considered a liberal concept of freedom.<sup>49</sup> However, Berlin’s reference of negative liberty theorists also includes authoritarian figures such as Thomas Hobbes and utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, who indeed oscillate between the liberal and authoritarian poles. The influence of these authors mostly emerges in Berlinian positive notion of freedom, which will be analyzed in *Chapter II*. To contrast, Berlin develops his negative concept by distancing it from Hobbes’ notion of freedom as absence of frustration, which states that liberty is restricted only when individuals are frustrated from choosing an option that they would actually desire.<sup>50</sup> For example, if the option that is obstructed is one that an individual does not desire, then she is still considered free. To contrast, Berlinian freedom is not simply a matter of what a person *wants* to do but rather it entails what a person *might want* to do.<sup>51</sup> As Pettit also explains, Berlin’s argument considers that “you must be positioned to do whatever you might happen to want or try to do among the relevant alternatives”.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Berlin supports a theory of freedom as “the absence of obstacles to *possible* choices and activities”.<sup>53</sup> What matters is not only the absence of *actual* obstacles, but also those that might limit my *potential* choices and actions “if I chose to do so”.<sup>54</sup> It is at this point that Berlin provides the ‘open door’ metaphor, where he describes that such freedom depends

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<sup>46</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.127

<sup>47</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.121-122

<sup>48</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.122

<sup>49</sup> Berlin mentions these authors whose ideologies align with his argument that there ought to “exist a certain minimum area of personal freedom which must on no account be violated; for if it is overstepped, the individual will find himself in an area too narrow for even that minimum development of his natural faculties which alone makes it possible to pursue, and even to conceive, the various ends which men hold good or right or sacred. It follows that a frontier must be drawn between the area of private life and that of public authority. Where it is to be drawn is a matter of argument, indeed of haggling...” Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.121

<sup>50</sup> Pettit, Pettit, P. (2011). The Instability of Freedom as Non-Interference: The Case of Isaiah Berlin. *Ethics*, 121, p. 695-697; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.28-30

<sup>51</sup> Berlin, Isaiah, ‘Introduction’ from *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) in Carter, Kramer, Hillden *Freedom: A Philosophical Anthology* (2007): 131-132

<sup>52</sup> Pettit, The Instability, p. 698; Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.130 (footnote n. 19)

<sup>53</sup> Berlin, Introduction, p.132; Pettit, The Instability, p.697-699

<sup>54</sup> Berlin, Introduction, p.132

on “how many doors are open, how open they are, and to what extent they are left opened, upon their relative importance in my life”.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the absence of such freedom is caused by the closing of these doors or the failure to open them, “as a result of alterable human practices or of the operation of human agencies.”<sup>56</sup> This depends “not just on whether the door you push on is open”.<sup>57</sup> If, for whatever noble reasons, it is decided to “block before him every door but one, [...], a man, a being with a life of his own to live” fails to be considered as such and as a consequence his human nature is violated.<sup>58</sup> As a consequence of this statement, Pettit suggests that Berlin’s argument of non-interference moves beyond Hobbes’ preference-satisfaction and allows the concepts of freedom to be a matter of different doors remaining open, and not just the one that a person ‘pushes on’.<sup>59</sup>

Another important aspect to highlight in Berlinian conception of negative liberty is the idea that coercion does not cover every form of *inability*, and that the political dimension is distinct from its physical, intellectual or economic counterparts.<sup>60</sup> For example, if an individual is unable to run because she was born without legs, this certainly is a limitation of her physical freedom. Furthermore, if one is unable to understand a discourse due to insufficient training, education or talent, this might be a limitation of that person’s intellectual freedom. If one is unable to afford bread and housing due to a lack of financial means, this may be a limitation on one’s economic freedom. These situations only make an individual *unable* to do certain things, not *unfree* to do them. But in none of these cases is the individual “enslaved” or “coerced”, unless these limitations derive from the actions of others.<sup>61</sup> Thus, coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which an individual could otherwise act. An individual lacks liberty only if she is “prevented from attaining a goal by human beings. Mere incapacity to attain a goal is not lack of political freedom”.<sup>62</sup>

What defines Berlin’s negative freedom is not the *ability* to do X, but the absence of interference, of prevention, of constraint, of oppression, and of obstacles that are inflicted by somebody *external* to the liberty-holder. However, this does not mean that negative liberty can only be negated by physical interference. A person can also be made unfree by external

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<sup>55</sup> Berlin, Introduction, p.132; Pettit, The Instability, p. 698; Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty p.127, p.130; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.32

<sup>56</sup> Berlin, Introduction, p.132

<sup>57</sup> Pettit, The Instability, p.698; Berlin Two Concepts of Liberty, p.127

<sup>58</sup> Berlin, Introduction, p.133

<sup>59</sup> Pettit, The Instability, p.702

<sup>60</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts, p.122-123

<sup>61</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts, p.122

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*

psychological constraints. Threats can provide an example of this case. A person may be prevented from doing X if she is told by someone that she will be killed if she does X; whether the killing is actually undertaken is irrelevant, as long as the threat is taken to be serious and credible. While the existence of negative liberty “depends ultimately on causal interactions among bodies,” some bodily interactions, for example A’s pointing a gun at B’s head, can make B’s desired action ineligible and negate B’s negative liberty. This famous example of the highwayman, which is already to be found in Locke, will be further described from a different angle in the next section in order to highlight the differences between liberal and republican concepts of liberty, and even further developed in the next chapter when referring to internal and psychological constraints. Regarding these kinds of obstacles, Berlin does not believe that fear and liberty are consistent. Thus, to be free to do X is different from being capable of doing X. A person may not be able to fly but this does not mean that he is unfree to fly. A person is said to be unfree if and only if her actions are constraints as result of “alterable human practices”. Paradigmatically, a person is made unfree by somebody’s deliberate interference; but a person may also be made unfree as an unintended consequence of “the operation of human agencies” as well. Let’s consider poverty. A person is unfree to obtain, as well as incapable of obtaining, food, water and other basic necessities if her poverty is caused by unjust social arrangements for which some members of the society are knowingly or unknowingly accountable. Her situation is different from a food crisis caused by a natural disaster, in which case the victims are simply incapable of obtaining, but are neither unfree nor free to obtain, basic necessities.<sup>63</sup>

To be free in the negative sense is to have opportunities, which I will show in the next chapter to be different from realizing them, which refers the positive notion. Berlin highlights the difference by repeatedly invoking the image of “open doors”, explained above. A free person has many open doors of various kinds in front of her. She may not be walking through a door, or may not have decided which door to walk through, but her inaction does not make her unfree or less free. This emblematic example and the concept of *intellectual or psychological inability* associated with it will be recalled in the next chapters to explain how women’s range of choices may be limited not because they are unable to enter a certain door, or to make a certain choice, but because of the presence of internal constraints.

Another recent development unforeseen by Berlin is worth noticing: the unexpected rise of competition to the negative side of the liberty spectrum. Berlin thought that there is a

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<sup>63</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.121-22

place for only one negative concept of liberty (the liberal one), where freedom is defined as non-interference. However, in the 1980–90’s, a revival of a republican political theory, the so-called “neo-Roman”, was proposed mostly by Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit, who proposed an alternative way to describe negative freedom. Unlike liberals, the neo-republicans employed a different sort of negation, that of *non*-domination. Anticipating what follows below, Pettit’s more radical views are particularly noteworthy, since, as he proposes, neo-republicanism is a genuine alternative not only to the negative notion of conception but also to a positive notion.<sup>64</sup>

Starting from the evolution of the concept of liberty from Hobbes’ mere absence of frustration to traditional account of freedom as non-interference, Pettit takes it a step further by introducing another *dimension*: freedom from arbitrary power and as non-domination. This is the focus of the next section.

## 1.2 Philip Pettit’s republican freedom as non-domination

Philip Pettit is considered the pioneer of the revival of the Italian-Atlantic republican tradition.<sup>65</sup> As a result of his new approach, republicanism became a “living force within contemporary philosophy”.<sup>66</sup> The republican ideal attaches a great deal of importance to ensuring that individuals are not *dominated* and thus cannot be interfered with on an arbitrary basis. What does it mean to be *dominated*? Under what circumstances does *arbitrary power* arise? Which role does the state play to avoid domination and how to limit its influence in citizens’ life? This section will examine this new model in depth by explaining why non-domination provides a robust and adequate lens for the discussion of freedom in negative terms.

Pettit’s interpretation of freedom possesses three specific conditions that are “sufficient for domination to occur”.<sup>67</sup> These are: a) the capacity to interfere, b) on an

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<sup>64</sup> Pettit, *The Instability*, p.716

<sup>65</sup> For the differences between the old and the new forms of republicanism, see Pettit, *One the People’s Terms*, p.5-8; Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.17-21; Skinner, *A Third Concept of Liberty*, p.243-255. For general discussion on “civic republicanism,” and its distinctiveness from participatory or so-called “civic humanist” republican theories, see Laborde, C., & Maynor, J. (2008). The republican contribution to contemporary political theory. In C. Laborde & J. Maynor (Eds.), *Republicanism and political theory*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1–9; and Lovett, F. (2022). Republicanism. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*

<sup>66</sup> Skinner, Q. (2008). Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power. In J. Maynor & C. Laborde (Eds.), *Republicanism and Political Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 83

<sup>67</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.52

arbitrary basis, and c) within “certain choices” a person is in a position to choose from.<sup>68</sup> Before beginning this discussion, some points need to be specified. First, due to Pettit’s lack of clarity of terms such as *certain choices*,<sup>69</sup> combined with the primary focus of my analysis, I have decided to examine only the first two conditions that instead Pettit explains deeply and clearly. The second point to clarify is that in this section, the use of concepts such as *capacity to interfere* and *arbitrary power* might often overlap. Since both elements are central to Pettit’s theory, it is challenging to examine them separately. In addition, a great role in the development of my argument in *Chapter III* and *Chapter IV* is played by Pettit’s decision to abandon the use of the wordings *arbitrary power* as the main denomination for the neo-republican concept of negative freedom and to use exclusively *freedom as non-domination*.<sup>70</sup> However, in this section I will *temporarily* disregard this difference. Lastly, I utilize an analysis of Pettit’s theory that centers on a slave’s relationship with his master, serving as an emblematic for explaining a status of domination and subjugation. Let me start by looking more closely at the two features of domination: the capacity to interfere, and the arbitrary basis.

According to Pettit, the paradigm of an *unfree* person is the slave who lives at the mercy of his master.<sup>71</sup> Supporters of the non-interference view of liberty, as just shown for Berlin, might say that to the extent that the master does not interfere with his slave, the latter enjoys some measures of freedom. The figure of the *gentle giant* used by Matthew Kramer is a clear example of what negative liberals support.<sup>72</sup> For these scholars “the soft-hearted dominator’s superiority is not in itself a source of unfreedom; everything hinges on what the

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<sup>68</sup> In addition to these three conditions, Pettit adds also a fourth one, namely *common knowledge* among the people involved. Situations of domination and relationships marked by a powerful and powerless will always be a matter of *shared awareness* between the parties. The establishment of a stable just rule of law, in which there is no situations in which a person thinks she can arbitrarily play, permits people to engage in social activities and interpersonal relations with the assurance that no other person can arbitrarily act upon them. This is because it becomes a socially recognized fact that each and every citizen of the republic is free to undertake their pursuits not because of the *good grace* of another, but rather as the result of a “publicly recognized right” (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.58-61,71)

<sup>69</sup> Pettit offers only two paragraphs in his book addressing the meaning of ‘certain’ choices. “And so, finally, to the third clause in our characterization of domination. The main thing to notice about this clause is that it mentions certain choices, not all choices. This highlights the fact that someone may dominate another in a certain domain of choice, in a certain sphere or aspect or period of their life, without doing so in all. The husband may dominate the wife in the home, the employer dominates the employee in the workplace, while that domination does not extend further—not, at least, with the same level of intensity.” (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.58)

<sup>70</sup> In Pettit’s masterpiece “On the People’s Terms” (2012), the use of freedom as non-domination takes center stage, marking a significant shift from his earlier focus on arbitrary power. Prior to this, in works like “Freedom as Antipower” (1989) and “Republicanism” (1997), Pettit primarily concentrated on exploring freedom as antipower or arbitrary interference. Pettit prefers to define arbitrary power as “*uncontrolled* interference practiced in accordance with the *arbitrium*, or ‘will’ of another; that is, interference that is exercised at the will of discretion of the interferer; interference that is uncontrolled by the person on the receiving end”. The reason for making this change depends on the fact that the definition “arbitrary power” has lost the connotation he meant to ascribe in” earlier republican usage”. (Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.58)

<sup>71</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.22

<sup>72</sup> Kramer, M. (2008). Liberty and domination. In C. Laborde & J. Maynor (Eds.), *Republicanism and political theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, p.41-42

dominator does with his superiority”.<sup>73</sup> To contrast, Pettit criticizes this idea by arguing that freedom must be understood not as the absence of *actual* impediment, but as the absence of the *capacity* to interfere in the affairs of others on an arbitrary basis.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the crucial role of *capacity* of the master to exercise power over the slave becomes clearer when we understand what having *arbitrary power* means. Therefore, I now proceed to explain the second condition of Pettit’s theory of domination, *on an arbitrary basis*, without forgetting that this analysis still embedded the constant presence of the master’s *capacity to interfere* over his slave.

Republican theorist Quentin Skinner develops his theory in line with Pettit’s ideal of non-domination by supporting the idea that a slave is governed by the “arbitrary power of a *dominus* or master”, which allows the *dominus* not only to interfere with the life of the slave, but, and more importantly, to do so according to his or her arbitrary will.<sup>75</sup> Skinner defines this power as the ability to interfere “in our activities without having to consider our interest”.<sup>76</sup> This is a view also espoused by Pettit. Indeed he states that a person who has the arbitrary power to interfere can do so without having to be concerned with the “interests, or the opinions, of the one affected”.<sup>77</sup> Specifically, Pettit insists that an act of interference is performed on an arbitrary basis “if it is subject just to the *arbitrium*, the decision or judgment of the agent, who was in a position to choose it or not choose it, at his pleasure”.<sup>78</sup> What makes the interference a problem is thus not solely its potential to worsen a person’s situation, but also in the fact that the interference occurs “on an arbitrary, unchecked basis”.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, arbitrary acts of interference are thus ones that are performed at the whim of another’s will without any consideration for the effects that the interference might have on the person affected.<sup>80</sup>

Domination refers to someone’s *capability* to act according to his *arbitrium*. Subjugation to arbitrary power does not always require that an *actual* act of interference be committed. Indeed, simply knowing I may be arbitrarily interfered with is enough to limit

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<sup>73</sup> Kramer, *Liberty and Domination*, p.42

<sup>74</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.54, 63

<sup>75</sup> Skinner, *Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power*, p.86

<sup>76</sup> Skinner, *A Third Concept*, p.247

<sup>77</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.55

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>80</sup> In his new masterpiece, Pettit prefers to define arbitrary power as “*uncontrolled* interference practiced in accordance with the *arbitrium*, or ‘will’ of another; that is, interference that is exercised at the will of discretion of the interferer; interference that is uncontrolled by the person on the receiving end”. The reason for making this change depends on the fact that the definition “arbitrary power” has lost the connotation he meant to ascribe in “earlier republican usage” (Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.58)

my liberty.<sup>81</sup> In light of this, Skinner argues that “the mere presence of arbitrary power has the effect of undermining political liberty” and it is central to the republican tradition.<sup>82</sup> By considering the slave/master dichotomy, the position of the slave described by Pettit is characterized by domination, not by actual interference, in which the slave develops a sense of vulnerability due to the dependency on the master’s goodwill, whether this power occurs or not.<sup>83</sup> Pettit explains that although the master may be “purely benign or permissive”, so long as that master has the ability to act according to his *arbitrium*, the slave never escapes his dependence on his master.<sup>84</sup> As Skinner indicates, even if a slave can undertake a particular action without being “prevented or penalized”, as long as he is subjected to the arbitrary power of the master he “remain[s] wholly bereft of liberty”.<sup>85</sup> This is how a master retains arbitrary power over his slaves “without ever having to lift a hand or utter a word”.<sup>86</sup> For these reasons, the image of the slave by Pettit clearly contrasts with the example of the *gentle giant* provided by Kramer. Whether or not the master acts is not the central argument. As long as a person is subject to the arbitrary power of her owner, she cannot be said to be free. Therefore, no slave can be completely free until the institution of slavery itself is abolished. This is precisely what freedom as non-domination requires. The mere presence of a dominator is in itself a source of unfreedom for republican theorists.

The concept of non-domination is concerned with the interferences carried out *arbitrarily*. In light of this, Pettit strictly condemns the dependency on the will of the power holder on one side; on the other side he accepts that there are instances where non-arbitrary forms of interference are permissible and, quite frankly desirable, as in the case of *just* laws. I will now analyze the two different cases of interferences described by Pettit.

The first case represents the context in which the master decides not to *actually* interfere with his slave, and thus, the slave still remains dominated. In this case, the slave’s condition is one of *domination without interference*.<sup>87</sup> Moving beyond the master/slave example and placing this in the context of the relationship between the state and its citizens, the second case is defined by Pettit as *interference without domination*.<sup>88</sup> In Pettit’s view, the republican tradition demands a non-arbitrary rule of law, which means that “those who make

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<sup>81</sup> Skinner, *A Third Concept*, p. 257; Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 23; *The Instability*, p.708; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.59

<sup>82</sup> Skinner, *Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power*, p. 85

<sup>83</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.63; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.60

<sup>84</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.32, 64; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.60, 130

<sup>85</sup> Skinner, *Freedom as Absence of Arbitrary Power*, p.89-90

<sup>86</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.61; Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.63

<sup>87</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.63-64

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65-66



the law are forced to track the avowable common interests - and only the avowable common interests - of those who will live under the law".<sup>89</sup> In other words, the state must track "not the power-holder's personal welfare or world-view, but rather the welfare and world-view of the public".<sup>90</sup> Therefore, the only time interference is permissible with non-domination is when it is performed on a non-arbitrary basis.<sup>91</sup> In light of this, even in situations where the actions of the state do *interfere* with the lives of its citizenry, since the state is bound to tracking its citizens' interests and thus the interference is carried out *non-arbitrarily*, the citizens are not dominated.<sup>92</sup> In this case, there is no infringement on liberty; rather there is only a *restriction* to it.<sup>93</sup> This statement brings to a major point of division between the republican and liberal idea of freedom. In Pettit's opinion, "devotees of freedom as non-interference" insist that *all* forms of coercion and especially all forms of state action (even if "well bounded and controlled") are an affront to a person's liberty.<sup>94</sup> But for Pettit, the sort of coercion that ensues from the enforcement of a non-arbitrary law, or interference without domination, is considered permissible.

The various reasons why one person may possess an unequal balance of *power* include physical strength, technical advantage, financial clout, political authority, social connections, communal standing, informational access, ideological position, cultural legitimacy, and the like.<sup>95</sup> In order to ensure that these advantages do not result in domination and dependency on the *goodwill of the powerful*, Pettit claims that a crucial requirement is the establishment of a well-ordered self-governing republic of equal citizens under the rule of law, where no citizen is the master of any other. Contrary to non-interference, which cannot prevent a person's freedom from being dependent on the altruism of others, the republican ideal of non-domination aims to remove this type of dependency and vulnerability at its core by seeking different institutional and legal means that avoid retention of arbitrary power on individuals. Protecting citizens from the arbitrary power of

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<sup>89</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.56, 149, 172

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65, 172

<sup>93</sup> Pettit makes an accurate description between situations in which a person's liberty is "compromised" or "conditioned". According to Pettit, if I am obstructed from choosing some course of action because I am subjected to the arbitrary power of another to interfere, I am thought to be *unfree*. In this case, my personal liberty is *compromised* when I am interfered with in such a way that my interests and opinions are not considered or tracked. In contrast, if I am "restricted but not dominated", as I may be by the presence of "unintended obstacle or a non-arbitrary law", then I am considered *nonfree*. In this case, my liberty is simply *conditioned* within the limits of a just law that corresponds to my interests and opinions. (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 94)

<sup>94</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.84-5, Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.149

<sup>95</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.59, 93; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.63

their government through good institutional design represents the signature motive of republicans.<sup>96</sup>

Non-domination is a social ideal that presupposes the presence of a number of mutually interactive agents.<sup>97</sup> In light of this, in order to ensure the ideal of freedom as non-domination, Pettit specifies that the state *intervenes* on two different levels: in the *horizontal* relations among individuals and in the *vertical* relations between the state and its citizens. Although I will concentrate more on the second scenario, it is worthy briefly describing how citizens can enjoy freedom in relation to each other.

On the first horizontal level, freedom as non-domination is ensured only if all citizens are “willing to live on equal terms with others”.<sup>98</sup> Put it differently, the society should operate within the circumstances of *justice* so that it can enable each individual to enjoy the status of a *free* citizen.<sup>99</sup> Pettit’s *eye ball test* requires that individuals can look each other in the eye without fear or deference that a power of interference might inspire from others.<sup>100</sup> This image captures the republican value that “free persons are able to walk tall, live without shame or indignity, and look one another in the eye without any reason for fear or deference”.<sup>101</sup> It is worth mentioning the paragraph where Pettit clearly explains the implications of this eye ball test:

Thus, in the established terms of republican denigration, they do not have to bow or scrape, toady or kowtow, fawn or flatter; they do not have to placate any others with beguiling smiles or mincing steps. In short, they do not have to live on their wits, whether out of fear or deference. They are their own men and women, and however deeply they bind themselves to one another, as in love or friendship or trust, they do so freely, reaching out to one another from positions of relatively equal strength.<sup>102</sup>

The achievement of this “discernible and applicable ideal” would make for the “*equality* of people in their status as free *persons* or citizens”. This statement, along with Pettit’s assertion supported by the equal nature of men and women, provides me with some important elements for the development of my argument, which I will further elaborate on in the upcoming chapters. However, what is important to highlight here is that non-domination can be achievable only if their *basic* liberties are equally safeguarded under

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<sup>96</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.181

<sup>97</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.66

<sup>98</sup> Pettit, *On The People’s Terms*, p.78

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82

public laws and norms.<sup>103</sup> Specifically, only when the interrelations among individuals are mutually governed by a system of commonly-known and stable rules is it possible for fellow individuals to enjoy independence from arbitrary rule. In line of this argument, there is no possibility to be intentionally interfered with on an arbitrary basis, because non-domination offers a guarantee from the materialization of this power. A theory of justice is thus meant to provide an image of how people's social relations ought to be organized, if they are each to enjoy equal freedom as non-domination amongst all citizens in society.<sup>104</sup>

In addition to the first horizontal level of protection, which refers to the domain of *private* domination (this distinction will also be relevant for the sake of my argument), the second level mainly concerns the *public* domain. This is meant to provide an image of how the state ought to make decisions regarding justice to ensure that citizens may enjoy equal freedom as non-domination in relation to government. Rule of law, separation of powers and democratic accountability represents some of the “constraints” that a republican state should guard against domination.<sup>105</sup> The rule of law ensures that governmental decisions are in accordance with a sufficiently just and stable law;<sup>106</sup> the separation of power ensures that the government disperses among different agents;<sup>107</sup> and democratic accountability allows citizens to possess control and influence over governmental decisions, excluding the more basic and important laws which must be not be subject to straightforward majoritarian amendments.<sup>108</sup> It is specifically on the *control* aspect that I want to focus my attention until the end of this section.

In Pettit's theory the state should be designed to track people's interests according to their ideas; more precisely, the promotion of freedom as non-domination requires assurance that public decision-making tracks the interests and the ideas of those citizens whom it affects.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, Pettit claims that citizens hold the state accountable to popular inputs.<sup>110</sup> Only if the people control the *interference* practiced by government, in the sense that “if they control the laws imposed, the policies pursued, the taxes levied”, then “they

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<sup>103</sup> Pettit identifies *basic liberties*, as the range of choices which are considered co-exercisable and co-satisfying: those choices that all can exercise at once, while still enjoying the standard rewards associated with the choice (Pettit, *On The People's Terms*, p.92-101)

<sup>104</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.60,67,71,87,96; Pettit, *On The People's Terms*, p.77

<sup>105</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.172

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172-177

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p.177-180

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p.180-182

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184

<sup>110</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.152-153

might not suffer domination at the hands of their rulers and may continue to enjoy their freedom in relation to the state”.<sup>111</sup>

Popular control represents one of the primary elements within a republican theory. Pettit distinguishes between various kinds of control (intentional and non-intentional)<sup>112</sup>, defines the requirements on the domain of control (historical, political and functional necessity)<sup>113</sup> and on its nature (individualized, unconditioned and efficacious)<sup>114</sup>, analyzes how this kind of control might materialize (a representative assembly, electoral and contestatory citizenry, mixed constitution)<sup>115</sup> and finally how citizens might impose a popular direction on government. To require public decision-making to be controlled, an important role in Pettit’s view is played by political participation. Contrary to liberals, who draw clear limits between the state and the private spheres of individuals, republicans are principally concerned with the stimulation of people to engage robustly with their corresponding institutions. Pettit explains that individuals who wish to retain their freedoms must frequently put aside their private affairs to participate collaboratively in holding governmental leader to account. In the next chapter, I will analyze deeply and pay particular attention to the role of democratic participation. This notion represents the primary link between Pettit’s non-domination and Taylor’s concept of self-realization, making it a crucial element in the development of my main argument.

At this point, it is worth briefly analyzing, for a complete understanding of Pettit’s republican notion of non-domination, the last component in democratic participation: the presence of a contestatory citizenry. This ensures that citizens are able to contest the laws and policies enacted by the state.<sup>116</sup> In the contestation issue, a crucial role is played by civic virtue, which serves people to create a “network of norms independently of state

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<sup>111</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.153

<sup>112</sup> Intentional control involves exercising influence as an agent and this leads to the realization of some desired end. Non intentional mechanisms can have such an influence and impose such an identifiable direction that we happily say citizens exercise control (Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.155)

<sup>113</sup> In a society there are necessities under which one has to live. The state you live does not constrain you to live in political society, since the constraint is imposed as a necessity of history. It does not constrain you to live in this state rather than any other so long as it allows emigration; that constraint derives from the political necessity whereby other states deny a right of open immigration. And finally, it does not constrain you to live under coercively applied laws; the requirement on the state to treat all its citizens as equals combines with the fact that some citizens have to be coerced to support the functional necessity of universal coercion (Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.160-166)

<sup>114</sup> Control will be individualized if the people enjoys an equally accessible system of popular influence that imposes an equally acceptable direction on government. Control will be unconditioned if their directed influence materializes independently of any other party’s goodwill: the threat of popular resistance is enough to fasten it in place. And control will be efficacious if their influence imposes that direction so unflinchingly that when decisions go against particular citizens, they can take this to be just a *tough luck*, not the sign of a malign will at work in their lives (Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.166-179)

<sup>115</sup> For further details, see Chapter 4 on “Democratic Influence” in Pettit, *On the People’s Terms* (p.187-238)

<sup>116</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.184; Pettit, *On The People’s Terms*, p.226-227

coercion".<sup>117</sup> The state's laws must work in synergy with norms that are established in the realm of the civil society. In other words, civil norms must mesh with political laws.<sup>118</sup> If the laws conflict with the norms, or if the laws are not actively supported by such norms, then the chances to realize the ideal republic radically diminish.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, republican laws must be supported by the habits of civic virtue embedded in society, otherwise those rules cannot survive.<sup>120</sup>

Pettit recognizes three reasons for thinking that civility is necessary in the republican ideal. First, the reliable enjoyment of non-domination requires more than the existence of laws; it requires also socially established norms that give security in the areas against interference.<sup>121</sup> In this way, citizens respect laws for normative reasons. Secondly, the presence of an active society helps to satisfy the constraints associated with democratic contestability.<sup>122</sup> This means that when there is a need to enact reforms in government to address new interests and ideas concerning the common good, such as shifts in attitudes towards the role of women in society or the necessity for environmental awareness and protection, an active society ensures that these changes can be advocated for and implemented effectively.<sup>123</sup> The third reason why civility is fundamental to the security of institutional republic is to ensure the effective implementation and eternal vigilance of legal and related sanctioning.<sup>124</sup> For instance, in the case of political corruption or domestic violence, ordinary people have to be willing to support such sanctioning by making personal and communal disapproval manifest and by calling in the legal authorities.<sup>125</sup>

The most important task for the state in encouraging and facilitating these three methods is to give people a voice *within* the government, especially in regards to the establishment of a contestatory democracy. To achieve this, it is necessary to establish the republican legitimacy of its laws in the 'public mind'.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, laws must present themselves, not just as sanctioning devices, but as instruments that signal what civility requires, ensuring they receive civil acceptance and support.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.241; Pettit, *On The People's Terms*, p.228

<sup>118</sup> Three conditions are needed for the existence of a norm: first, it is a matter of behavioral regularity; secondly, people approve of anyone's behaving in that way and/or disapprove of anyone's failing to do so; this habit of approval makes the behavior more likely or secure than it would otherwise be (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.242-244)

<sup>119</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.245

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p.246

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.247

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p.247-248

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p.249

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p.250

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p.252

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.253

To conclude, I have demonstrated why in Pettit's theory the role of citizens within governmental issues is essential in a theory of liberty. All decisions that affect citizenry must be worked out on the ground *by* the people of the republic themselves and are left to be contested from *all corners of society*. What counts as non-arbitrary use of power relies on what the interests and ideas of the people are, and these ideas and interests can be discovered only by actual and open public deliberations.

### 1.3 Superiority of non-domination over non-interference

In his books *Republicanism* and *On the People's Terms*, Pettit severely criticizes freedom as non-interference and considers his account of freedom a more adequate and 'richer' than the liberal approach.<sup>128</sup> In his essay "*The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference: The Case of Isaiah Berlin*" Pettit strongly opposes Berlin's version of non-interference, provided a detailed analysis of the liberal notion of freedom. He supports his thesis that non-domination is a preferable account of liberty. In the previous section, I have highlighted the reasons why Pettit considers it more appropriate for individuals to ensure a *greater* level of freedom, namely the absence of domination and of arbitrary power. Skinner reaches a similar conclusion, agreeing that Pettit's account of freedom offers a viable alternative to the negative notion of non-interference.<sup>129</sup> As next step, in this section, I will focus on the *benefits* of non-domination and explain why it should be considered *superior*. Consequently, I will argue that the concept of freedom should primarily rely on Pettit's explanation rather than on freedom as non-interference.

The primary concern Pettit has with mere non-interference is that it permits the potential for someone to retain arbitrary power over another. This is because it only requires that one's "expectation" of being interfered with be minimized.<sup>130</sup> Pettit specifies that, contrary to non-interference, which is about *probabilities*, non-domination is about *certainties*.<sup>131</sup> We can gain a better understanding of this point by revisiting the *open doors*' metaphor.

When discussing negative freedom, I demonstrated that Berlin employs the *door* example to differentiate his theory from Hobbes' perspective of freedom as non-frustration.

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<sup>128</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.17-21

<sup>129</sup> Skinner, *Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power*, p. 83

<sup>130</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.85

<sup>131</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.85, 88; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.60,69

According to Berlin, liberty is “the absence of obstacles to *possible* choices and activities”, and not only to the option that you prefer.<sup>132</sup> “The options in a choice are like doors you can push on and how extensive the choice is depends on how many doors there are. How extensive the choice is depends on what the doors lead to. And crucially, how free the exercise of choice is depends on whether and how far the doors are open”.<sup>133</sup> Berlin claims that “the extent of a man’s negative freedom is a function of what doors; and how many are open to him; upon what prospects they are open; and how open they are”.<sup>134</sup> However, for Pettit this is simply not enough.

What freedom ideally requires “in the republican book is not just that the doors be open but that there be no *doorkeeper* who can close a door - or jam it, or conceal it”.<sup>135</sup> There is nothing to ensure that if there is a doorkeeper, who can act arbitrarily and deny a person access to any one door whenever he wants. There are no checks on the doorkeeper’s power to do as he pleases within the discourse of non-interference. If someone wanted to block a door whenever he saw fit, he could do so because non-interference only seeks to ensure that “interference should remain improbable”.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, for Pettit, freedom as non-interference can do little to protect a person against such a predicament by only requiring that his “expectation” to be interfered be minimized. Whereas freedom as non-domination moves beyond mere expectations by putting in place a level of *certainty* against such acts. It is clear that only non-domination can provide this *certainty*. The improbability that a master/doorkeeper will not interfere with the activities of individuals is not what matters for Pettit.<sup>137</sup> The problem is the existence of A’s power over B and not its practice. Thus, what must be ensured is the absence of arbitrary power to interfere over B’s choices.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Berlin, Introduction, 132; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.64

<sup>133</sup> Pettit, *The Instability*, p.698

<sup>134</sup> Berlin, Introduction, 131-132

<sup>135</sup> Pettit, *The Instability*, 709; Pettit, *On The People’s Terms*, p.66

<sup>136</sup> Pettit, *The Instability*, 710; Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.86

<sup>137</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.86

<sup>138</sup> Pettit specifies two other elements that non-interference fails to include in its theory. The first refers to the idea that non-domination can avoid the need to *ingratiate* oneself to the powerful. In fact, with non-domination a person will not have to engage in any form of self-abnegation, preference adaptation, or calculated and tactical moves in life in order to gain access to someone’s choices. Pettit tells us that with the protection of non-domination, there is no need to pay favor to the doorkeeper; a person does not have to “curtail” someone’s desires to avoid the possibility of being interfered with favor to the doorkeeper. However, we do not have to confuse *negative* self-ingratiation with *positive* self-abnegation, in which the first refers to freedom of choice, and the other to self-mastery. (Pettit, *The Instability*, p.704-711; Pettit, *Republicanism*, 86-87; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.33-35, 65-66). Another benefit that non-domination brings to the table, is what it does for a person’s social status and intersubjective relations. Contrary to liberal theories, the principle of non-domination has important consequences for both of these elements, and in particular because we know that situations of domination and relationships marked by a powerful and powerless will always be a matter of *shared awareness* between the parties and a matter of common knowledge among others. Moreover, since Pettit claims that republican liberty is “defined by a status”, a person retains it because she enjoys the protection from being arbitrary interfered with. According to Pettit, non-domination permits a person to see herself as “nonvulnerable”, and helps to solidify a “comparable” level of social status for her among others. Having this ‘comparable’ level of status, she can “look the other in the eye” without having to “bow

Unlike non-interference, the notion of non-domination possesses mechanisms to ensure that there is no dependence on the “good graces” of the doorkeeper.<sup>139</sup> Thanks to the presence of a stable and just rule of law, as well as contestatory citizenry, acts of domination by a doorkeeper are thwarted within a republican theory of freedom. On the one hand, the doorkeeper may only prevent access to a door by upholding and enforcing a *fair and just* law that is arrived at by non-arbitrary means. On the other hand, citizens retain the ability to contest the doorkeeper’s action if they believe that it is taken arbitrarily. Some doors may be blocked, others may be restricted, but the ones that remain open cannot be jammed, blocked, or concealed based on the will of the doorkeeper. Nor can the doorkeeper freely manipulate, coerce, or threaten a person from choosing a door that is meant to remain as an available alternative: a door that a person might want to use.

After describing the elements that Pettit considers as benefits of freedom as non-domination over non-interference, I want to emphasize another aspect that further illustrates why a model of non-domination is highly preferable. Pettit’s non-domination possesses an advantage over non-interference, not only because it seeks to eliminate the kind of *power* that makes acts of interference a possibility in the first place, but also because such a conception of liberty goes *beyond* being concerned only with *actual* acts of interference. In the part above, I mainly emphasized the first feature, but now I want to focus on the second aspect by highlighting the *extension* of the *kinds of interferences* ensured by non-domination.

According to Pettit, individuals must encounter different dangers “associated with different levels of *dominium* in everyday life both in their dealings with one another, individually and in the context of collective and corporate organization”.<sup>140</sup> In Pettit’s opinion, any theory of negative liberty should accept that freedom can be limited in more ways than simply *direct* forms of interference.<sup>141</sup> Interference encompasses a wide range of possible behaviors.<sup>142</sup> It includes “coercion of the body, as in restraint or obstruction; coercion of the will, as in punishment or the threat of punishment, manipulation: this is usually covert and may take the form of agenda-fixing, the deceptive or non-rational shaping of people’s beliefs or desires, or the rigging of the consequences of people’s actions.”<sup>143</sup> All interfering behaviors, coercive or manipulative, are intended by the interferer to detract from

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and scrape” in order to avoid being arbitrarily acted upon (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.87-88, Pettit, *The Instability*, p. 711-714).

<sup>139</sup> Pettit, *The Instability*, p.709; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.66

<sup>140</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.130

<sup>141</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.54

<sup>142</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 53

<sup>143</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 53; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.54



the agent's choice situation by limiting the range of options available, altering the expected payoffs assigned to those options, or assuming control over which outcomes will materialize, thereby misrepresenting the actual options in place.<sup>144</sup> "I may deny you the use of your cognitive resources in making a certain choice by recourse to manipulation, which denies you the possibility of making a choice on the basis of a proper understanding of the options on offer".<sup>145</sup> This strategy applies pressure that affects the exercise of individuals' capacity to comprehensively consider the alternative choices and options offered.<sup>146</sup> As a result of this misinformation, deception may occur. "If I deceive you about the options available in a choice, or about the consequences they are likely to trigger, I can obviously lead you to believe that the options are other than, as a matter of fact, they are."<sup>147</sup> Manipulation of the options, expected payoffs, actual payoffs<sup>148</sup> and in some circumstances acts of omission, all represent forms of interference.<sup>149</sup>

In addition to manipulation and deception, there are many other ways in which domination might occur without any actual interference, such as practicing invigilation and intimidation.<sup>150</sup> In these cases, a master stands guard over what his slave does ready to interfere whenever he changes his disposition. As a result, the slave is subjected to and dependent on his master's goodwill for retaining the capacity to exercise choice, although the slave may be not aware or willed of it.<sup>151</sup> Thus, by means of *these* interferences, a master succeeds in forcing the slave to choose as wished, but even in case of failure, the master will still retain arbitrary power over him.

The condition of manipulation, deception, intimidation and invigilation demonstrate that lack of freedom might also occur outside of actual and direct interference. Contrary to what is ensured in the account of non-domination, non-interference fails to ensure a person to be manipulated and *psychologically* coerced, because it is incapable of avoiding situations of dependency on the goodwill of the powerful. For example, it is evident that liberals would tolerate the master/slave dichotomy relationship, while republicans might denounce it as paradigms of domination and unfreedom. Pettit's approach can thus offer more assurance than a person may be able to experience through a liberal account of liberty. Indeed, this is

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<sup>144</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.53; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.54

<sup>145</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.55

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.54

<sup>148</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.60

<sup>149</sup> Interference might also occur, for instance, if a pharmacist refuses without good reason to sell an urgently required medicine (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.53; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.73)

<sup>150</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.60

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.62

also true because non-domination is related to the variety of obstacles that a person might have to overcome in order to be defined as *free*. These *potential* acts of interference or harm, such as manipulation and deception, cannot be ensured within a standard non-interference model. In this case the only kind of obstacle that is taken into account by liberals is the *actual* interference, what derives from “alterable human practices”. To contrast, non-domination can prevent certain kinds of situations from possibly unfolding, because it *goes beyond* the types of constraints mentioned in a theory of non-interference. In his concepts of non-domination, Pettit includes also *psychological* hindrances as obstacles and barriers that individuals must overcome to achieve freedom.

In conclusion, non-domination is more faithful than non-interference, not only for all the reasons explained by Pettit. But also, because it better secures different set of conditions by *enlarging* the range of obstacles necessary for ensuring a person’s liberties. Despite Pettit proof that the principle of non-domination has priority over non-interference as the only negative definition of freedom, it is obvious that any position supporting a positive concept of liberty inevitably stands out.

Despite Pettit’s references to manipulation, brainwashing, pressure or deceit as examples of the sort of constraints which belong to the psychological domain, we should not confuse *psychological* constraints which are imposed by others, as the ones just mentioned, and the obstacles created *by* one self, such as fear, phobia or spite. As part of the negative notion, which considers the relation between us and others, both theories of non-interference and non-domination only consider *external* obstacles as constraints to freedom, *i.e.* those imposed and caused by others. They thus fail to include internal obstacles. While Pettit clearly demonstrates that his model provides better security of a person’s *negative* freedoms than non-interference, what is his *approach* towards internal hindrances and thus positive freedom? These questions will be amply addressed in the next chapter, along with the main argument that a theory of freedom cannot be truly complete without including the positive notion. This is particularly important for ensuring that individuals, specifically women, are able and willing to achieve their self-realization in our male-dominated society.

## Chapter II

### POSITIVE LIBERTY

Historically, notions of negative and positive freedom developed in divergent directions, not always by logically reputable steps, until in the end they came into direct conflict with each other. On one side, negative freedom is a matter of *how many* doors lie open to you, which requires the *absence* of obstacles, barriers of constraints. It is concerned exclusively with *opportunities*. On the other side, positive freedom is a question of whether or not you *can* go through the doors. It requires the *presence* and *exercise* of something, *i.e.* of control, self-mastery, self-determination or self-realization, and the possibility of acting in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize oneself. Another way to distinguish the two concepts is to think in terms of the difference between factors that are *external* and factors that are *internal* to the agent. While theorists of negative freedom are primarily interested in the degree to which individuals or groups suffer interference from *external* bodies, theorists of positive freedom are more attentive to the *internal* factors affecting the degree to which individuals act freely. However, the difficulty to explain concepts like being one's own master, self-mastery, self-realization can be challenging. This complexity and ambiguity often derive from the common mistake of confusing and overlapping these concepts with other related ideas in the internal and psychological domain of individuals, such as *free will* or *autonomy*.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> The notion of freedom should be distinguished from any other concept, although they are closely related. The literature offers several different definitions of personal (or individual) autonomy, and some conceptions of positive freedom may indeed be equivalent to what is often meant by autonomy. In *Chapter V*, I will explore the differences between these two concepts more deeply. For further details, see Christman, J. (2020). Autonomy in moral and political philosophy. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition).

Regarding free will, this is also distinct from freedom, more specifically from positive freedom. Free will pertains to the ability of individuals to make choices that are not determined by prior causes or by divine intervention. It is about the capacity for autonomous action, implying that individuals can make decisions independently of deterministic forces. While free will focuses mainly on the metaphysical ability to make choices, positive freedom focuses more on the conditions necessary for individuals to act upon their will (such as social, economic, and personal capabilities). In general, positive freedom is concerned with having the power and resources to act upon one's desires and to achieve one's own goals, while free will is concerned with the inherent capacity to make choices independently of external determinants. For further details,

In *Chapter I*, I amply focused on two concepts of negative freedoms: one defined as non-interference supported by Berlin, and the second notion as non-domination by Pettit. Specifically, I argued in favor of a superiority of the neo-republican concept in terms of enlargement of barriers which limit our freedom. In this chapter, however, I will focus on the positive notion, which represents the other side of the same coin of the concept of individual freedom. I will explore three different descriptions. In *section I*, I start with the concept of *self-mastery* proposed by Berlin and the reasons for abandoning its promotion within his current society due to the danger of authoritarianism. In *section II*, I present an alternative notion of positive freedom as an *exercise-concept*. This approach suggests that individuals achieve self-realized by discriminating among our motivations and developing our true and authentic desires. Only in this way individuals can overcome our internal constraints, and hence be free. Finally, in *section III*, I will revisit Philip Pettit, the main authors of this dissertation. I will highlight his attempt to embrace the positive concept in his theory and discuss the reasons why he not further developed or clearly included this notion within his concept of freedom as non-domination

## 2.1 Isaiah Berlin's self-mastery and its criticism

In *Two Concepts of Liberty* Berlin provides a complex definition of positive liberty. Let me start with Berlin's quotation:

The positive sense of the word liberty derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside. I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer -deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realizing them. This is at least part of what I mean when I say that I am rational, and that it is my reason that distinguishes me as a human being from the rest of the world. I wish, above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by reference to my own

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see O'Connor, Timothy and Christopher Franklin, Free Will, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.).

Going into the definition of each of these terms in detail would be confusing. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that they might share common ground, namely based on the inner sphere of individuals. What should be considered is the fact that concepts of autonomy and free will are not strictly connected to the notion of freedom. Since freedom is the focus of this dissertation, these additional concepts will not be considered relevant within this context and for the sake of my argument.

ideas and purposes. I feel free to the degree that I believe this to be true, and enslaved to the degree that I am made to realize that it is not.<sup>153</sup>

It is evident that these few lines embrace several notions and involve difficult philosophical concepts that urge deep consideration and exhaustive explanation. To facilitate the understanding of Berlin's notion of positive liberty and due to the complexity of this paragraph, I will split it and focus on three distinct senses that mainly emerge from this quotation: self-mastery, political participation and the rationalist approach.

Let me start with the personal character of positive freedom as *self-mastery*. By saying that I am positively free means that I am a *true* master of myself. Only if this is true, I can be free to pursue the kind of life I choose. This is possible only if my choices are not influenced by other agents or even by *external forces of whatever kind*. As set out in the passage quoted earlier, it is evident that Berlin fails to give an exhaustive description of what stands beyond the idea of *being one own master* and of making decisions of my life that depend merely on *myself*. Taking this into consideration, Berlin combines several different elements without thorough analysis, e.g. being *the instrument of my own*, being *a subject, not an object*, be *somebody, not nobody*. One of the reasons that might contribute to the lack of clarity in the definition of self-mastery depends also on Berlin's priority to emphasize the negative implications of this concept rather than providing its clear meaning.

The second aspect of positive liberty that emerges from the Berlinian concept of positive liberty is the ideal of democratic participation, defined as the desire of people to share sovereign authority. As Berlin states, this sense of positive freedom is involved in the question "Who governs me?" and "By whom I am ruled?".<sup>154</sup> The quotation above provides only a partial answer to these questions, in particular with the expression "*I wish to be a doer-deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men*". However, it is not at this point in the article that Berlin mentions political participation as *self-direction*, but immediately before that quotation on the previous page. Indeed, he affirms that the desire to govern ourselves is realized through the right "to participate in the processes by which my life is to be controlled".<sup>155</sup> If understood in this way, *self-government* seems to be strictly connected to *self-mastery*. Following this statement, I argue that this second sense of governing oneself could be analyzed as a *subset* of being my own master, because it is one of the ways in which I might seek self-mastery. I

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<sup>153</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.131

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.130

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p.131

will amply analyze the connection that exists between self-mastery and political participation when describing Taylor's concept of self-direction. What is now important to keep in mind is only that this feature is connected to the third sense of positive freedom, which I will now explain.

In addition to these two components, the third and last sense of Berlinian concept of positive freedom is the so-called *rationalist approach*, which requires individuals to be *conscious, rational* and *wise* in their own choices.<sup>156</sup> This approach is not only foundational to Berlin's criticism of the positive notion of liberty. But meanwhile it also represents the main reason why the society should strive to promote negative liberty rather than positive freedom. Since this view represents the main threat to the development of positive liberty, it is worthwhile to focus on this concept for the remainder of this section.

According to Berlin's approach, a positive concept of liberty involves dividing the human into a *higher transcendental self* and a *lower empirical self*.<sup>157</sup> The *true self* has been given several definitions by various schools of thought: the 'Form' of man by Plato, the 'autonomous' self of Kant, and the 'soul' of Christianity are only a few historical examples.<sup>158</sup> A common theme of these examples is the conviction that this part, and not any other, constitutes the *true self*, the self at its best, the ideally realized and fulfilled individual.<sup>159</sup> This is in contrast with the *lower self* of irrational instinct, immediate pleasures, uncontrolled desires, or our base nature, which prevents me from reaching the full splendor of my *true nature*.<sup>160</sup> Liberty as self-mastery becomes mastery of the higher or real self over the lower, desirous, animal self. Moreover, the *real self* is identified with some social whole of which the individual is part, and this organic whole is then taken to embody all the real or higher selves or wills of all individuals.<sup>161</sup> So, in imposing its organic *will* on individuals, the society is said to achieve a higher liberty for all its members.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, Berlin holds the promotion and protection for all of freedom as the highest *end* of society and human life. Due to its importance, the lower self must be disciplined by and made subordinate to the higher self for an individual to truly be free. It is therefore important to ask how individuals can *discipline* their lower self and what the consequences will be.

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<sup>156</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.131

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.132

<sup>158</sup> Buss, S., & Westlund, A. (2018). Personal autonomy. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

<sup>159</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.132

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p.133

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p.134

<sup>162</sup> *Ibidem*

To provide an argument for this necessity, Berlin describes two main historical trajectories of the positive conception: freedom as *self-abnegation* and freedom as *self-realization* through complete *subjugation to reason*. This discussion reveals the third sense of Berlinian theory, namely the rationalist foundation, which represents the common ground to both forms used to explain how to discipline our lower self. Regarding the positive conception of freedom as *self-abnegation*, Berlin affirms that the individual human self possesses reason and will, through which it conceives of “ends and desires to pursue them”.<sup>163</sup> An individual may be, however, prevented from pursuing these ends, due to “laws of nature, by accident, by the interference of others, or by the often unintended effects of human institutions”.<sup>164</sup> If these elements occur, the agent is no longer free. Such forces lie beyond the self’s ability to overcome, leaving the self with only one course of action. Rather than engaging in futile attempts to overcome *impossible* constraints, the self determines to rid itself not of the constraint but of the very desire to overcome them. Berlin defines this phenomenon as “*the retreat to the inner citadel*”, in which the self retreats to an *inner* space of complete independence by extirpating all desires of which the attainment depends on factors beyond its complete control.<sup>165</sup> This is done not by increasing its liberty to a point of sufficient power to become master of these external vicissitudes, but by contracting its liberty to a point where it desires only the freedom to pursue those ends which it can be certain of attaining.<sup>166</sup> A retreat to one’s *inner citadel*, or to teach the self to curb one’s goals, because they are deemed to be desires that a *rational* person should not have, is, according to Berlin, not the path to individual freedom.<sup>167</sup> This is precisely the route that Berlin believes doctrines of positive liberty will demand of people to follow. With the hopes of avoiding this, Berlin firmly argues that his account of negative liberty as non-interference, and thus his support in favor of a negative notion, is able to limit the external forces that place this demand for self-abnegation upon an agent.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.135

<sup>164</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p.135-141

<sup>166</sup> It is commonly taken into account that, in considering which actions we are free to do or unfree to do, only those which we desire to do or, more generally, those which we imagine might be worthwhile doing. For instance, Berlin’s example of cutting a leg clearly describes this situation. We would not define ourselves as free to cut off our leg, even in the absence of enforced restrictions against our doing so. Another important point to highlight here refers to the ability of X of doing Y. The same concept which applies to negative freedom concerning the lack of ability of doing something can be extended to the aspect of positive freedom as well. To be free to do or be X is different from being capable of doing or being X. A person may not be able to fly but this does not mean that he is unfree to fly. A person is said to be unfree if and only if his desires are frustrated as a result of “alterable human practices” (Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.135)

<sup>167</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.139

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p.140

The second form of positive freedom to *discipline* an agent's lower self represents the most threatening to the negative freedom of the liberal tradition. This is the conception of liberty as *self-realization through reason*. According to Berlin, this notion regards the use of critical reason, that is, an understanding of what is *necessary* and what is *contingent*, as the only method for attaining true freedom.<sup>169</sup> Berlin frames positive liberty as the "positive doctrine of liberation by reason", in which I must work to stem my desires and match my will to that of society, because there can be only one "rational society".<sup>170</sup> Indeed, even if Berlin claims that positive liberty is chiefly about a desire to make *responsible* choices in order to realize a life plan, he still posits that positive liberty carries with it the possibility of severely hampering a person's free will. One of Berlin's primary concerns is that positive liberty brings with it a very particular idea of what kind of person an individual should be in order to live a *free* life. According to Skinner, it is not so much "*the idea of being your own master*," but the idea of "*mastering yourself*" that truly disconcerts Berlin.<sup>171</sup> What Skinner refers here is the manner in which Berlin questions that embedded in the notion of liberty in a positive sense is an idealized version of what this *self* ought to be and what will be demanded of the individual in order to live up to this standard. In light of this, we have to *assimilate* and internalize the rational will of society and to adapt to the one true and proper way to life so that they can conform to it. In turn, this promotes the will of all by damaging the will of individuals.<sup>172</sup> Thus, positive liberty is achieved either through acts of conformity or through some form of self-abnegation, and not by choosing from unobstructed choices (which is the focus of Berlin's negative liberty as non-interference). However, the consequences for the use of a *rationalist approach* do not end here.

After providing the two historical forms for achieving positive liberty, Berlin associates the concepts of self-abnegation and self-realization as a foundation for the rise of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Since individuals are in "*no condition to know what is best for them*" and thus cannot achieve their true self, some individuals have to take up the goal of remolding the lower self on behalf of others.<sup>173</sup> Those people are considered "the better educated, the more rational, those who possess the highest insight of their time and people".<sup>174</sup> These "higher members of the society", wise and rational, may exercise "compulsion to rationalize the irrational section of society" by eliminating and suppressing

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<sup>169</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.141-144

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p.144

<sup>171</sup> Skinner, A Third Concept, p.239

<sup>172</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.143-144

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p.151

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p.150



those lower instincts, passions and desires which render them unfree.<sup>175</sup> In order to ensure this, Berlin moves towards a totalitarian re-working of the individual where only the great dictator knows the true fulfillment of each individual.<sup>176</sup> As a result, freedom requires a state governed by laws that all men would *rationaly* accept if they were fully rational. Since at present most people are not, the state is asked to fulfill this goal in name of its citizens.<sup>177</sup> To justify his idea, Berlin affirms that “to force empirical selves into the right pattern is not tyranny, but *liberation*.”<sup>178</sup> Only in this way can individuals achieve full rationality and, therefore, full freedom.

The rise of totalitarianism depends on the belief that individuals lack individual responsibility and rational self-perfection. Specifically, the distinction between higher and lower self serves Berlin to develop his argument in favor of the rationalist approach, due to the idea that individuals are unable to reach their true self on their own. In this way, individuals not only lose their *own* will by adapting to that of society, but this road ends up in coercion, in which the individual is “forced to be free”.<sup>179</sup> All of this is extremely problematic for Berlin, since he believes that the route to individual liberty is one that avoids the abolition of many basic individual liberties by reference to the ultimate development of the people’s positive liberty.

The last important point associated to the rationalist approach and positive liberty refers to the role played by popular sovereignty. In this *controlled* condition, sovereignty represents the demand on the individual to comply with the rational will. Berlin explains that once the ‘positive doctrine of liberation by reason’ was transposed onto the political realm by Rousseau, it opened the door to the control of society by all of its “fully qualified members”.<sup>180</sup> This, in turn, guided people on the right and rational path towards the commonly held notion of good life, since society would retain the authority to “interfere with every aspect of every citizen’s life”.<sup>181</sup> In this way it is not difficult to imagine that the sovereignty of people is another element that could destroy the will of individuals. Therefore, popular sovereignty runs the risk of allowing the ‘will of all’ to subvert the will of individuals. This is one of the major concerns that is emphasized in Pettit’s theory, in regard

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<sup>175</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.150-151

<sup>176</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148

<sup>179</sup> Taylor, C. (1985). What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty. In C. Taylor (Ed.), *Philosophy and Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2 (pp. 211-229). Cambridge University Press.

<sup>180</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.162-163

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p.163

to his own aversion to positive liberty, which will be analyzed in the section III of this chapter.

To summarize, the *rationalist approach* begins with individual liberty of the *rational* self and ends with liberty as coercion of the individual by the fully rational selves of someone else. For this reason, Berlin holds positive liberty responsible for many threats that affect society, because it justifies the foundation of a totalitarian ideology. Although Berlin concludes that the third sense is a necessary aspect if one accepts positive liberty, it is important to highlight that Berlin's theory is strongly influenced by the geopolitical and ideological divisions of the 1950s and the Cold War, a period in which the apparently noble ideal of freedom as self-mastery was distorted by the totalitarian dictators of the twentieth century. In contrast, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries advocates of positive liberty like Bernard Bosanquet and Thomas H. Green were of considerable significance in British philosophical circles.<sup>182</sup> However, they fell into disrepute after World War I, when many intellectuals regarded such scholarship as responsible for the war.<sup>183</sup> Berlin's list of positive liberty theorists includes both liberals and non-liberals, Kant and T. H. Green (whom Berlin calls "a genuine liberal") on one side and Rousseau, Fichte, Hegel, Marx, the Jacobins and the Communists on the other. However, the taint of this disrepute was still prevalent when Berlin wrote his famous essay and led him to highlight the negative connotations that this concept carried with it.

Berlin demanded that liberal political philosophy should refrain from using or appealing to a positive concept of freedom. One cannot say that he did not succeed in convincing his peers. Since then, in the English-speaking political philosophy, few scholars (such as Charles Taylor and John Christman on whom I will focus later in the chapter) have supported a positive concept. It has come to the point where some theorists began to doubt the very existence of an alternative to the negative understanding of freedom, arguing that a single concept of liberty, *i.e.*, the negative, was more than sufficient.<sup>184</sup> This development was obviously against Berlin's original intention; for him, the positive concept of liberty was not only real, it was the gravest danger for humanity and responsible for the most terrible crimes of his time. Berlin believed that neglecting positive liberty would be unthinkable. In

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<sup>182</sup> For further details, see Green, T. H. On the different senses of freedom as applied to will and to the moral progress of man. In I. Carter, M. H. Kramer, & H. Steiner (2007), *Freedom: A philosophical anthology* (pp. 29-33). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.; Allard, J. W. (2010). T.H. Green's theory of positive freedom: From metaphysics to political theory. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 48(4), p.538-539.; and John Gray, (1989). On negative and positive liberty. In *Liberalisms* (p. 57-60). London: Routledge.

<sup>183</sup> Skinner, A Third Concept, p.240-241

<sup>184</sup> MacCallum, G. C. (1967). Negative and positive freedom. *Philosophical Review*, 74, p.312-334; Nelson, E. (2005). Liberty: One or two concepts liberty: One concept too many? *Political Theory*, 33(1), 58-78.

a sense it would amount to suppression of the most significant lessons which the political experience of the totalitarian regimes ought to teach the following generations. As Skinner affirms, stepping outside the stream of history and furnishing a neutral definition of such words as *libertas*, freedom, autonomy and liberty is an *illusion*.<sup>185</sup>

After explaining all negative implications that a positive notion of freedom would carry with it, Berlin reaches the conclusion that the concept of negative liberty offers a realistic and more human ideal than the goals of positive freedom. Freedom *from* does not carry with it the possibility of forcing people to adopt a life that is imposed upon them. It only secures a wide range of options that are protected from interference of others so that people can choose for themselves which route in life they will take.<sup>186</sup> To contrast, in a positive account, we exercise no choice over our goals, because *every door but one* will be shut before us.<sup>187</sup> In other words, the only option we have is to conform to the will of all. Thus, although positive freedom might be considered a magnificent ideal, it cannot be defined in such a way that it seems impossible to avoid the pitfalls to which the rationalist approach falls prey.

The perils of using the rationalist and *collective* approach to justify the coercion of some men by others in order to raise them to a *higher* level of freedom have often been pointed out. The plausibility of this kind of language lies in our recognition that it is sometimes possible and justifiable to coerce individuals in the name of certain goals, such as justice or public health. These are goals they would pursue themselves if they were more enlightened, but do not because they are blind, ignorant, or corrupt. This makes it easy for dictators to justify coercing others by convincing themselves that they are acting in the people's best interests, rather than their own. At most, this implies that if individuals were rational and wise, and understood their interests as the dictator does, they would not resist the dictator. This paradox has been often highlighted. It is one thing for a dictator to claim he knows what is best for *his* citizens while they do not, and therefore disregards their wishes for their own sake. It is quite another to argue that citizens have, in some sense, chosen this path - not consciously, not as they appear in everyday life, but in their role as *rational* beings whose *empirical* selves may be unaware of this choice. This *real self* discerns the good and inevitably chooses it once it is revealed.

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<sup>185</sup> Skinner, *A Third Concept*, p.265

<sup>186</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, p.169

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127

This monstrous impersonation, which consists in equating what citizens would choose if they were something they are not (or not yet) with what individuals actually seek and choose, lies at the heart of all political theories of self-realization. To put it differently, it is one thing to say that I may be coerced for my own good, which I am too blind to see - this may occasionally benefit me and even expand my liberty. It is quite another to claim that if it is for my good, then I am not being coerced, for I have willed it, whether I know it or not. This argument suggests that I am *truly* free even if my physical body and foolish mind reject it bitterly, and struggle against those who benevolently impose it with the greatest desperation.

This paradoxical view can also be pursued with the negative concept of freedom, where the self that should not be interfered with is no longer the individual with their actual wishes and needs as normally conceived, but the *real* self within, identified with the pursuit of some ideal purpose not envisioned by their empirical self. As with the positively free self, this inner entity may be inflated into some super-personal entity - a state, a class, a nation, or the march of history itself - regarded as a more *real* subject of attributes than the empirical self. However, the positive conception of freedom as self-mastery, with its suggestion of a man divided against himself, has historically lent itself more easily to this splitting of personality into two: the transcendent, dominant controller, and the empirical bundle of desires and passions to be disciplined and controlled. This demonstrates - if demonstration of so obvious a truth is needed, that the conception of freedom directly derives from the view that is taken of what constitutes a self, a person, a man. Enough manipulation with the definition of man, and freedom can be made to mean whatever the manipulator - the dictator wishes. Recent history has made it only too clear that the issue is not merely academic. Berlin is ambiguous about the merit and enhancement of positive freedom in a concept of individual freedom, exposing its defective nature by pointing out that historically this concept has been used to control and repress individuals in the name of liberty.

The answer to the question *How far does the government interfere with me?* is however clearly distinct from the question regarding self-government: *Who governs me?*<sup>188</sup> More precisely, positive liberty answers the question: "*What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?*".<sup>189</sup> As Skinner suggests, Berlin describes positive liberty as *freedom to* as "the ability, and not just

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<sup>188</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.130

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p.122

the opportunity” to lead one prescribed form of life.<sup>190</sup> In order to pursue a certain life, to strive after certain goals or achieve willed goals, the *presence* of something is required, *i.e.* self-mastery. By saying that an agent is *positively free*, Berlin means that he “governs himself” – is a true master of himself.<sup>191</sup> If the former is freedom *from* constraints, positive liberty has to do with the capacity to act as a *fully* human being.

To conclude, understanding positive liberty is a hard and tortuous goal. Contrary to Berlin, I will show that there is more to freedom than his analysis captures. Positive liberty is not necessarily productive of tyranny and a social goal that must be avoided, where connecting the concept of positive liberty to a rational approach is only *one* way to explain this notion. It is possible to live in societies oriented toward the enhancement of positive liberty without falling into authoritarianism. This different way is shown by Charles Taylor, who offers a much more moderate account of positive liberty that departs from the theoretical problems and political dangers identified by Berlin. In addition, if until now I have utilized the terms as *self-mastery* and *self-realization* interchangeably, as used by Berlin, I will now show how these concepts have different components. I dedicate the second section of this chapter to Charles Taylor’s theory and his concept of positive freedom as an exercise-concept.

## 2.2 Charles Taylor’s exercise-concept

Understanding the exact meaning of *positive freedom* is critical highlighting its role in individuals’ life. I have demonstrated in the previous sections that Berlin fails to provide a clear definition of positive liberty. He concentrates more on its implications by anchoring this concept in the notion of *rationality*, which requires that the will of individuals must adapt to the will of the society. Nevertheless, Berlin himself recognizes the importance of positive freedom. He affirms “I do not say that ideal of self-perfection is to be condemned in itself”.<sup>192</sup> But he denies its value when national and social self-direction, coupled with it, might lead to totalitarian regimes. These dangers problematize the promotion of this kind of liberty. Indeed, the use of the *rationalist approach* vindicates the denial and exclusion of the positive notion within the Berlinian concept of liberty, in favor of the advancement of the negative one. In this section I will demonstrate why we should abandon Berlin’s account of

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<sup>190</sup> Skinner, *A Third Concept*, p.242

<sup>191</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, p. 131

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p.168

positive liberty and instead embrace Taylor's formulation of positive freedom as an *exercise-concept*, which indeed avoids the negative connotations illustrated by Berlin.

Charles Taylor believes that the Berlinian formulation is an oversimplified and reductionist approach for capturing the "whole family of positive liberty".<sup>193</sup> Indeed, he affirms that when scholars attack positive doctrines of freedom, they generally have some "left totalitarian theory in mind"<sup>194</sup>, which represents, as I have demonstrated above, the main reason for Berlin to reject positive liberty. Since positive freedom so conceived resides exclusively in "exercising *collective* control over one's destiny", negative liberty is considered less vulnerable to abuse than its positive counterpart.<sup>195</sup> In the Taylorian view, this description represents an "absurd caricature" of positive liberty.<sup>196</sup> This is because it avoids one of the most powerful motives behind the modern defense of freedom, namely *individual independence*, or the idea that "each person's form of self-realization is original to her, and therefore can only be worked out *independently*".<sup>197</sup> Berlin fails to recognize the *uniqueness* of each individual by stressing exclusively the will of the society over the will of *each* individual. In addition to the importance attributed to the *singularity* of individuals' will, Taylor recognizes the enhancement of freedom by considering the inclusion of individuals within the *whole* society and the development of each individual's own *personality*. In other words, he does not want to deny that the political question *Who governs me?* is an important question. But he also wants to demonstrate that it is not the only question when it comes to positive liberty. Additional questions like *Which kind of person you want to be? What is the right direction? How to exercise this control?* must be included when discussing liberty. Negative freedom seems to be purely instrumental, in the sense it just provides space to individuals to develop their own personality. But it fails to give importance to how certain desires, and thus certain actions, are developed. Instead, I agree with Taylor that it is necessary to also include the development of each individual's *self-realization* when providing a complete definition of positive liberty. It is for this reason that Taylor supports the idea that positive freedom is developed not only on a *collective* level, but also on an *individual* one. In light of this, Taylorian theory does not only avoid negative connotations, but it is also able to give a complete overview of what positive liberty implies. He achieved this goal by anchoring its definition in the notion of self-realization and more specifically in

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<sup>193</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.211

<sup>194</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p.212

the importance of *discrimination among motivations*.

Due to the complexity and relevance of Taylor's theory, I divide this section in three subparts. I start by explaining freedom on *individual* level and secondly, I consider the *collective* aspect of his theory. Finally, in the third part, I demonstrate why Taylorian theory is able to overcome the dangers of authoritarianism and thus must be considered as the valid account for providing a better definition of positive liberty.

## 2.2-I Taylorian freedom on individual level

In Taylorian theory, the positive notion of freedom considers a view of liberty that involves the *exercising control over one's life*, i.e. a person is free "only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life".<sup>198</sup> By considering this definition, Taylor's account of freedom is identified as an *exercise-concept*.<sup>199</sup> A person's level of freedom, understood in this approach as *self-realization*, is directly associated with my ability to shape my life according to my own design. To put it differently, I achieve a personal level of self-realization, and hence freedom, because I retain and exercise a certain level of control over my life.

The idea of positive liberty as an *exercise-concept* contrasts Taylorian definition of negative freedom as an *opportunity-concept*. The latter is severely criticized by the author, because it describes only what individuals are allowed to do and "what is open to us to do".<sup>200</sup> Taylor states that for negative liberty theorists "it is a sufficient condition of one's being free that nothing stands in the way".<sup>201</sup> In this case, freedom consists of the absence of obstacles posed by others. Skinner also defines negative freedom as an *opportunity for action* thanks to the absence of constraints, whereas positive freedom is viewed as a *pattern of action of a certain kind*.<sup>202</sup> John Christman supports that Taylor's focus on positive liberty is centered on the "quality of agency and not merely the opportunity to act".<sup>203</sup> The negative theorists' approach is, according to Taylor, too simplistic, because it only concerns whether or not individuals are obstructed in a certain action.<sup>204</sup> However, it fails to identify the specific *desires* that lead to the particular action. Indeed, Taylor advances the idea that "freedom is

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<sup>198</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.213

<sup>199</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>202</sup> Skinner, A Third Concept, p.242

<sup>203</sup> Christman, J. (2005). Saving Positive Freedom. *Political Theory*, 33(1), p.79

<sup>204</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.215

important to us because we are *purposive* beings” and that *desires* are about the kind of person one would like to be.<sup>205</sup> When one’s behavior or actions conforms to those desires, one is conforming to one’s own ideals and is thus free. What matters in Taylor’s view is thus not only being *able* to do what I want, where what I want is unproblematically understood as what I can identify with my desires; but it is important to put certain conditions on my motivation.<sup>206</sup> If I am free in the exercise of certain capacities, then I am not free, or less free, “when these capacities are in some ways unfulfilled or blocked”.<sup>207</sup> For the capacities relevant to freedom must involve self-awareness, self-understanding, moral discrimination and self-control. If this is not so, I can fail to be free because these internal conditions are not realized. Taylor affirms that if we are self-deceived, or utterly fail to discriminate properly the ends we seek, or have lost self-control, we can be doing what we want in the sense of what we can identify as our wants, without being free; indeed, we can be further entrenching our unfreedom.<sup>208</sup> An exercise-concept of freedom requires that we “discriminate among motivations” that lead us to act in a certain way.<sup>209</sup> From the point of view of self-realization or indeed any exercise-concept of freedom, being able to do what I *want* can no longer be accepted as a sufficient condition on being free. Indeed, I fully agree with his argument that supports that I cannot be free if I am motivated, through fear, inauthentically internalized standards or false consciousness, to thwart your self-realization. Under an exercise-concept of freedom, being free cannot just be a question of doing what I want in the unproblematic sense. It must also be that what you want does not run against the grain of your basic purposes, or your self-realization.<sup>210</sup> Let me now focus on this aspect of Taylorian theory relevant for my argument. This aspect has particular importance as it captures some feminist concerns, setting the basis for explaining the challenge of overcoming *inauthentically internalized standard* or *inculcated false beliefs* for women. This theme will be thoroughly explored in *Chapter IV*.

According to Taylor, I am free to the extent that I act in line with my *real* desires, when I am able to do what I *really* want, to follow my *real* will, or to fulfill the desires of my own *true* self.<sup>211</sup> Taylor warns that such *formulae* may mislead by making us think that exercise-concepts of freedom are tied to some particular *metaphysics*, in particular that of a

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<sup>205</sup> Taylor, What’s Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.219

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p.215

<sup>207</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>208</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>209</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216



higher and lower self. This is far from being the case, and there is a much wider range of bases for discriminating authentic desires. What are then the components to define a desire as *real* and *authentic*?

As a first step Taylor explains his idea of “discriminations among purposes”. Since we are *purposive* beings, there must be “distinctions in the significance of different kinds of freedom based on the distinction in the significance of different purposes”.<sup>212</sup> Freedom is no longer just the absence of obstacle *tout-court*, but the absence of obstacle to *significant* actions, to what is important to us. With the examples of religious beliefs and the presence of traffic lights in the city, Taylor points out that some activities are more serious than others, and that some are utterly trivial. Some restrictions may limit our freedom but either not in a serious political or moral way, as in the case of traffic lights, which restrict my crossing of the intersection to certain times. Different is the case of restricting people’s expression of their religious and ethical beliefs, which holds greater significance than restricting their movement around uninhabited parts of the country.<sup>213</sup> These examples serve the purpose of showing that, in addition to *quantitative* judgements, an exercise-concept of freedom requires *qualitative* judgements as well, which can occur only if we discriminate among motivations.

But what lies behind our judging certain purposes as more significant than others? Some might hold that the more significant purposes are the ones that we *want* more. However, this perspective not only introduces another *quantitative* theory but also suggests that *wanting* serves as an independent criterion beyond mere significance.<sup>214</sup> Put differently, the intensity or priority of a desire, or the prevalence of one desire over another, is evident in the most banal experience that the purposes we acknowledge as more significant are not always the ones we urgently seek to fulfill, nor do they consistently prevail in conflicts of desires.<sup>215</sup>

When we reflect on this kind of *significance*, another element emerges which is the application of *strong evaluations* on our desires. This relates to the fact that we as “human subjects are not only subjects of first-order desires, but of second-order desires, desires about desires”.<sup>216</sup> Some desires and goals are considered more significant than others based on a

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<sup>212</sup> Taylor, What’s Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.219

<sup>213</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p.220

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p.220

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p.220. This concept resonates familiar with the second-order desire concept elaborated by Harry Frankfurt. Second-order desires as desires about desires. In other words, these are reflective desires that individuals have concerning their own first-order desires. The latter are immediate, ground-level desires for things or actions. For instance, if you want to eat a piece of cake or to go for a run. Frankfurt suggests that if you belong to the first category, then you are not a person

*qualitative* judgement. Some passing comfort is less important than the fulfilment of our life-time vocation, our *amour propre* less important than a love relationship. We experience some desires as bad, not just comparatively but absolutely, for instance, if we desire not to be moved by spite, or some childish desire to impress at all costs.<sup>217</sup> These judgements of significance are quite independent of the strength of the respective desires: even if we're currently consumed by a craving for comfort or preoccupied with our *amour propre*, the judgment of significance remains unchanged.

Our next step will address the question: How do we apply the principle of strong evaluation to a concept of freedom? Taylor specifically asks: Is freedom not at stake when we find ourselves carried away by a less significant goal to override a highly significant one? Or when we are led to act out of a motive we consider bad or despicable? Sometimes this could be the case, for instance, when there is some irrational fear which is preventing me from doing something I *very much* want to do. For example, the fear of public speaking might prevent me from taking up a career that I very much want to and thus represents a clear internal obstacle that need to overcome to fulfill my desire. Or again, if I am very attached to comfort, the depression resulting from losing it may prevent me from doing certain things that I should like *very much* to do, such as going on an expedition over the Andes, or a canoe trip in the Yukon. Or if I am undermining a relationship which is terribly important to me due to my spiteful feelings and reactions which I cannot inhibit or control. In these examples, no cases of conflict are identified, although they describe painful situations. It is clear what the most significant desire for the agent is: having a career, going on an expedition, saving my relationship. However, there are instead some internal fetters that are denying me to achieve these purposes.

The same argument does not apply if we imagine a situation in which I have to decide for a job that might break up my relationship, because it might take me away from home a lot. In this case I have indeed a terrible conflict, but in this case no talk of lesser freedom is adequate. Although the two desires are clear, this is not a sufficient condition of my *wanting* to speak of freedom. There are no internal constraints, and I am aware of all conditions and

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in any proper sense but only what he calls a wanton. To contrast, second-order desires are about one's first-order desires; e.g., wanting to want to eat healthy food, wanting to desire to exercise. Frankfurt emphasizes that true freedom involves not just having first-order desires but having second-order desires that align with and endorse one's first-order desires. In other words, a person is truly free when their actions (driven by first-order desires) are in harmony with their reflective endorsement or rejection of those desires - second-order desires (Frankfurt, H. (1987). Freedom of the will and the concept of a person. In *The importance of what we care about* (pp. 11-25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.). Despite I acknowledge Frankfurt's contribution, his mainly focus relies on free will. He *merely* provides a detailed account of internal psychological freedom, whereas Taylor's concept of positive freedom offers a more comprehensive view that includes both internal and external factors necessary for achieving self-realization.

<sup>217</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.220

consequences of my action. Another case in line with what I just described, where we would not talk of lack of freedom, is the situation in which my marriage may be breaking up because I like going to the pub and playing cards on Saturday nights. I may feel quite unequivocally that my marriage is much more important than the release and comradeship of the Saturday night bash. Nevertheless, I would not want to talk of my being freer if I could slough off this desire.<sup>218</sup> We have to distinguish between conflicts where we feel fettered by one desire, like the example of fear, discomfort or spite, and those where we do not, where, for instance, a man is torn between his career and his marriage. The difference is that in the case of genuine conflicts both desires are the agent's; whereas in the cases where he feels fettered by one, this desire is one I want to repudiate.<sup>219</sup>

All these examples provided by Taylor are meant to avoid misinterpretations and to clearly define situations in which we can speak of freedom, and not simply of experiences or obstacles *simpliciter*. I agree with Taylor that what is instead relevant for the absence of freedom is related to something that implies the loss of what I am, of my personality, as expressive of myself. The cases of fear, discomfort or spite are clear examples of elements that I can lose without any further implication for my personality. This is why they are seen as obstacles to my purpose, and hence to my freedom, although they are desires and feelings of mine.<sup>220</sup> Some career, or an expedition in the Andes or a love relationship are of great significance for me and represent a fulfillment of something central to me, which will bring me close to what I really am.

To further develop his argument, Taylor asks: How can we feel that an import-attributing desire is not truly ours? In the case of careers, it is clear that the irrational fear is a fetter, because it is irrational; or in the case of spite, this is a fetter because it is rooted in a self-absorption which distorts our perspective on everything, and the pleasures of venting it preclude any genuine satisfaction. Losing these desires, we lose nothing, because their loss deprives us of no genuine good or pleasure or satisfaction. Furthermore, there are also cases where we may perceive certain desires as not truly our own because we recognize them as incorporating a quite erroneous appreciation of our situation and of what matters to us. This can occur, for instance, in matters related to religious, traditional or cultural practices, where individuals may not identify with the expectations imposed upon them. Taylor provides the example of the desire of revenge which in certain traditional societies is far from being

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<sup>218</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.221

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p.224

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p.222

considered a despicable emotion but it is considered a duty of honor on a male relative to avenge a man's death.<sup>221</sup> I might *really want* to deny this desire; however, I have internalized some inauthentically standards imposed by my society and its traditions, which do not enable me to act as my second-order, and hence real, desire would require. In this case, my strong evaluation might let me feel wrong or mistaken about my most significant purpose, which is not to kill anyone or sacrifice one goal for the sake of another, that I want to repudiate. This aspect represents a very important element for the development of my argument in *Chapter IV* when describing the difficult condition for women to overcome internalized standards which deny them the kind of life they *really* want.

In line with this argument, Taylor clarifies that *real* desires are defined as *strongly evaluated desires*.<sup>222</sup> They must be experienced by the individual in question and cannot be decided and imposed upon her by an *external* force. Great deal of importance must be placed on a person having a say in deciding which desires I will take as my *own* and which actions I will follow through. Indeed, the process through which my goals has been selected or endorsed must be as a result of my critical and autonomous reflection, so that the goals can be called really *my own* goals.<sup>223</sup> This condition implies that I am not positively free when the formation of my goals occurs by a process which I fail to control; or with which I do not identify, when goals are imposed on me by subliminal advertising.<sup>224</sup> The procedural condition is extensively examines by John Christman, who stresses that for positive liberty champions, individuals must possess the ability to reject others' interpretation of their desires.<sup>225</sup> They cannot, under no circumstances, be forced to adopt a way of life that has been "oppressively imposed" by others.<sup>226</sup> What is required in this process is that individuals can reflectively and critically choose goals in complete autonomy. Only if individual's desires are formed through an autonomous and rational process, can they have control over one's self, and hence be free.

After all said, in addition to obstacles imposed by others in the process of *real* desires' formation, Taylor includes also *internal* elements that might influence the *inner* part of individuals. Some of these examples are fear, inauthentically internalized standards, lack of awareness or false consciousness.<sup>227</sup> Taylor claims that individuals cannot be free if they are

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<sup>221</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.226

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.223

<sup>223</sup> Zaluski, W. (2010). On The Meaning of the Concept of Positive Freedom and Its role in Normative Discourse. *Studies in the Philosophy of Law*, 5, p.187

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188

<sup>225</sup> Christman, J. (1991). Liberalism and individual positive freedom. *Ethics*, 101, p.345

<sup>226</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>227</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.216

totally unaware of their potential, “if fulfilling it has never even arisen as a question” for them, or if they are “paralyzed by the fear of breaking with some norms which has been internalized but which does not authentically reflect them.”<sup>228</sup> In other words, if I am motivated through fear or from other internal judgment-distorting obstacles, *e.g.* various psychological compulsions or resentments, my desires have not been *strongly evaluated* and thus cannot be defined as *real*.

The Taylorian *exercise-concept* requires the development of self-awareness, self-understanding, self-control, and self-mastery. If I want to be self-realized, and hence free, these ideals are *indispensable* to my individual freedom.<sup>229</sup> I need to “become something, to have achieved a certain condition of self-clairvoyance and self-understanding”, I must be “actually exercising self-understanding in order to be truly or fully free”.<sup>230</sup> Thus, freedom necessitates that I am clear on who I am and what I want out of life. I must be self-mastered to achieve self-realization. This is exactly what Taylor means when he defines freedom as an *exercise-concept*: some degree of *exercise* over one’s self is necessary for a person to be thought free.<sup>231</sup> If these ideals fail to be reached, and thus individuals’ desires are not authentic or real, then individuals cannot be said to be self-realized. Only in this way they can have control over one’s self and the shape of their lives, and hence be free.

In addition to the achieving of self-clairvoyance, self-understanding and other ideals, an important step within this process of *real* desires is thus the existence of internal obstacles. This aspect is crucial in the journey toward achieving freedom. Taylor affirms that individuals must effectively “overcome or at least neutralize” any internal impediments that might prevent them from realizing their desire.<sup>232</sup> Freedom does not only necessitate that I am clear on who I am and what I want out of life, but it is also contingent on the removal of internal barriers. The removal of internal constraints, *e.g.* fear, spite, phobias or compulsions, is an important step that individuals are required to overcome. This is because they represent a constraint to the fulfillment of their real and authentic desires, and thus of freedom as self-realization. The question to ask now is: If we think of liberty as including something like freedom of self-realization, how can we deny that individuals who are externally free but still thwarted by their false desires are still free, despite the existence of such inner obstacles? These individuals may struggle to achieve a level of self-realization through inner fears, false

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<sup>228</sup> Taylor, What’s Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.213

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213-15

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p.229

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p.228

consciousness, lack of awareness as well as because of external coercion.<sup>233</sup>

To further understand the importance of overcoming internal obstacles and of achieving the aforementioned ideals, I now return to Taylorian reformulation of negative liberty as an *opportunity-concept*. He faults these proponents for suggesting that individual liberty can be achieved solely by the removal of external constraints.<sup>234</sup> As I described in the previous section, negative liberty is concerned only with securing protection against external forces that could otherwise impede so-called *free acts*. In Taylor's view, without a consideration of how internal hindrances could prevent us from taking advantage of the options available, an *opportunity-concept* cannot amount to a *truly and fully* substantial account of individual freedom.<sup>235</sup> Explaining why he believes that many negative liberty theorists are wrong to maintain that freedom rests exclusively on the negation of external constraints, Taylor writes: "For freedom now involves my being able to overcome or at least neutralize my motivational fetters, as well as my way being free of external obstacles".<sup>236</sup> "This is because in the meaningful sense of *free*, that for which we value it [...], the internally fettered man is not free".<sup>237</sup> Opportunities cannot amount to meaningful choices or actions in which I am considered free unless I can effectively overcome my internal fetters, achieve a personal sense of self-mastery, and exercise control over my life.

To summarize, freedom cannot be solely interpreted as a mere absence of external obstacles but overcoming internal hindrances plays an important role in the achievement of liberty. Moreover, for an individual to be free, we have to make discriminations among motivations, and accept that acting out of some motivations, for example irrational fear or phobias, is not freedom. These kinds of constraints are as *real* as externally imposed obstacles and held to deny me the freedom to act in ways contrary to my direction. If individuals overcome their internal constraints and motivational fetters, they achieve a personal sense of self-mastery. This occurs because they are aware and conscious of what motivates them. In this way, they also achieve their self-realization. Consequently, if individuals are not able to overcome their internal hindrances, then they cannot be self-realized, and hence not free.

This explanation of positive liberty creates an insurmountable distance, not only from Berlinian conception of positive liberty, but also from the negative doctrine, because it

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<sup>233</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.212

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p.222

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p.212

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p.228

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p.227

introduces a new form of *obstacle*, *i.e.* internal constraints. Positive liberty gives rise to new challenges of liberty within the personal domain that do not depend on others' will or actions but derive from the inner part of oneself.

## 2.2-II Collective freedom as self-direction

The primary objective of Taylor's theory relies on the fact that a person has to exercise control over her life on both an individual and a collective basis.<sup>238</sup> After describing the *individual* level of freedom, I will now focus on the other aspect of this concept, which does not analyze the individual in its *singularity* but as a member of society. I agree that analyzing only the situation of individuals taken into isolation is not the ideal approach in providing a complete view of political freedom. As Philip Pettit also affirms, this kind of liberty is what we enjoy as a person embedded in a social context. In this sense, the lack or presence of freedom occurs in the presence of other people, rather than remaining in isolation.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, together with the achievement of ideals, such as self-mastery, self-awareness, self-realization, which refer to the individual *as a single entity*, Taylor includes also the *collective self-rule*. This is defined as *self-direction*, *i.e.* the actual exercise of directing control over one's life in the collectivity.<sup>240</sup> If the overcoming of internal obstacles might lead to the achievement of self-realization on individual level, how can individuals reach *self-direction*? Taylor states that this kind of control can be achieved by participating in shaping their society, primary through political participation.<sup>241</sup>

In the Berlinian approach the act of political participation is concerned with prioritizing democratic self-rule and with the institutionalization of the *positive doctrine of liberalization by reason*, which forces people to adapt to the rational will of the society. In contrast, in the Taylorian doctrine of positive liberty, political participation allows individuals to participate in collective decisions that guide the shape of society and helps to develop also a sense of belonging to the community. Insofar as they take an interest in the shaping of their community, the individual possesses a voice in deciding both the conditions under which they are left to pursue their life goals as well as the values that constitute the *common good*.<sup>242</sup> In other words, participating in the shaping of the society represents a way

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<sup>238</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.213-15

<sup>239</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.66

<sup>240</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.214

<sup>241</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>242</sup> I will elaborate on Pettit's concept of the common good in *Chapter IV*.

for the individuals to decide what choices will be available to them to choose from, in order to live the kind of life according to their own design.<sup>243</sup> In this way, individuals influence the activity of the state through political decision-making in which they condition the general framework of their own activity and interests.

*Self-direction* is a crucial feature of Taylor's account of freedom, since the act of participating in the collective self-rule of society is a reflection of people exercising control over their lives.<sup>244</sup> In this scenario, political participation becomes a relevant element needed to achieve the ideal of freedom. Thanks to this account, citizens can become aware of the issues that affect them as a society and it helps to create some common threats upon which people work together to create a pluralist society. In this way, they can come to an understanding of what is important to them as *individuals*, while meanwhile recognizing that they are members of a political and social community who share similar and/or opposing concerns and aspirations.

To conclude, I can summarize by saying that when joined with the importance that political deliberation and participation has in Taylor's positive liberty, we gain a fuller picture as to why both self-realization and self-direction can be subsumed under the umbrella of an *exercise-concept*. Together with the importance of being self-realized on an individual level - obtained by overcoming internal obstacles and by the enhancement of self-mastery and other ideals, individuals are required to also achieve a level of self-direction by participating in the life of the society. The crux of Taylorian theory is thus that an individual is self-directed, self-mastered, and ultimately self-realized on both a collective and individual level. Only if I am exercising control both in isolation and as a member of a community, I am able to achieve a level of self-realization, and hence of positive freedom.

## **2.2-III Beyond Berlinian positive liberty**

In the previous two sections I have described Taylor's formulation of positive freedom, which is grounded in a communal ethos with the act of political participation and on the individual level with the achievement of individuals' *own* level of self-realization through the overcoming of internal obstacles. There is one overarching goal I aim to capture in this section and I set out to accomplish: demonstrating why we should abandon Berlin's

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<sup>243</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.213-214

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 212



account of positive liberty and instead embrace Taylor's formulation of positive freedom as an *exercise-concept*. The main reason for this *decision* relies on the utilization and purpose of the Berlinian *rationalist* approach. In his view, self-realization and self-mastery (I will soon clarify their differences) and political participation lose their importance within a theory of positive liberty, because they are associated with the principle of *rationality* which carries negative connotations, as explained above. In contrast, if we move beyond this formulation, we can attribute to self-realization and political participation a different value by demonstrating their relevance within a doctrine of freedom and for the enhancement of individual liberty. I believe this is what Taylor can achieve with his definition to exercising control over one's life goals.

As an *exercise-concept*, Taylor's account *seems* not be all that far removed from Berlin's view of positive liberty, because it derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. Additionally, this is because it offers an answer to the question "[w]hat, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?"<sup>245</sup> However, their similarities are spurious, contrary to what it may seem at a first glance. Indeed, Taylor attributes different values to the idea of being one's *own master* and being the *source of control* over one's life. As I have briefly outlined in the first section of this chapter, Berlin incorrectly utilizes terms as *self-mastery*, *self-realization* and even *self-direction* interchangeably. In this way, he fails to recognize the differences that exist between the *intrinsic* value of *self-realization* and the instrumental one of *self-mastery*. According to Taylor, self-realization is, in many respects, equivalent to what it means to be free, in which determining oneself and the shape of one's life is an activity valuable in itself. In contrast, self-mastery represents one of the many ideals, together with self-understanding, self-awareness, self-consciousness, which lead an individual to achieve a level of self-realization, together with the overcoming of internal fetters. I argue that what *matters* for Taylor is that individuals are finally self-realized, and not self-mastered. The latter is considered only a means necessary towards the achievement of positive freedom.

By considering Berlinian classification of the three *senses*, Taylor seems to take into examination only the self-mastery and political participation aspects. Indeed, the *third* sense, *i.e.* the principle of rationality, is not included in Taylorian doctrine of positive freedom. At least, not in the way Berlin defines it, namely by considering the society in its whole. I will explain this additional distinction between the two authors just below.

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<sup>245</sup> Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, p.122

Now, the question to ask is: what are the implications of avoiding the *rationality* dimension within a theory of freedom? To put it simple, the answer relies on the fact that in this way we can avoid the negative connotations illustrated by Berlin. Specifically, Taylor's notion of positive freedom can amount to what is appropriately termed by Christman the "*inner citadel*" and "*tyranny*" arguments.<sup>246</sup> Christman rightly indicates that the *inner citadel* argument posits that an individual can be manipulated into giving up on desires that should not be pursued by a so-called rational actor. Whereas the *tyranny argument* assumes that people will be subjected to state sanctioned intrusions in order to bring their desires in line with the rational will of society. These arguments are in many ways also addressed by Pettit, as I will point out in the next section. Yet, once understood in the Taylorian sense of an *exercise state*, positive liberty loses its associations with the risks of conformity and totalitarianism.

What Taylor's formulation adds to the notion of positive liberty is that it affords the individual the necessary room needed for achieving their *own* level of self-realization, in which this ideal is particular to *each* person. As such, there is currency placed on the *particularity* and *uniqueness* of each individual's will. In light of this, Taylor highlights that individuals' goals may derive from their *own* moral reasons. This is why we cannot assume that all human goals rest on the same "footing".<sup>247</sup> Taylor supports a type of *individual rationalism*, in which only those actions for which a person's desire can survive their rational reflection are ones which the person can determine as their level of self-realization.<sup>248</sup> In other words, Taylor argues that freedom as self-realization involves deciding for ourselves which desires we will adopt in order to live the kind of life we *really* want as individuals.

On the same line of argument, there may also be good reasons for holding that others are not likely to be in a better position to understand our real purposes. This indeed might plausibly follow from the post-Romantic view above that we have our own original form of realization.<sup>249</sup> Some others, who know us intimately, and who may *surpass* us in wisdom, are undoubtedly in a position to advise us. However, no official body can possess a doctrine or a technique whereby they could know how to put us on the rails. This is due to the fact that such a doctrine or technique cannot in principle exist if human beings really differ in their self-realization. No valid guidance can be provided in principle by social authority, because of human diversity and originality. Moreover, this holds that the attempt to impose

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<sup>246</sup> Christman, John, Liberalism and individual positive freedom, p.352-358

<sup>247</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom p.216

<sup>248</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>249</sup> *Ibidem*

such guidance will destroy other necessary conditions of freedom. The importance of uniqueness will be revisited extensively in this dissertation when discussing women's interests and the diversity of their desires.

After all is said, concerning Berlin's *inner citadel* argument, we can safely set aside this critique as it is clear that a Taylorian approach to positive liberty is not grounded in the idea that there is a single ideal of the right and rational way to live. If Taylor is keen on explaining why positive liberty should be seen as an *exercise-concept*, he is also eager to explain why the road to self-mastery and self-realization is not through conformity. There is no demand placed on a person to engage in some form of self-abnegation and to adopt a single idea of which desires we ought to have. Only through the realization of who I am and what I want out of life, my choices can be an expression of myself and a reflection of my character. I argue this approach represents a more nuanced picture of positive liberty than that offered in Berlin's essay.

In addition to the *inner citadel* argument, Christman, in line with Berlin's theory, describes another way of exercising some control over one's life, *i.e.* by participating in the political process and deliberating about the bond for all members of society. This point takes me to discuss Berlin's *tyranny* critique. If we accept that "human beings differ in their self-realization", then this also involves accepting there can be "no official body" that can set people on the right course towards self-realization.<sup>250</sup> Consequently, if the adaption to the will of the society fails to exist, then the risk of authoritarianism is also avoided. The *exercise-concept* view does not open the way to totalitarian manipulation, because others, even though they might be considered *wiser*, are not likely to be in a better position to understand our real desires.<sup>251</sup> It is the fear of *Totalitarian Menace* that has led negative theorists, as Berlin, to abandon the promotion of positive freedom.<sup>252</sup> To contrast, if we move beyond Berlin's overly simplistic formulation, positive liberty loses the self-abnegating and tyrannical features. Taylor recognizes that each person has her own notion of a life worth living based on what is significant to her as an individual. Consequently, no enforced rational will by a state is necessary.

At this point, some would argue that the idea to be self-realized, and to follow our real and true desires, might go against the moral rule of the society. However, if individuals aim to be free in such a society, they cannot do what they want, but they have to follow a

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<sup>250</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.216

<sup>251</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p.215

certain *canonical form* by incorporating self-direction.<sup>253</sup> As stated by Taylor, and as I will demonstrate further in this dissertation, any account of our *real* purposes has to be based on good values/reasons. Being free is governing ourselves collectively according to this canonical form. Some examples could be found in Rousseau's view that only a social contract society, in which all give themselves totally to the whole, preserves us from other-dependence and ensures that we obey only ourselves; or in Marx's doctrine of man as a species-being who realizes his potential in a mode of social production, and who must thus take control of this mode collectively. Therefore, individuals must not only discriminate among motivations and follow their *real* and authentic desires, but they must also consider their society and its established norms.

In conclusion, it is critical to summarize three main points I have argued in this section. First, Berlinian positive freedom fails to represent a valid account of this concept due to the negative implications that it possesses. In contrast, I stated the importance and promotion of positive liberty supported by Taylor thanks to his *exercise-concept* of freedom. Secondly, I demonstrated that individual freedom entails two markedly different phenomena: either a situation which is external to an agent or one that derives from our internal status. Both authors are equally divided since Berlin supports the relevance of external constraints posed by others which limit individual liberty; whereas Taylor highlights the importance of achieving self-realization and of overcoming internal obstacles. The last point I want to emphasize, which will be extensively addressed in the next chapter, is that the lack of external constraints does not yet *completely* ensure freedom. Individuals are not free if they blindly follow irrational impulses, phobias, compulsions, or acts on the basis of inculcated false beliefs. For these reasons, I argue that understanding freedom exclusively in terms of the independence of the individual from interference from others is too simplistic. Therefore, I believe that Taylorian formulation of freedom as self-realization must be considered as the valid account for providing not only a more concise definition of positive liberty but also a more complete concept of individual freedom. After giving voice to the account of positive liberty, let me move further to explain how Philip Pettit's theory of negative freedom as non-domination can relate to freedom as self-realization.

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<sup>253</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.217

### 2.3 Positive freedom within Pettit's theory as non-domination

Although the republican conception of freedom cannot clearly be categorized in the classical established negative-positive dichotomy, it is generally considered a *negative* approach to liberty.<sup>254</sup> This is mainly because it seeks to eliminate the kind of arbitrary power and acts of interference that constrain a person's freedom in a range of choices.<sup>255</sup> In addition to Pettit's definition of non-domination as a truly *negative* perspective on liberty, he also rejects including the *positive* notion of freedom within his concept.<sup>256</sup> What are the reasons that lead him to avoid *embracing* this notion?

In "Republicanism", Pettit explicitly states that his conception of freedom is "exclusively" aligned "with the negative ideal of non-interference and not with the positive ideal of self-mastery".<sup>257</sup> He also adds that "it would *not* be a useful exercise to compare the attractions of these two freedoms".<sup>258</sup> Although a comparison with a positive doctrine of liberty would be of *dubious utility*, this conception can be considered as *positive* only to the extent that it requires "something more than the absence of interference; *i.e.* it requires security against interference, in particular against interference on an arbitrary basis".<sup>259</sup> I agree with Pettit that his theory cannot be considered a *positive* doctrine of liberty, even because it is clearly distant from the exercise-concept I aim to promote.

Pettit has little desire to associate his theory with doctrines of liberty that place *self-mastery* as their end goal, mainly because his concern does not include the achievement and formation of a *true* or *real* will "however imperfectly formed will may be".<sup>260</sup> The primary focus of the republican tradition is on avoiding the evils associated with domination, without considering whether or not an individual's will is "distorted by obsession, compulsion or low impulse-control".<sup>261</sup> According to this idea, he claims:

I am free to the degree that no human being has the power to interfere with me: to the extent that no one else is my master, even if I lack the will or the wisdom required for achieving self-mastery.<sup>262</sup>

In this citation, Pettit clearly *undermines* the importance of one's own will by

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<sup>254</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.27-31

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27,81

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51

<sup>260</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.49

<sup>261</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.48; Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.27

<sup>262</sup> Pettit, *Freedom as Antipower*, p.578; Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

promoting instead the negative aspect of freedom. At the first glance, Pettit fails to provide a clear meaning of self-mastery by addressing it as “whatever that is thought to involve”.<sup>263</sup> Despite this initial statement, Pettit makes clear his aversion toward positive freedom, in particular if “it is understood in the populist fashion as democratic participation”.<sup>264</sup> He rejects an ideal of freedom that carries with “the prospect of each being subject to the will of all”, which forces individuals to conform to a single will. This “is scarcely attractive” also because it would leave the door open for the state to retain arbitrary power.<sup>265</sup> Based on this definition, it is evident that he is alluding to Berlin’s notion of positive liberty. As aforementioned, this concept has encountered several criticisms due to the use of the *rationalist* approach, which requires that the will of individuals subvert the will of all. Consequently, by relying on Berlin’s approach, Pettit might encounter similar criticisms.

Before diving further into the argument why Pettit abandons *positive* approach of liberty, I believe it is relevant to pose the following question: Does the exclusion of the positive perspective in his republican concept of freedom indicate a general lack of interest in the internal sphere of individuals? If we consider other works by Pettit, it is evident that this is not the case. Despite his refusal to include the internal perspective strictly within the concept of republican freedom, Pettit interestingly discusses the inner aspects of individuals in many of his articles. In particular, he focuses on the importance of free will and how individuals are held responsible for both their beliefs and desires.<sup>266</sup> Moreover, in recent articles, he has even explored different concepts like selfhood and personhood by distinguishing three kinds of selves: the referenced self, the personated self, and the imputed self.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.51; throughout his texts, Pettit often equates self-mastery with the concept of autonomy. Instead, Pettit specifies that he might prefer *orthonomy*, which is a rule of the *orthos* or the right rather than a rule of the *autos* or self (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82; Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.49). Moreover, Pettit repeats the same doubt, namely concerning the meaning of self-mastery, when making an analogy between self-rule of the people and that of individuals in order to explain the republican feature of contestability (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.185)

<sup>264</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.81

<sup>265</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>266</sup> Pettit defends an account of responsible believing and desiring as a means for individuals to exercise freedom in their beliefs and desires. Freedom in belief entails the ability to think independently, while freedom in desire involves the capacity for autonomous choice. While traditional definitions of freedom often include the ability to have acted otherwise, the attractiveness of this notion depends on whether it leads to right beliefs and desires. Thus, individuals hold beliefs and desires freely when they possess the ability to rectify them if they are mistaken, regardless of whether they are correct or incorrect initially. Additionally, while the prevailing view separates freedom of thought from freedom of will, the argument suggests that failures to exercise free thought may not always be as readily apparent as failures to exercise free will, due to the nature of belief formation and cognitive processes (Pettit, P., & Smith, M. (1996). Freedom in Belief and Desire. *Journal of Philosophy*, 93, p. 429-49). For further details on the role of moral responsibility, see McGeer, Victoria & Pettit, Philip (2013). The Hard Problem of Responsibility. In David Shoemaker (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility, Volume 1*. Oxford, p. pp.160-188: Oxford University Press UK; and Pettit, P. (2001a). The Capacity to Have Done Otherwise. In P. Cane & J. Gardner (Eds.), *Relating to Responsibility: Essays in Honour of Tony Honore on his 80th Birthday* (pp. 21–35). Oxford, Hart

<sup>267</sup> Pettit argues that having a self means being able to consider myself in terms of a specific profile that defines who I am and how I am. When I contemplate my identity, there are three prominent profiles I might use to define myself, three selves

Distinct from these metaphysical concepts, Pettit clarifies that free will is separate from a concept of political freedom, where the latter focuses not merely on the single agent but on the individual in interaction with others.<sup>268</sup> In his book, “A Theory of Freedom: from Psychology to the Politics of Agency”, Pettit *attempts* to unify these two concepts, bridging the individual and the metaphysical (*i.e.* free will) with the social and the political, into a theory of freedom. Despite his good intention, I see Pettit’s effort to create a unified theory of freedom vague and ambiguous. In the next chapter, I will present my view of what a *compounded* notion of freedom must address, and which components should include. Additionally, I will show how Pettit fails to *sufficiently* emphasize the aspect of positive freedom, which is essential when describing individual freedom. For this reason, I view his book - published in 2001 - as a *mere* attempt to encompass the internal realm of individuals within a theory of freedom; though I argue it achieves only limited success. “A Theory of Freedom: from Psychology to the Politics of Agency” follows the publication of his renowned work “Republicanism”, which predominantly focuses on the other aspect of freedom, mainly on external constraints and arbitrary power exercised by others. However, it is in his book “On the People’s Terms” that Pettit presents a more mature and detailed argument on his political theory of freedom as non-domination.

In this masterpiece, Pettit *tries again* to include positive liberty within his account of freedom. Despite Pettit sees positive freedom as “a psychological or ethical challenge” that fails to include the “collective domain of individuals”, he still recognizes its value.<sup>269</sup> I believe Pettit struggles to *completely* exclude positive freedom from his theory primarily due to his interest in individuals’ inner sphere and likely because doing so would probably avoid numerous obvious criticisms.<sup>270</sup> Pettit acknowledges that “freedom of choice requires some kind of *psychological* freedom”; however, he chooses to ignore it “in the present context”.<sup>271</sup>

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with which I might identify. Firstly, I can see myself as an agent, characterized over time by the connections between my experiences, attitudes, and actions. Secondly, I can view myself as the persona I present to others, which, if sincere, I also internalize. Thirdly, I can see myself as the figure perceived by others, regardless of whether I embrace that image. These ambiguities highlight the complexity in philosophical discussions of the self and the conflicts in everyday advice to be ourselves and know ourselves, while also being told to forget ourselves and lose ourselves (Pettit, Philip (2020). *My Three Selves. Philosophy* 95 (3): p.363-389)

<sup>268</sup> Free will is what distinguishes you and me, then from agents whom we have to regard as lying beyond the reach of conversation: that is, the deliberative conversation that you can hold with yourself or with another person. In that sense, free will is nothing more or less than *conversability*. It is the capacity to be reached with effect in deliberative exchange – personal or interpersonal – about the pros and cons of various choices (Pettit, P., & Smith, M. (1996). *Freedom in Belief and Desire. Journal of Philosophy*, 93, p.429–49; and Pettit, P. (2001b). *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency*. Cambridge and New York, Polity and Oxford University Press.)

<sup>269</sup> Pettit, *On The People’s Terms*, p.49; Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.81

<sup>270</sup> My point is reinforced by Pettit’s own words: “I can only hope that once opponents of this kind see the full profile of the republican state that I defend” (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82). This quote indicates his awareness that his concept of freedom might face criticism, and he is preemptively addressing these concerns.

<sup>271</sup> Pettit, *On The People’s Terms*, p.49

He supports that political philosophy should not attribute importance to:

metaphysical free will: that is, with what makes you into an agent with the capacity, however that is understood, to take one or another option in a given choice. What we have just seen is that equally we are not concerned with what gives you psychological free will, enabling you to form your will autonomously, however autonomy is understood. Our concern is solely with social free will or, in effect, political freedom: that is, with what is required for it to be the case that however imperfectly formed your will may be, you are in a position to make your choice, without vitiation or invasion, according to that will.<sup>272</sup>

On one hand, Pettit clearly excludes the positive notion of freedom from his theory; on the other, he recognizes its value. Indeed, to address this *contradiction*, Pettit affirms that self-mastery can both be “facilitated” and “actively promoted by non-domination”.<sup>273</sup> In his view it “is bound to be easier for people to achieve autonomy once they are assured of not being dominated by others”.<sup>274</sup> Pettit is convinced that the state will *facilitate* the realization of the self-mastery due to the presence of a government where individuals are protected from domination by others, and in which they are able to contest the government decisions.<sup>275</sup> In Pettit’s view, people can manage their own affairs given that they live “under a dispensation where they are protected from domination by others”.<sup>276</sup> For this reason, he states that it is unnecessary to have a concept of freedom that should “explicitly embrace the richer ideal of promoting people’s personal autonomy”, and thus “there is no need to give state explicit responsibility” to promote this value.<sup>277</sup> Pettit reaffirms his concept some years later in another article, stating:

The state is a coercive entity that ought to be given charge of people’s freedom only when that is essential for promoting the *ideal*. I think there is no doubt but that the state should be charged with a concern for political freedom in the sense identified here. But I think it is even more important that it is not assigned the task of nurturing freedom in any other sense.<sup>278</sup>

As just discussed, Pettit’s reference to the ‘ideal’ pertains to political freedom, which he clearly distinguishes from psychological and ethical freedom.<sup>279</sup> He clarifies that an

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<sup>272</sup> Pettit, *On The People’s Terms*, p.49

<sup>273</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

<sup>274</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

<sup>275</sup> Before analyzing non-domination as a political ideal, Pettit persuaded scholars that there is no need to give the state explicit responsibility for promoting people’s personal self-mastery, although he clearly states that his aim is to reach an ideal society (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.81)

<sup>276</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

<sup>277</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>278</sup> Pettit, P. (2015). Freedom: Psychological, Ethical and Political. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 18(4), p.375

<sup>279</sup> Pettit distinguishes three kinds of freedom: freedom of the will which consists in having the psychological ability to deliberate about the options presented in any choice; freedom of the will which consists in having the ethical virtue or skill associated with *exercising* that ability reliably; and freedom for the will which consists in having political protection, in



individual can possess ethical freedom (referred to as freedom *of* the will) without political freedom (termed as freedom *for* the will), and conversely, one can have political freedom without possessing psychological and ethical freedom.<sup>280</sup> I agree with Pettit that “no matter how weak-willed you are, there is room and call for enjoying protection against the domination of others”.<sup>281</sup> However, I disagree with his idea that political freedom does not required the internal, or as defined by Pettit, ethical freedom. How can we imagine an individual making choices in the society without having the capacity and ability to exercise his true and authentic *will*?

After all said, an important point to highlight is the difference between *having* the capacity for free will and *exercise* this capacity. Pettit explains that “those with freedom *of* the will do not just have the abstract *capacity* to deliberate well and effectively; they actually *exercise* that capacity in their deliberation and decision-making”.<sup>282</sup> I will elaborate a *similar* distinction further in the last chapter. The fact that Pettit acknowledges the difference between having a capacity and exercise such capacity provides a fundamental support for the success of my argument. Unfortunately, he fails to develop this distinction further and to consider it as a *way* to address the existing *limitations* of his neo-republican notion of freedom.

In light of what I have discussed, I will demonstrate later in this dissertation that the establishment of a stable government that can ensure freedom as non-domination is *not* sufficient for individuals to achieve self-mastery, or self-realization in Taylorian terms. Moreover, even if we consider Taylor’s concept of freedom, Pettit’s theory could only *partially embrace* the concept of positive freedom. It is undeniable to affirm that Pettit’s account of freedom as non-domination gives more consideration to the development of the inner realm, and even positive freedom, compared to non-interference account. However, this does not mean that non-domination is able protect individuals’ self-realization. It is precisely the *shortcomings* of Pettit’s theory and its lack of inclusion of positive freedom that have led feminist theories to distance themselves from his *masculinist* theory of freedom. The next chapter will focus on the feminist criticism and concerns towards Pettit and his negative theory of freedom as non-domination.

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such a domain of choice, that you can count as a free person (Pettit, P. (2015). Freedom: Psychological, Ethical and Political. Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy, 18(4))

<sup>280</sup> Pettit, Freedom: psychological, ethical, and political, p.387

<sup>281</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 379

## Chapter III

### ONE COMPOUNDED CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

The dichotomy between negative and positive concepts of freedom is the most well-known philosophical debate that revolves around the question of what constitutes true individual freedom. Negative freedom, also defined as *freedom from*, has received more attention from social and political scholars. It emphasizes the absence of *external* constraints and the ability to act without interference from others. It is a *negative* concept of freedom because it is concerned with removing obstacles to individual choices and actions, rather than promoting a particular set of values or outcomes. Positive freedom, on the other hand, also known as *freedom to*, is less supported by social and political philosophers. It emphasizes the capacity to pursue one's own goals and to live a meaningful life in accordance with one's own values. Rather than *simply* removing external constraints, this notion is defined as a positive concept of freedom because it is concerned with promoting certain values and outcomes. Their antagonism arises also in the role attributed to the state and its aim to protect individual freedom. If on one side, supporters of negative freedom argue that the function of government should be to protect individual rights and to limit the power of the state; on the another side, supporters of positive freedom argue that the government should *actively* promote the well-being of its citizens and create conditions that allow individuals to flourish according to their true self.

In the previous chapter I described three authors who prioritize different aspects of freedom in their theories. Supporters of the negative notion of liberty include Isaiah Berlin, who regards it as “a truer and more human ideal” compared to positive liberty, and Philip Pettit, who emphasizes the value of freedom as non-domination, aiming to overcome the arbitrary will of others. Their argument in favor of negative liberty has faced opposition from philosophers who contend that positive freedom is crucial for fostering individual flourishing and advancing self-mastery, self-realization, or autonomy, seen as the primary values in

attaining individual liberty. In this argument, Charles Taylor presents a valid alternative to Berlin through his *exercise-concept*. Berlin's positive concept as self-mastery is criticized for its potential negative implications, such as the risk of authoritarianism and the imposition of societal will on individuals in pursuit of this ideal. Taylor's theory emphasizes the individual's role as the sole decision-maker of their actions, while also stressing the importance of identifying the necessary *conditions* for agents to act freely.

In contrast, supporters of negative notion of freedom believe that what actions to take, what values to hold, what goals to pursue or what desires moved us to choose a certain pattern of actions is of secondary or no importance in considerations of freedom. They contend that in political and social contexts, the *psychological* domain and *internal* constraints should not be considered. What matters, according to Berlin, is whether individuals have access to opportunities, while Pettit argues that it is crucial for individuals to not live under the arbitrary will of others.

My concern is: how can we think of a concept of individual freedom that avoids including internal constraints and the formation of desire which lead to certain actions? How can we detract attention from individuals and their power of free choice? How can we see individuals as simply *passive* recipients of what is offered to them by the state and by society? If we apply these questions to the context of women, how can we contribute to a feminist concept of freedom that excludes the danger of inauthentically internalized constraints or false beliefs, which have denied and still deny women the ability to act freely in a male-dominated society where most of their desires are still coerced and manipulated by social, cultural and patriarchal factors? In addition to the example of women's subjugation, I hold that as a human being, it is not conceivable to separate an action from its author. It is like thinking to separate a painting from its artist, where this piece of art is an expression of her perspective, creativity and style. It is the product of the artist's imagination and skills and is deeply connected to their personal experiences, emotions and worldview. In the same way, although the action and the desire that lead to a certain action can have their own *descriptive* processes, when describing a concept of freedom, they cannot be considered separately because the result is in its entirety.

In this chapter, I will expand on my argument advocating for a concept of freedom that goes beyond *mere* absence of external constraints or interference from others. Instead, I will propose that a *complete* understanding of freedom should also include the achievement of positive liberty due to the importance that this concept has for an individual's life. Human freedom is not hindered only by the interference of other humans; therefore, it must *not* be

understood as a purely *negative* and *passive* idea but should also possess ties to the ideal of *positive* and *active* concept.

After establishing the importance of positive freedom, the next question to answer is: what is the most suitable and appropriate way to *compound* a Taylorian exercise concept within a theory of negative freedom, and which theory of negative freedom can better embrace this concept within its notion: non-interference or non-domination? Throughout history, the concept of freedom has evolved depending on the different needs of the society at that particular historical, cultural and social time. In *Chapter I*, I showed that the original supposition that non-interference is *enough* for freedom is false. Pettit moved away from Berlin's concept of freedom both in negative and positive terms. In the first case, I demonstrated that Pettit's non-domination is *superior* because it offers a more nuanced understanding of freedom that considers the possibility of domination by the arbitrary will of others. It distances from merely preventing *actual* interference by others in an individual's actions - a crucial concern during the time of dictators and authoritarian regimes when Berlin develops his theory in protection of individual freedoms. Despite relying on the fundamentals of the republican theories back in the ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, Pettit, pioneer of neo-republicanism, develops a theory that better responds to contemporary challenges faced by current democratic societies. While sharing the main traditional values of civic virtue, active participation in the public life and the common good, Pettit also emphasizes the importance of protecting citizens from domination and guarantees that they have the freedom and capacity to contest freely in the democratic processes. For instance, an element that shows how Pettit takes distance from the traditional account and develops a progressive theory that considers the needs of the current society, is the reference to the *female* citizen. With this element, Pettit opens up his theory to the inclusion and role of woman not only as member of the household but also in the political context – women who were historically excluded from public sphere. This decision represents a great revolution in the *masculinist* republican concept of freedom, where the concept of citizenship, for instance, was exclusively intertwined with and reserved to men. This aspect and many others regarding feminist concerns and possible alignments between feminist concerns and non-domination -which will be described in details in the next chapter - highlight Pettit's intention, but probably more a *necessity*, to include women in his definition of non-domination.

Let me now turn back to the two points that I left open in the previous chapter, which are the following: is the establishment of a stable government in which freedom as non-

domination is ensured sufficient for individuals to achieve their self-realization? Is Pettit's theory able to embrace the concept of positive liberty described by Taylor's exercise concept? In order to answer these questions, I divided this chapter in five sections.

First, I will demonstrate that, despite Pettit's aversion towards positive liberty, the principle of non-domination is *closer* to Taylor's positive freedom than Pettit might imagine. This is because Pettit's theory can embrace, even if only *in part*, the notion of self-realization, specifically in the role attributed to political participation. In contrast, the same cannot be said when we discuss the overcoming of internal obstacles, specifically in the public sphere. Indeed, the second section will analyze in depth the differences between Taylorian freedom as self-realization and Pettit's non-domination. Additionally, I will highlight the role and importance that Pettit attributes to women to explain his concept of non-domination. In the third section, I will focus on another way, used by many authors, to *simplify* positive and negative concepts, namely by aligning the positive notion with the overcoming of internal obstacles and the negative one with the external obstacles. I will show how this distinction is often used inappropriately because it avoids considering the pure *instrumental* role of these restraints against the *intrinsic* values which belong instead to the positive and negative concepts of freedom. I will also highlight two other important aspects: the role played by human agents in the definition of a *constraint* and the impossibility to give a clear-cut definition of internal and external obstacles. In the fourth section, I will deepen my argument in favor of a *uniform* and *complete* concept of freedom which must include both positive and negative notions to reflect individual life experience in the reality. I will also respond to the objection that my concept can be equated with MacCallum's *triadic* concept of freedom. In the fifth and final section, I further develop my argument by supporting a *compounded* concept of liberty which must include both ideals of non-domination and self-realization. I will focus on Pettit's concept of non-domination and show the main reasons why Pettit's theory is unable to provide a *complete* theory of freedom. However, I will also acknowledge the importance of his contribution for the development of an engaged concept of freedom able to embrace feminist concerns.

### **3.1 Political participation as self-direction**

In *Chapter I*, I described the important role of political participation and contestatory citizenry within Pettit's theory. The *control* and *contest* elements provide individuals with

the opportunity to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives and to hold those in power accountable for their actions. Political participation and contestatory citizenry are fundamental components of a healthy and functioning democracy. By participating in the political processes, citizens can influence the policies and decisions that affect their lives and this can help to ensure that the government is responsive to the needs and desires of the people it serves. What matters for Pettit, indeed, is that the state needs to be designed to track people's interests according to their ideas; more precisely, the promotion of freedom as non-domination requires assurance that public decision-making tracks the interests and the ideas of those citizens whom it affects. Moreover, it also requires that the existence of the law is based on socially established norms that give security against interference. There can be no fair and equal state that fails to represent its citizens in *its entirety*.

In this section, my aim is to demonstrate that, while the concept of freedom as non-domination and the idea of self-realization are distinct, there are some similarities between the two theories. The first similarity between Pettit and Taylor is their common ground for a concept of individual freedom and their focus on a *type* of liberty we enjoy as a person embedded in interaction with others. Both authors stand out from the belief that individuals must be recognized as members of a society and cannot be fully understood or analyzed in isolation but in communities and social contexts. Individuals are influenced by the culture and social norms of the communities they are a part of. These norms shape our beliefs, values, desires and behaviors, and influence our interactions with others. The society we belong to can have a significant impact on our lives, in shaping our opportunities, experiences and perspectives. Our social networks can provide us with support, information and resources. Understanding the culture and norms of a community can help us to better understand the individuals and their actions. At this point, I also want to mention the importance of the social context for the shape of one's desires and actions which will be explained in details in *Chapter V*.

Back to the two authors. The most relevant similarity which contributes to making freedom as non-domination a different perspective in individual's achievement of freedom, is represented by Pettit's concept of democratic participation and the Taylorian positive conception of self-direction. In other words, Pettit's view of overcoming the subjugation to arbitrary power shares some resemblances with Taylor's view of a person's sense of freedom as self-realization, specifically if it concerns our being *self-directed*. In Taylor's view, *self-direction* is one of the important elements that allows a person to exercise control over oneself and the shape of one's life in the community. This is achieved only by participating

in the political process to shape our society according to our own interests and goals. To develop my argument in favor of this similarity, I first analyze Pettit's understanding of *having control* over governmental decisions, and then I focus on Taylor's label of *exercising control* over one's life.

In "On the People's Terms", Pettit highlights the importance of *having control* over the regulations of the government so that interference of the state does not count as dominating and the state will not deprive people of their freedom. Following the republican traditions, Pettit provides the reasons why state *intervention* is necessary to protecting citizens from its arbitrary power if and only if citizens have controls over the interference practiced by government, in the sense that only "if they /.../ control the laws imposed, the policies pursued, the taxes levied, they might not suffer domination at the hands of their rulers and may continue to enjoy their freedom in relation to the state".<sup>283</sup> In this way, citizens can enjoy equal freedom as non-domination in relation to government thanks to the presence of the rule of law, a separation of powers and democratic accountability. These elements allow citizens to possess control and influence governmental decisions, however, excluding the more basic and supreme laws which must be not subject to straightforward majoritarian amendments.<sup>284</sup>

In Pettit's view, this control would require that people not only influence government behaviors but their influence is needed and viewed as imposing a "welcome direction on that behavior".<sup>285</sup> Pettit distinguishes two degrees of control: having some influence over the process leading to the result, and using that influence to impose a relevant direction on the process, which thus helps to ensure that a suitable result transpires.<sup>286</sup> The need for influence is evident. Citizens could not claim to have control over a result that they merely observe "as a bystander".<sup>287</sup> At the same time, individuals' influence must give rise to a recognizable pattern in the process.<sup>288</sup> Freedom as non-domination gives great importance to the voice and opinion of citizens, so that they can move forward with a high level of certainty and

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<sup>283</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.153

<sup>284</sup> There are certain fundamental rights and principles that are considered to be so essential for the protection of individual liberties and the functioning of a democratic society that they should not be subject to straightforward majoritarian amendments. These are often referred to as "entrenched" or "supreme" laws, which means they are placed above ordinary legislation in terms of their legal status. For instance, human rights laws protect the basic rights and freedoms of individuals, such as the right to life, liberty, and security of the person, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the right to a fair trial. Human rights laws are often entrenched in a country's constitution or other fundamental documents and are a permanent and integral part of a country's legal system (Englund, Harri. "1. The Situation Of Human Rights: Debating Governance And Freedom". *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, p. 25-46)

<sup>285</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.155

<sup>286</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>287</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>288</sup> *Ibidem*

assurance that the course they plot will be free from the arbitrary power of another. The manner in which popular control is achieved, and ideas and interests of citizens are discovered, occurs through their participation in the electoral and contestatory domain, which ensures that citizens are able to contest the laws and policies enacted by the state. All decisions that affect citizenry must be worked out on the ground by the people of the republic themselves and are left to be contested from all corners of society. What counts as non-arbitrary use of power depends on what the interests and ideas of the people are, and these ideas and interests can be discovered only by actual and open public deliberations.

In the Taylorian doctrine of positive liberty, political participation plays a similar role to the one just described for Pettit. Participating in the social and political domain allows individuals to be part of the collective decisions that shape the society, so that individuals have a say in deciding the conditions under which they are left to pursue their life goals. Specifically, participating in shaping society represents a way for the people to decide what choices will be available to them to choose from in order to live the kind of life according to their own design.<sup>289</sup> In this way, individuals can influence effectively the activity of the state through political decision-making in those aspects which condition the general framework of their own activity and the realizability of their own ends and interests. In this scenario, political participation becomes a relevant component in order to achieve the ideal of freedom as self-direction, and *partly* self-realization, since the act of participating in the collective self-rule of society is a reflection of people *exercising* control over their lives.<sup>290</sup>

In addition to the fact that both authors recognize the importance of political participation within their theories, they also share the idea that participating in the society is not a good in *itself*, but rather it serves the purpose of protecting individuals' freedom. In other words, political participation is certainly important for Pettit and Taylor, but it is a *means* towards a higher value, namely the achievement of liberty. For Pettit, democratic participation is essential to the republic as a "necessary pre-condition" for avoiding arbitrary power and consequently for promoting the enjoyment of freedom as non-domination, which is considered the primary good.<sup>291</sup> Pettit argues that democratic societies with strong protections against arbitrary power are necessary for individuals to achieve non-domination. In such societies, political participation is seen as a fundamental right and institutions are established to protect the interests of individuals and prevent the arbitrary exercise of power

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<sup>289</sup> Taylor, *What's Wrong with Negative* p.213-214

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p.212

<sup>291</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.91



by those in authority. For Taylor, instead, political participation is a means towards the achievement of self-direction, which is then considered an *instrumental* value towards the *intrinsic* value of liberty of self-realization. In Taylor's view, self-direction involves individuals' ability to shape their own lives and pursue their own goals and interests, in accordance with their own values and beliefs. Political participation allows individuals to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives and to shape the direction of their communities and societies. To summarize, for both authors, the act of political participation is treated as *instrumental* rather than foundational to liberty.

After describing possible similarities between the two authors, let me now provide an answer to the first question, mentioned earlier: Is Pettit's theory able to embrace the concept of positive liberty described by Taylor's exercise-concept? I argue that Pettit's principle of non-domination can *partially* provide the necessary conditions to achieve Taylor's concept of positive freedom. This is primarily through political participation, which enables individuals to express their views, advocate for their interests and influence the decisions that affect them.

At this point, some might object that, Pettit's theory *might* fall under the umbrella of positive theories. This is because it includes some positive liberty's features within his theory. From a certain perspective, this can be true; however, this point needs to be made carefully and with subtlety. Even if these two approaches share some common ground, Pettit's theory lacks an important aspect which is relevant in the Taylorian view of positive liberty, namely the achievement of self-realization and the *exercise* of control over one's own life. The main difference relies on *having* and *exercising* control. If on one hand, *having* control means possessing the power or authority to influence or direct something or someone; *exercising* control, on the other hand, involves *actively* using that power or authority to make decisions, take actions, or otherwise manage the situation or individual in question. For a concept of positive freedom, the ability of exercising this control is the key for the achievement of self-realization, and thus freedom. In contrast, for negative theorists, whether this control is exercised or not is irrelevant. Indeed, it is important to remember that Pettit explicitly states that his theory of non-domination follows a negative approach.<sup>292</sup> What matters for Pettit is only that citizens have the *opportunity* to participate within the political domain, but not they actually *exercise* this *opportunity*. In other words, non-

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<sup>292</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.51

domination is only concerned with giving citizens the tools to retain the control to influence and contest decisions that might affect their lives non-arbitrarily.

Based on this difference of control and given Pettit's clear statement, it is clear how Pettit fails to include the *exercise* aspect of control supported by Taylor; instead, he *simply* supports the idea of *having* and *retaining* control. One of the main reasons for this discrepancy depends on the fact that their goals represent what respectively a positive and negative theory of freedom aims to achieve: on one side, the presence of enabling conditions that allow individuals to pursue their goals or desires; on the other side; the absence of external constraints and of arbitrary power. The similarity that exists between non-domination and the exercise-concept *simply* depends on the importance that both authors attribute to political participation, but not on the *nature* of control.

Despite this similarity, Pettit's concept of non-domination does not fully address the goals of positive liberty. This is because it lacks a crucial aspect of Taylor's concept of freedom: the consideration of internal hindrances and the development of self-realization by overcoming these internal constraints. The next section will focus on this aspect, specifically examining women's status of domination.

### **3.2 The status of women's domination and the exclusion of internal obstacles in Pettit's theory**

In *Chapter II, sec.3*, I described Pettit's approach towards positive freedom. In his theory, he briefly mentions this notion. He *avoids* the problem of enhancing it by supporting the idea that personal self-mastery can both be "facilitated" and "actively promoted by non-domination"<sup>293</sup>. His reason is that it "is bound to be *easier* for people to achieve autonomy once they are assured of not being dominated by others"<sup>294</sup>. According to Pettit, achieving freedom from domination and establishing a stable legal order will not only address issues of subordination among citizens but also provide a foundation for individuals to develop positive freedom. Although I argued for the *superiority* of non-domination over non-interference, where the first is considered more desirable and indispensable in describing freedom in our current society, this does not imply that non-domination is not the *be-all* and *end-all* of the concept of freedom. Although Pettit promotes the absence of domination and

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<sup>293</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

<sup>294</sup> *Ibidem*

the necessity of acquiring an *equal* status among citizens and towards the state, I will demonstrate that individuals can still lack some *aspects* of freedom.

To clarify the *shortcomings* in Pettit's theory, I will use a scenario provided by Pettit himself. This example, like the master-slave dichotomy, is one of the most emblematic conditions illustrating the status of non-domination: the relationship between husband and wife.<sup>295</sup> I decided to use the same example because it allows me to demonstrate the threats to freedom that extend *beyond* Pettit's concept of *mere* domination of husbands over their wives. The submissive condition of women will lay the groundwork for my argument in favor of a feminist neo-republican theory of freedom, which will be developed later in this dissertation. Before delving into Pettit's reasons for excluding *certain* kinds of obstacles in his theory of non-domination, let me begin with a brief historical overview.

For centuries, women have been illustrated to be *passive* and submissive beings, shackled by structures of male authority.<sup>296</sup> Only in the last decades, but still not worldwide, women have entered new social domains and acquired new roles from which they were previously excluded both in the private and public sphere. In his theory of non-domination, Pettit focuses on the status of women's domination. Specifically, he often mentions the example of wives who are dominated by their husbands through the resources of indoctrination, misinformation and manipulation.<sup>297</sup> Pettit distances himself from liberal negative supporters of freedom by arguing that even when husbands do not exercise force, coercion or manipulation through *active* interference, they still have *control* and *arbitrary power* over them. For instance, men decide how women should live or can influence the decisions they may make. Suppose a husband continuously monitors his wife's phone calls, text messages and social media accounts without her consent. He controls the finances of the household and his wife has limited access to money. He also prevents her from meeting her friends and family members or attending social events. In such a scenario, the husband is *actively* interfering with his wife's personal life and freedom, thereby restricting her individuality and freedom. A different situation occurs when such *active* interference does not exist. Nevertheless, to the extent that men enjoy a kind of control, specifically arbitrarily, women still live in a status of subjection and slavery. This idea is well exemplified in the

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<sup>295</sup> The husband who can beat his wife for disobeying his instructions, the employer who can fire his employees as whim inclines him, the teacher who can chastise her pupils on the slightest excuse are all figures who enjoy high degrees of arbitrary power over those subject to them. They are practical examples of the master/slave dichotomy (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.57, 60, 123-124, 138-140, 143,247; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.115)

<sup>296</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.138-140

<sup>297</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.57, 60, 123, 138-140, 143, 247; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.62, 115

famous play of Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*.<sup>298</sup> The protagonist Nora is denied nothing but macaroons by her doting husband, Helmer Thorvald, and even this restriction is a light burden, since she is able to hide the macaroons in her skirts.<sup>299</sup> As Ibsen makes clear, however, her comfortable existence is entirely blighted by her husband's unquestionable power over her. The key message of this play, that Pettit aims to echo in his theory, is that although the husband may act with benevolence (as in described in the famous example of "Gentle Giant" by Matthew Kramer)<sup>300</sup>, this would not solve the problem of women's subjugation, because the existence of that power is an evil in itself, even though it is scarcely ever exercised. Nora does not live in her own jurisdiction, but under the rule and mastery of her husband. Thus, as long as women live under the thumb of men, subject to their control and supervision, they would remain unfree.

Let's now follow Pettit's interpretation of freedom which considers three features sufficient for domination to occur, explained earlier in this dissertation: namely, the capacity to interfere, on an arbitrary basis and within "certain choices". Let's apply them to the example of Nora:

1. Regarding the first feature, Torvald has the *capacity* to interfere by trying to push his wife in his desired direction, in this case, he can forbid her to eat the sweets meant for their guests.
2. Nora's husband has the arbitrary power in reserve against the possibility that she is not disposed to go in the direction he prefers by *invigilating* or monitoring her choice; for instance, she tries to hide herself from her husband because she is aware of her husband's disagreement.
3. The husband has the capacity to limit Nora's choices by intimidating her into making preemptive adjustments in his favor; indeed, Torvald becomes angry with her for disobeying him and threatening to withhold money from her as punishment for her disobedience.

Although Torvald forbade her from eating sweets due to her health condition, the

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<sup>298</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.60

<sup>299</sup> "A Doll's House" is a famous play written by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen in 1879. The play is a groundbreaking work of modern drama and is considered a masterpiece of 19th-century theater. In Henrik Ibsen's play, there is a notable scene involving macaroons. The scene takes place early in the play, in Act I, when Nora Helmer, the play's protagonist, sneaks some macaroons from a box that is meant for guests. Nora is careful not to be seen by her husband, Torvald, who has forbidden her from eating sweets due to a health condition. As the scene unfolds, Nora's friend Mrs. Linde arrives, and Torvald soon enters the room. Nora tries to hide the macaroons from Torvald, but he notices the crumbs on her face and becomes angry with her for disobeying him. He scolds her for not taking his health seriously and for being wasteful by eating sweets meant for guests. The argument intensifies, with Torvald referring to Nora as a "little squirrel" and threatening to withhold money from her as punishment for her disobedience. This moment will foreshadow Nora's eventual rebellion against Torvald's controlling behavior and her desire for independence and autonomy.

<sup>300</sup> Kramer, *Liberty and Domination*, p.41-42

notable scene of macaroons is significant because it highlights the power dynamics in the Helmer household and the way that Torvald treats Nora as a child rather than an equal partner. Nora is a young wife and mother, who appears to have a comfortable life with her husband. However, as the story unfolds, she realizes that she has been living a false life and has been treated as a mere doll by her husband and society. Nora ultimately leaves her husband and children to seek her own identity and independence, making the play a powerful statement about women's rights and the need for personal freedom and autonomy.

Following Nora's example who lives under the subjection of his husband, Pettit's theory *requires* building a society where the absence of arbitrary interference is firmly established. In this society, women would enjoy not only freedom as non-interference but also as non-domination. Wives are thereby not dependent on the whims of their husbands and the latter would not intimidate or inhibited them in any way. If we just support the idea of subjection *only* related to active interference, we avoid including the risk that the husband might shape, damage or eliminate his wife's will and aspirations. In a non-dominated scenario, wives enjoy an equal status that allows them to look their husbands in the eyes without fear or deference. These examples will be taking and analyzed from different angles along the whole dissertation. What is relevant for this section is to highlight how certain scenarios are analyzed and that some are *insufficiently* emphasized in Pettit's theory. After describing the obstacles that wives experience in the household, I will move to explaining the limits women can still encounter in the public sphere.

In addition to what occurs in the marriage scenario, non-domination must also be ensured in relations to the other members of the society and overall in the relations with the government. According to Pettit, the only way to solve the problem of women's subjugation in both contexts is throughout the abolishment of the *slavery* institution. It occurs with the establishment of a well-ordered self-governing republic of equal citizens under the rule of law, where no citizen is the master of any other.<sup>301</sup> This implies that women are considered in all respects citizens of the republic and can benefit from equal rights and opportunities as men do. This allows women to have the same legal, political and social status and to be entitled to the same rights and protections under the law. In many countries, women have gained significant legal and political rights over the past century, such as the right to vote, access to education and employment opportunities.<sup>302</sup> However, inequalities between men

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<sup>301</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.59, 93; Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.63

<sup>302</sup> Fritzberg, G. J. (2002). Freedom that counts: The historic underpinnings of positive liberty and equality of educational opportunity. *Journal of Thought*, 37(2), 7-20.

and women still exist in particular contexts, even where patriarchal social structures and norms are eradicated. These aspects cause discrimination against women, limitation of opportunities in their education and participation in the political sphere. In an ideal scenario, instead, all citizens, including women, would enjoy an equal status in the *horizontal* relations with other citizens as well as in *vertical* relations towards the state. Only in the absence of arbitrary power both from their husbands and from the state, women might be able to pass the *eyeball test* and take part within the political domain by controlling and influencing governmental decisions.

At this point, since Pettit's idea of a republic implies that non-domination can be ensured in the familial and political contexts, it is important to question if the enhancement of this type of freedom and the establishment of a democratic government can solve all the problems that arise for the fulfillment of women's liberty. The questions to ask are: is an equal *status*, as explained by Pettit, sufficient to make women *completely* free? If this is true, would women *act* according to their equal status to their husbands and to the state, as Pettit affirms? If this were not the case, would Pettit nevertheless state that women are free just because the context *allows* them to act as non-dominated? Pettit holds that the abolishment of subjugation *will* also promote self-mastery and consequently allow women to *act* as free individuals. In Pettit's view, people can be *trusted* to manage their own affairs, given that they live "under a dispensation where they are protected from domination by others".<sup>303</sup> Thus, if freedom as non-domination is ensured on both the private and public level, then women are driven neither by the dependency on their husbands nor on the society. In other words, the protection of freedom as non-domination and the establishment of a stable legal order seem to *be all that matters* for Pettit to protect individual freedom. In contrast to what is affirmed in his theory, I suggest a different answer to the questions listed above.

Pettit's theory of freedom as non-domination is unable to explain why, despite enjoying an equal political and social status, in many societies many women still *act as if* they are dependent on their husbands. The main reason for this deficiency is Pettit's failure to recognize an element that is indispensable in individual freedom, and primarily based on the distinction between an *opportunity-* and an *exercise-concept*. Suppose the situation in which women live in a context in which different types of subjugations fail to occur both in the familiar and public sector. For example, women might have equal access to education, job opportunities and political participation. They would also have the freedom to choose

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<sup>303</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

their own paths in life, whether that involves pursuing a career, starting a family or both. Independently of women's decision, suppose a situation in which men retain no legal power in marriage, women can transform their opportunities for career and there is recognition of the right to vote and equal say in the political decision-making process. In these scenarios, women would likely experience a greater sense of freedom, equality and empowerment. Without domination, women would be able to fully *exercise* their rights, pursue their aspirations and contribute to society without any barriers or limitations based on their sex. Despite these opportunities, suppose that women would decide to be at home and behave as a *good* wife, and not even consider the option to start a professional activity.

Suppose now a similar situation described within a familial setting but in the relation between the state and its citizens, where women live in an advanced democracy, in which public domination fails to occur. In these conditions, women would have the same opportunities and freedoms as men to participate in the democratic process, express their opinion and hold public office. They would have the *opportunity* to control and influence governmental decisions throughout political participation and contestatory citizenry, which represent the most efficient ways to enjoy non-domination. In both private and public contexts, Pettit might say that women should have no reason to feel subjugated or dominated by their husbands or by the state, because they exercise no arbitrary power over them. Women's role within the familiar setting and society is recognized and their freedom as non-domination is secured. However, as mentioned in the previous section, *having* an opportunity is clearly distinct from *exercising* it. The existence of equal conditions is not an *obvious* consequence for women to *decide* to make use of them. In other words, non-domination would not ensure that certain opportunities are *exercised*.

Pettit's *negative* conception of liberty rests on the idea that external obstacles restrict the opportunity of the agent, but it fails to give voice to the other side of liberty, which depends "on the agent's ability" to enjoy those opportunities.<sup>304</sup> Viewing freedom as a quality of agency is different, conceptually, from viewing it as an *absence* of something, "no matter how robust one's conception of that *something* turns out to be".<sup>305</sup> Freedom needs not only be broadened to a variety of options that might not be interfered by others, but also to the actual realization of the desires and goals of human action. To use the famous example

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<sup>304</sup> Megone, C. (1987). One concept of liberty. *Political Studies*, 35(4), 611-622.

<sup>305</sup> Christman, Saving Positive Freedom, p.80

of Berlin's doors, we might say that although all doors are available to be opened, the individual is the one who decides whether or not to push one and which one of them.

At this point the next question to focus on is: what are the reasons that might stop women from opening those doors? Following Taylorian theory, the answer is that women fail to make use of certain opportunities because the development of their *desires* is mainly shaped by male-dominated-structural social and cultural norms. In the aforementioned examples, the main reason why women might fail to enjoy those opportunities depends on the fact that their *desires* are threatened by internal factors, like fear, inauthentically internalized elements, false consciousness, lack of self-awareness and of self-mastery. In those cases, women fail to be aware of the opportunities provided in a familial and political context, and therefore they do not *act* freely and do not open any door which might be available to them. The only way to take advantage of those opportunities occurs if women become self-conscious, self-mastered and self-aware of their role within the different environments. If this occurs, then they may overcome such internal obstacles and achieve a level of self-realization that leads them to be free also from a *positive* perspective. I will analyze the process regarding the formation of women's desire and its implications, in the last chapter of this dissertation.

To develop further my argument in favor of the achievement of individuals' self-realization, I might say that another important point against Pettit, and of negative-supporters of liberty overall, is the *priority* they attribute to the creation of equal opportunities and of a stable environment where individuals can enjoy their negative liberty, over the value of self-awareness and self-mastery necessary for choices and decisions they might *eventually* make. Let me provide the example in the political context. In the act of political deliberation and participation, individuals should be clear about what type of conditions they need to secure in order to realize their life plan. If the government fails to be responsive to people's interests and ideas, people must possess the *ability* to disagree, especially because this might affect the area of politics of common concerns which directly affects not only themselves but all citizens; for example, if people require adequate measures from the government regarding the needs for environmental awareness and protection.<sup>306</sup> A similar example can also be applied to the condition of women, who have asked for recognition of their equal role within the society. If women are unaware of what their *true* goals, their own values and preferences are, they will not be able to appropriately contest governmental decisions. Pettit attributes

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<sup>306</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.248



great importance to the voice of citizens in a democracy. Indeed, as explained in the previous section, political participation can partly contribute to the achievement of positive freedom. However, only in terms of self-direction in the public scenario. Thus, in addition to the idea that the removal of external constraints is not the only way to explain freedom, I might add that the removal of internal constraints that leads to self-realization should be secured even *before* the external hindrances. Individuals must be aware and conscious of themselves and their choices before enjoying the equal opportunities and provisions of the state. This idea is also supported by Taylor who affirms that “having the opportunity to be free requires that I already be exercising freedom”.<sup>307</sup>

What is important to highlight, however, is that the ideal of non-domination is *compatible* with the one of positive liberty, and that the existence of democratic governments is important for individuals to achieve their freedom. What I aim to emphasize is that we have to go beyond that unique goal, because securing *simply* negative freedom is incoherent and incomplete as a social aim. I do not want to deny that the background in which individuals can be *completely* free, must be the one in which a democracy is established. I surely acknowledge the importance of equal opportunities. Indeed, in order to achieve freedom as self-realization, individuals need certain resources, capabilities and opportunities, such as education, health, social support and access to markets and public goods. Without these basic conditions, individuals may be constrained in their choices and unable to pursue their goals. For example, the opportunity to vote requires the existence of free and fair elections, a democratic system of government and the absence of voter suppression or intimidation. Similarly, the opportunity to pursue a career requires access to education, training, job openings, and a supportive work environment. Nevertheless, at the same time, simply having these opportunities does not guarantee that individuals are *exercising* their freedom. Many factors, such as social norms, cultural values, economic constraints, political power and personal beliefs, may influence individuals’ choices and actions. Therefore, the opportunity to be free is necessary but not sufficient for actual freedom. Furthermore, some individuals or groups, such as women, may face structural or systemic barriers that limit their opportunities or constrain their choices. Despite the existence of formal opportunities, women might also experience discrimination, marginalization or exclusion that prevent them from fully *exercising* their freedom.

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<sup>307</sup> Taylor, What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty, p.214

Promoting equal opportunities is surely an important aspect of ensuring that everyone might have the chance to exercise their freedom but this is not a direct consequence. Human beings are not creatures that would make the negative concept of freedom *sufficient*; they are not agents whose will counts as free just to the extent that they are not subjected to interference or domination from others. To summarize, Pettit's idea of non-domination alone is *insufficient* to fully ensure individual freedom because it overlooks other potential threats to liberty. These internal psychological constraints can prevent individuals, particularly women, from *acting* freely, even in societies that *seems* to allow for freedom. If non-domination were sufficient, it would explain why some women in democratic societies still *act as if dominated*, despite the absence of domination from other agents. The issue arises because Pettit focuses solely on external obstacles failing to emphasize individuals' liberty as self-realization and their subjective orientations. Thus, Pettit's claim that a stable and just legal order *actively promotes* positive freedom is flawed.

As Christman states, freedom concerns not only the absence of intrusion but also the effectiveness as an agent.<sup>308</sup> This ideal is only going to be fully possible in the absence of external and internal hindrances. The latter will be the focus of the next section.

### 3.3 Internal and external constraints

The types of constraints that an individual might encounter are various depending on the different circumstances and contexts. Here are some examples:

- Physical constraints: These include limitations in mobility or health, such as a disability or chronic illness, that may prevent an individual from performing certain tasks or activities.
- Financial constraints: These include limitations in the amount of money or resources available to an individual, which may prevent them from pursuing certain opportunities or achieving certain goals.
- Social constraints: These include limitations imposed by societal norms or expectations, such as gender roles or cultural traditions, that may restrict an individual's choices or behavior.
- Legal constraints: These include restrictions imposed by laws, regulations, or government policies, which may limit an individual's freedom to act or make certain choices.

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<sup>308</sup> Christman, Saving Positive Freedom, p.80

- Psychological constraints: These include limitations imposed by an individual's own beliefs, attitudes or fears, which may prevent them from taking risks or pursuing new experiences.
- Environmental constraints: These include limitations imposed by the physical or natural environment, such as climate or geography, that may affect an individual's access to resources or opportunities.

In the context of political freedom, legal restrictions represent the basis necessary to maintain a just and equitable society. What about the other kinds of obstacles listed above? Are they also to be taken into consideration for a concept of individual political freedom? It is generally believed that all types of constraints should be minimized or eliminated to the greatest extent possible, in order to provide more opportunities or/and to maximize an individual's *capability* to exercise their freedom.<sup>309</sup> However, the decision to prioritize the overcoming of one kind of barrier over another depends on the essence of freedom that philosophers aim to support in their theories.

In the previous chapters I have analyzed three different theories and their way of defining the range of constraints. Berlin and Pettit prioritize *external* obstacles where coercion and enslavement result exclusively from the interference or domination of other agents. Their definition of liberty occurs either through acts of *actual* interference, as provided by Berlin, or through manipulation, brainwashing, pressure or deceit, as held by Pettit. The latter distinguishes between domination and interference as two ways in which other agents can pose obstacles to an individual's freedom. Interference occurs when an individual is prevented from acting in a certain way either by physical force or by the threat of force. According to Pettit's neo-republican approach, this threat can be addressed through legal or institutional mechanisms that protect individuals, which provide to the state a kind of *interference without domination*.<sup>310</sup> On the other hand, domination occurs when an

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<sup>309</sup> It is worthy highlighting at this point that the types of obstacles I consider are the ones that deny freedom as a normative condition, and not as a *physical* fact. As Kramer describes freedom as a normative condition, which is concerned with the ethical ideal of individual autonomy and the absence of external constraints on one's choices, and freedom as a physical fact, which is concerned with the tangible absence of physical barriers or impediments that prevent individuals from acting or making choices. While the two concepts are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they represent different perspectives on the nature of freedom and the conditions necessary for individuals to exercise their freedom (Kramer, M. (2002). Freedom as normative condition, freedom as a physical fact. *Current Legal Problems*, 55(1), p.43-63).

<sup>310</sup> As explained in *Chapter I*, Pettit believes that a legitimate state should *interfere* in the lives of its citizens to prevent domination by others as long as the state's interference does not itself amount to domination. *Interference without domination* means that the state should act to ensure that no individual or group is able to exercise arbitrary power over others and that its interventions should be subject to democratic oversight and accountability. The state should act as a neutral arbiter to safeguard, to prevent abuses of power and to protect individual rights and freedoms (Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.152)

individual is subject to the arbitrary or unaccountable power of others. This type of obstacle is more subtle and difficult to address, as it often involves *systemic* power imbalances and the domination of certain groups or individuals over others, as in case of male domination. Pettit argues that addressing domination requires not only legal and institutional mechanisms, but also broader social and political changes that empower individuals and challenge dominant power structures. Indeed, I hold that he provides a different dimension in understanding the negative notion, mainly by *expanding* the types of external obstacles that individuals might encounter in the achievement of their freedom of choice.<sup>311</sup> Pettit includes cases of brainwashing, coercion and manipulation which may lead to a lack of freedom, as it occurs in the case of wives' subordination who live under the arbitrary power of their husbands and suffer freedom even without *active* interference. These cases must be considered and added to the list of external obstacles that can deny individuals their liberty (as I argued when discussing the *superiority* of Pettit's theory over Berlin's earlier).

On one side we have advocates of barriers posed by others, on the opposite side there are those who highlight the importance of *internal* constraints whose derivation is internal to the agent. Constraints can be both internal and external, and they can have a significant impact on an individual's life and choices. These factors are *internal judgment-distorting* obstacles since they are primarily beyond individual control or choice. As shown earlier, Taylor refers to irrational impulses, fear, phobia and acts based on inculcated false beliefs as examples of internal psychological compulsions that may deny individuals their freedom as self-realization. Different from the set of obstacles considered in the negative camp, positive theorists tend to take a *wider* view of what counts as constraints on freedom and it is more extensive for the *former* than negative theorists, whose range of constraints is rather *narrow*.

Obstacles that count as *internal* in terms of their own location include psychological phenomena such as ignorance, irrational desires, illusions, fears and phobias. Such constraints can be caused in various ways: for example, they might have a genetic origin, they might be brought about by others, as in the case of brainwashing or manipulation, or can be posed by structure or system. In the first case we have an internal constraint brought about by natural causes and there is no doubt to see them as *internal*. In the second case, we

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<sup>311</sup> It is worth noticing that that the term *external* may be ambiguous, for it might be taken to refer either to the location of the causal source of an obstacle or to the location of the obstacle itself. Let's say that a person is trying to focus on their work, but they keep getting distracted by noise from outside their office. In this case, we could describe the noise as *externally-caused* because its source is outside the person's immediate environment (*i.e.*, it is coming from outside the office). However, we could also describe the noise as an *external obstacle* because it is located outside of the person's mind (*i.e.*, it's an obstacle that's preventing them from focusing, but it's not a mental or emotional state within themselves). So, depending on how we interpret the term *external*, we could use it to refer either to the location of the causal source of the obstacle (the noise is externally-caused) or to the location of the obstacle itself (the noise is an external obstacle).

talk about an internal constraint imposed by another human agent, and despite its effect in the internal sphere, the fact that it is caused externally could be also fall under the range of *external* constraints.<sup>312</sup> Finally in the third example, we refer to an internal obstacle caused by the existence of oppressive structure, like poverty, economic recession, unemployment or patriarchy. At this point, three different points require to be addressed and clarified separately: first, the key role played by *human* agents; secondly, the interrelation that exists among different types of constraints; and finally, the *instrumental* value that such hindrances assume in a concept of freedom. I will analyze each of them in the following three sections.

### **3.3-I Human agents vs. social structure**

The first important aspect to highlight is the necessity to distinguish obstacles posed by other agents and those posed by structures or systems, since they differ in their nature and purpose. For the sake of argument, I follow advocates of both non-interference and non-domination, who conceive as freedom as an interrelation between agents. While the two principles have different origins and philosophical traditions, as shown in the previous two chapters, they both recognize the interdependent nature of social freedom, which is analyzed as a dynamic process shaped by the interactions between individuals and social structures. However, both non-interference and non-domination recognize that social freedom is not an *individualistic* or *static* concept, but rather a *relational* and *dynamic* one that requires attention to the social and political context in which individuals operate. Thus, in this context obstacles posed by other agents refer to barriers or hindrances that arise due to the actions or decisions of other individuals or groups. For example, a woman may face obstacles in getting a job due to discrimination from the employer, which can result in lower pay, fewer opportunities for advancement and being passed over for promotions or job offers. In this case, the agent who poses the obstacle is the employer and the agent who is affected is the employee. On an opposite side, obstacles posed by structures or systems refer to barriers or hindrances that are inherent in the design or functioning of social, economic or political systems. For instance, a person from a disadvantaged socio-economic background may face obstacles in accessing quality education due to systemic inequalities in the education system or that woman may face discrimination due to the patriarchal system. The key difference between these two types of obstacles is that the former is more contingent on individual

choices and actions, while the latter is more inherent in the broader social, economic or political systems that individuals operate within. In addition, obstacles posed by structures or systems are often more difficult and challenging to overcome because they are deeply ingrained in the social fabric and require systemic changes to address which will be visible only in the long-term; whereas obstacles posed by other agents may be more *easily* identified and addressed through individual or collective action and can be visible in that moment.

What it is important to highlight here is that I focus on a concept of liberty which addresses the actions of *agents* as an obstacle towards the achievement of freedom. This approach is also supported by Pettit who claims: “Freedom consists in individuals being able to act independently of others, and it occurs only in the interactions between people who stand in relations of non-domination to one another”.<sup>313</sup> Pettit recognizes the role of societal structures but only in creating conditions of domination that may limit and shape individuals’ opportunities. For instance, he discusses economic inequality, social hierarchies and other structural factors only in the view that they can create relations of domination among individuals that may limit their freedom.<sup>314</sup> While Pettit’s theory of freedom as non-domination does not focus explicitly on the role of societal structures, he emphasizes the role of agents in creating and maintaining relations of domination. This decision reflects his view that “the oppressed are not simply passive victims but active resisters, seeking to transform the structure of domination that confines and limits (opportunities to) them”.<sup>315</sup> Throughout his work, Pettit highlights the importance of individuals in realizing freedom and challenging domination. Individuals are not merely *passive* recipients of structural forces but are *active* agents who can resist and challenge domination. Thus, his concept of freedom requires the absence of external obstacles as well as the presence of a collective commitment to non-domination and the ability to hold those in positions in power accountable for their actions.

Despite the fact that individuals are clearly influenced by the social and political contexts they live in, obstacles which are not posed by agents are *out of the scope* in my argument. I aim to describe situations where an agent has arbitrary power over another individual and may constrain some other people’s desire, whether directly or indirectly,

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<sup>313</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.107; *On the People’s Terms*, 91

<sup>314</sup> In *Republicanism* Pettit discusses how economic inequality can create relations of domination, noting that “economic power gives the possessor the ability to dominate others in any number of ways” (17-19); Pettit examines the concept of freedom as non-domination and argues that structural factors such as social hierarchies can create conditions of domination. He writes, “social hierarchies that prevail in many societies make it impossible for some individuals to avoid being subject to the arbitrary will of others” (31-34); Pettit discusses how the institutional arrangements of a society can create or reinforce relations of domination, noting that “certain institutional arrangements ... can operate to keep people in a position of subordination” (71-72).

<sup>315</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.26-27

intentional or unintentional.<sup>316</sup> Although agents may have the opportunity to dominate others in their decisions and to shape their goals due to dominating structures, this does not mean that we have to attribute the *agency* and *responsibility* for the lack of freedom to social *structures*. I hold they are *simply* the creation of human agents, who must be considered the only ones responsible for their existence. But at the same time, they are also the ones who can make a change in their *design*. If we consider patriarchy, described as a social system in which men hold primary power and authority and where women are often subordinated in various aspects of life, this system has been prevalent in many societies throughout history. Its effects on women's freedom and opportunities have been widely documented. While it is true that individual human agents have contributed to the creation and maintenance of patriarchal structures, many may argue that these structures exist and operate on a *systemic* level and are not simply a matter of individual actions or beliefs.<sup>317</sup> Patriarchy is a complex web of social norms, expectations and institutions that shapes the way in which we live and interact with one another. Furthermore, it is worth noting that it can be complex for individuals to challenge or dismantle them on their own, because patriarchal systems often serve the interests of those in power. Although it is important to recognize the broader structural factors that contribute to women's lack of freedom, I argue that *human agency* is the main and only important element able to create social change and to work towards systemic solutions. It is not the *structure* itself that dominate individuals, but only the *actions* of individuals that have established those systems and maintained it. Individuals as the only morally accountable and responsible human agents for the achievement or lack of freedom for themselves and, in some cases, even for others. In this context, men can become the most powerful allies in supporting women's emancipation and self-realization. I will further explain this point and the role played by patriarchy as a social structure in the concluding part of this dissertation.

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<sup>316</sup> Although I do not aim to analyze the presence or the lack of intention of an agent to pose obstacles on others, it is worth mentioning that external obstacles can be *intentional* or *unintentional*, meaning they can either be deliberately imposed by the agent or arise from the agent's actions without conscious intent. An example of intentional external obstacle is when a manager at a company intentionally blocks an employee from being promoted because of their race, gender or other personal characteristic. An example of unintentional external obstacle might occur when a company uses a standardized test as part of its hiring process, which ends up excluding candidates who have different learning styles or cultural backgrounds, even though the test was not intended to be discriminatory. In this case, the company's policy inadvertently creates a barrier to access for some individuals. These examples show how external obstacles posed by other agents can have different intentions or lack thereof, but can still have significant impacts on individuals' freedom. Addressing these obstacles may require different strategies depending on their nature, but it always involves recognizing and challenging the factors that limit individuals' access to opportunities and resources.

<sup>317</sup> Hirschmann, N. J. (2002). *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p.75-102

### 3.3-II The impossibility of a clear-cut

Until now I have described internal and external obstacles separately with the main aim to understand their origins and their nature. However, as already emerged in some examples, it is evident that when trying to draw a line between these two concepts, the difficulty to clearly separate them is *undeniable* because they often overlap. The second point which needs to be clarified regards the *impossibility* to have a clear-cut definition of internal and external obstacles. Even in Pettit's theory, who defines non-domination as a *pure* negative concept, some scenarios he describes could fall with *not so much controversy* under the positive camp since they operate in the psychological realm.<sup>318</sup> As clearly described in the emblematic example in the familial context, the husband can dominate his wife through acts of indoctrination or brainwashing and may use various tactics, such as gaslighting, emotional abuse and isolation, to manipulate his wife's thoughts, perceptions and beliefs, leading her to adopt his worldview and accept his authority. Over time, the wife may come to feel dependent on her husband and fear the consequences of challenging his authority or expressing her own views, which can lead to a sense of psychological domination.

Manipulation represents a clear example in which external elements or actions by other individuals can influence the internal domain and are describable as *external psychological* hindrances. In addition to these situations, there are other cases in which internal and external obstacles overlap, for example, in the case of *inauthentically internalized* constraints, as highlighted by Taylor. Let's analyze the experience of minority individuals who face both external discrimination and internalized inauthentic constraints. A person belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group may face external obstacles such as systemic discrimination, prejudice and marginalization. These external obstacles can limit the person's opportunities and social mobility and lead to a sense of exclusion. At the same time, the person may also experience inauthentically internalized constraints, such as feelings of shame, self-doubt and inadequacy that derive from societal norms and stereotypes about their identity. These internalized hindrances can undermine the person's sense of self-worth and confidence, and lead them to internalize negative beliefs about themselves and their abilities. The overlap of these internal and external obstacles can create a complex and challenging situation for the individual, as they struggle to navigate both external barriers and internalized constraints.

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<sup>318</sup> Harbour, M. D. (2012). Non-domination and pure negative liberty. *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 11(2), 186-205.



A similar situation can occur to women as well, who still face a range of external discriminatory practices and biases in the workplace, despite significant progress in women's rights and gender equality. For instance, women may be paid less than their male colleagues for the same work, be passed over for promotions or opportunities and face harassment and discrimination on the basis of their gender. At the same time, women may also internalize these discriminatory attitudes and beliefs, leading them to feel a sense of self-doubt or imposter syndrome in the workplace. They may also feel pressure to conform to gender norms or expectations, such as being nurturing or deferential, rather than assertive or ambitious. As a result, women may find themselves caught between external discriminatory practices and internalized constraints on their behavior, attitudes and aspirations. This can lead to a sense of dissonance or conflict, as they struggle to reconcile their own values and desires with the social norms and expectations placed upon them.

There is another way how to analyze and distinguish the category of constraints, which considers two different dimensions along which one's notion might be *broader* or *narrower*. The first dimension concerns the *source* of a constraint, which refers to *what* brings about a constraint on freedom: either by human action or with a natural origin. The second dimension is that of the *type* of constraint involved, where constraint-types include the types of internal constraints, mentioned above, but also various types of constraint located *outside* the agent. Some examples are physical barriers that render an action impossible, obstacles that render the performance of an action more or less difficult and costs attached to the performance of a more or less difficult action. The two dimensions of type and source are logically independent of one another. Given this independence, "it is theoretically possible to combine a narrow view of what counts as a source of a constraint with a broad view of what types of obstacles count as unfreedom-generating constraints, or *vice versa*".<sup>319</sup>

Although some might argue that inauthentically internalized constraints derive from external contexts and circumstances, and thus may be defined as *external*, it is undeniable that they affect the internal self of each individual, their thoughts, beliefs, actions and decisions. Whether such obstacles fall under the category of *internal* or *external* constraints, these are elements that stop individuals from achieving their liberty. Indeed, it is not clear that theorists who are normally placed in the negative camp need to deny the existence of internal constraints on freedom. As a result, the difficulty to draw the line strengthens even more my argument in favor of a concept of freedom that captures all relevant restraints in

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<sup>319</sup> Carter, I. (2022). Positive and negative liberty. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition).

individuals' life. Indeed, combining both positive- and negative-liberty elements in the idea of a barrier means that the line between internal and external cannot be clearly drawn; rather, the two must be seen as mutually constitutive and have to be understood together.

At this point, one might ask whether the inclusion of inner obstacles makes Pettit's theory to be about a positive notion instead of a negative concept of freedom. The answer is undoubtedly no. In addition to what is clearly stated by Pettit and his focus on the absence of domination and arbitrary power, as discussed earlier, I also believe it would be a mistake to reduce positive liberty *simply* to the consequences that may indirectly affect the internal domain of individuals and thus to be about the overcoming of internal obstacles. Moreover, although Pettit *expands* the kind of constraints by including also the *indirect* consequences to the internal domain, which occurs for example through acts of manipulation, this would lead to misinterpretation of the real essence of his theory. Pettit's main value is freedom as non-domination, and not *whatever exercise* of certain actions may lead individuals to be free. This brings me to the third and last point I need to clarify in this section, which refers to the instrumental role that internal and external obstacles play for the achievement of individual freedom.

### **3.3-III Their instrumental value**

In the previous chapters, I have often associated the absence of external obstacles with the negative notion of freedom and the overcoming of internal constraints with the positive notion. Although this seems to be the *logical* relation between these elements, this is not always the case. The misunderstanding that occurs here starts from the use of the term *obstacle*, which refers to constraints that limit both positive and negative freedom. Indeed, both Pettit and Taylor use terms such as *obstacle*, *constraint* and *hindrance* to analyze two distinct concepts of liberty, although they are in a disagreement about its scope. What is relevant is to avoid the mistake to think about these theories in a *too simplistic way*. Christopher Megone clarifies this point by arguing that although "Taylor is able to appeal to the use of the same term *obstacle*, a subtle change has occurred in the move from inner to outer".<sup>320</sup> Even if we still speak of restraints, we are not referring to negative liberty anymore. Indeed, in Taylorian theory, those terms apply to the internal sphere, whereas in Pettit's concept they refer to actions of others or to other *external* circumstances. Megone rightly

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<sup>320</sup> Megone, One Concept of Liberty, p.163

distinguishes between the *inner* and *outer* aspects of these hindrances. However, an additional clarification needs to be done in order to capture what is behind the idea of overcoming either internal or external obstacles. It would be a mistake to believe that the concept of liberty, negative or positive advocates want to address, is associated with which *kind* of obstacles they aim to overcome. Internal and external obstacles are only a *means* towards the achievement of a higher value represented by freedom, although they lead to two distinctive kinds of liberty, respectively positive and negative. What is relevant to emphasize is the role played by obstacles, whether internal or external, in a theory of freedom. To clarify this important distinction let me analyze each concept separately.

The Taylorian concept of freedom as self-realization supports the ideal that in order to be self-realized, individuals must achieve a level of self-mastery, self-understanding, self-awareness and self-control, which requires *discrimination among motivations*. These important features can be accomplished only when individuals overcome their internal constraints. However, it is not the absence of such obstacles *simpliciter* that matters for Taylor. Rather, the abolishment of constraints becomes a means towards individuals' achievement of self-realization.<sup>321</sup> Towards a similar direction, John Christman argues that positive liberty concerns the *ways* in which desires are formed, whether as a result of rational reflection on all the options available or as a result of pressure, manipulation or ignorance.<sup>322</sup> Moreover, he adds that what it does not regard is the *content* of an individual's desire.<sup>323</sup> What matters is the mode of formation of certain desires. This implies the claim that there is not only one right answer how a person should live. This argument will become very important when discussing *certain* choices of women who live under strong patriarchal social norms, which may be considered controversial and questionable for some feminists.

A similar explanation can be attributed to a concept of republican freedom, which aims at abolishing obstacles posed by others, so that people can enjoy freedom from domination and then can have the opportunities to make their choice freely. Pettit clearly states that "freedom of a person does not just require the absence of certain obstacles but, more specifically, an absence that is secured by a rule of accepted norm and law".<sup>324</sup> This is a point that is forcefully supported by Christman when he claims: "What *counts* as a

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<sup>321</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Liberty, p.217

<sup>322</sup> Christman, Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom, p. 344-346

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 359

<sup>324</sup> Pettit, *On The People's Terms*, p.48

constraint is only specified by the presupposition of what final state such interference makes impossible”.<sup>325</sup>

Freedom thus cannot be simply reduced to the removal of obstacles, either internal or external. What must be promoted and protected is the ability of individuals to act freely in a positive way, *i.e.* to be self-realized, and to create a stable and just government able to avoid domination in the private and public domain. This is different from saying that obstacles should be removed. It is not the elimination of constraints that matters. What must be ensured is the achievement of a certain *kind* of life and of a *status* of non-domination and dependency from others. The presence or absence of a certain types of hindrances are only a means towards the achievement of the value of liberty which applies both to non-domination and self-realization.

### 3.4 Towards completeness and uniformity

The explanation of the three points regarding the importance of human agency, the impossibility to sharply distinguish the different kinds of obstacles and their instrumental value provides an overview of the role played by internal and external obstacles. From what emerged above, it is evident that the impossibility to distinguish the inner from the outer part and the consequent overlap that exists between internal and external restraints, whether posed by others or as a consequence of our inner realm, leads to the necessity to talk about freedom in its *entirety*. All these elements show that negative liberty is incomplete as a full account of human freedom since it captures only obstacles posed by others and fails to consider our internal and psychological sphere. Individual freedom cannot be *simply* analyzed as a pure *negative* notion, or as an *opportunity* concept; otherwise, freedom would become an inadequate and reductionist concept. Thus, I hold that the combination of these two notions should not be considered as an ideal, as affirmed by Berlin and Pettit, but as a *human* necessity. This depends on how the constraints and values of non-domination and self-realization interrelate and influence the *real* life of human beings.

The title of this chapter invokes the idea of a concept of liberty that is able to *compound, integrate* and capture both positive and negative freedoms. This section lays the foundation for a *complete* and *uniform* concept of individual freedom, which combines the Taylorian concept of self-realization and the neo-republican concept of non-domination.

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<sup>325</sup> Christman, Saving Positive Freedom, p. 84; Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Liberty, p.212, 217-219, 228

Before moving to explaining *what* Pettit's theory needs to include in order to be able to embrace feminist concerns and specifically self-realization, which is the main goal of this dissertation, another important clarification needs to be done in order to avoid some misunderstandings, in particular due to the wide space I gave to explaining the difference and value of internal and external obstacles. Indeed, some might argue that my advocacy for a *unique* theory of liberty that combines negative and positive notions is similar to MacCallum's theory of liberty. Let me look at this a bit more closely.

MacCallum views freedom as a triadic concept, in which liberty always consists of three components: "X is free (not free) from Y do (or not to do, become or not become) Z", where X refers to the agent, Z refers to *freedom to* actions and conditions of a character available to the agent, and Y refers to *freedom from*, namely "preventing conditions" such as constraints, restrictions, interferences and barriers that should be absent if *freedom to* is to be obtained.<sup>326</sup> MacCallum clearly states that the subject of freedom has to be an agent, as supported by Pettit and argued in the previous section. To explain this point, MacCallum states that some uses of *free of* and *free from* don't mean *rid of* or *without*. For example, saying "the sky is now free of clouds" is not about freedom because it does not deal with an agent.<sup>327</sup> Whenever the freedom of an agent is in question, it will always be freedom from some elements of constraint upon doing or becoming (or not doing or becoming) something.

MacCallum clearly contrasts the dyadic relation of *freedom from* and *freedom to*, respectively associated with the negative and positive notion, because this characterization only serves to emphasize one or the other of the two features of freedom of agents.<sup>328</sup> Consequently, those philosophers who argue that *freedom from* is the only freedom, or that *freedom to* is the truest freedom, or that one is "more important than" the other, "cannot be taken as having said anything both straightforward and sensible about two distinct kinds of freedom".<sup>329</sup> This might be only an attempt to emphasize the importance of only one part of what is always present in *every* case of freedom. He recognizes that freedom is always both freedom from something and freedom to do or become something.<sup>330</sup> MacCallum highlights his doubt about the reasons provided by philosophers for this decision and the necessity to choose either one notion or another. For instance, what a positive notion of freedom might require, in particular in the context of political freedom and in the context of democratic

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<sup>326</sup> MacCallum, Negative and positive freedom, p. 314

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, p.315

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, p.318

<sup>329</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>330</sup> *Ibidem*

republics, is that the state should take action and provide the right tools to its citizens to ensure their positive freedom. However, whether this is due to historical reasons, as argued by Berlin during totalitarian regimes where self-mastery had a negative connotation, or in the case of republican freedom where the exercise of certain actions depended on a just and equal legal order, advocates of negative freedom have always excluded the importance of positive freedom.

When discussing freedom, we usually tend to start from the famous dichotomy provided by Berlin and the next questions that arise are: “Well, who *is* right? Whose concept of freedom is the *correct* one?” or “Which *kind* of freedom do we really want after all?”<sup>331</sup> Instead of trying to explain what freedom means, MacCallum argues that we should focus more on each of the three *variables*, *i.e.* the identity of agents, what counts as an obstacle and restraint, and on the range of what such agents might or might not be free to do or to become.<sup>332</sup> It is clearly feasible that agreements between adherents of different notions of freedom in their understanding of the range of one of the variables does not make inevitable similar agreements on the ranges of the others. Indeed, it is totally possible that the kinds of issues arising in determination of the ranges are sufficiently diverse to make such simple correlations unlikely. Precisely this renders attempts to divide writers on freedom into two opposing camps so distorting and ultimately futile. There is too rich a stock of ways in which accounts of freedom may diverge.<sup>333</sup> It would be important to focus our attention on each of these variables and on differences in views as to their ranges, instead of focusing on a concept of freedom overall.

In line with this argument, MacCallum argues that it is conceptually and historically misleading to divide theorists into two camps. For instance, he mentions major philosophers, like Locke or the Marxists, who are ‘accused’ to have some elements of the negative and some of the positive notion and thus cannot be placed unequivocally in one or another camp.<sup>334</sup> MacCallum even develops further this point by arguing that the fact that even known philosophers cannot fit too well in one camp or another might have even worse consequences. He suggests that the whole system of dichotomous classification is futile and

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<sup>331</sup> MacCallum, Negative and positive freedom, p. 320 ; for support of Berlin’s dichotomy see Blau, A. (2004). Against Positive and Negative Freedom. *Political Theory*, 32(4), 547-553.

<sup>332</sup> MacCallum, Negative and positive freedom, p.322

<sup>333</sup> MacCallum, Negative and positive freedom, p.327

<sup>334</sup> An example of this overlapping is John Locke who said: “liberty ... is the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action according ... as he himself wills it” (Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk. i i, ch. xxi, sec. 15). He also said, of law, “that ill deserves the name of confinement which hedges us in only from bogs and precipices,” and “the end of law is, not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom” (Second Treatise of Government, sec. 57). He also sometimes spoke of a man’s consent as though it were the same as the consent of the majority (Locke, J. (1960). Two treatises of government. Cambridge University Press).

distorts important views on freedom.<sup>335</sup> Indeed, MacCallum challenges the classical definition of the so-called adherents of negative freedom who see freedom as *absence* of something as obstacles to freedom.<sup>336</sup> In order to support his argument, he provides the following example: Consider a man who is not free because, although unguarded, he has been locked in chains. Is he unfree because of the presence of the locked chains, or is he unfree because he lacks a key? Are adherents of negative freedom prohibited from giving the latter answer? Following the same principle, he also contrasts adherents of positive freedom who are not always straightforward in their acceptance of the *lack* of something as an obstacle to freedom. “They sometimes swing toward attributing the absence of freedom to the presence of certain conditions causally connected with the lack, absence, or deprivation mentioned initially. For example, it may be said that a person who was unable to qualify for a position owing to lack of training (and thus not free to accept or ‘have’ it) was prevented from accepting the position by a social, political, economic, or educational ‘system’ the workings of which resulted in his being bereft of training.”<sup>337</sup>

In a similar way, Eric Nelson points out, most of the theorists that are traditionally located in the positive camp, such as Green or Bosanquet, do not distinguish between freedom as the absence of constraints and freedom as the doing or becoming of certain things. Indeed, he argues that all positive concept of freedom may be reduced to negative notions, with disagreements over the meaning of *constraints*.<sup>338</sup> The mistake here resembles the one MacCallum points out. Freedom is not just about lacking obstacles, whether internal or external. It also involves the *effectiveness* of an agent, which is “manifested not only in one’s internal or psychological capacities to govern oneself but also in one’s ability to carry out one’s wishes through action in the world”.<sup>339</sup> The suggestion to reduce this ideal to negative notions threatens to seriously misunderstand what positive freedom really means. The suggestion that positive conceptions of liberty can be reduced to negative notions “threatens efforts to include idealized models of agency in our broadest understanding of

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<sup>335</sup> MacCallum, Negative and positive freedom, p. 322

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321

<sup>337</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>338</sup> For these theorists, freedom is the absence of any kind of constraint whatsoever on the realization of one’s true self (they adopt a maximally extensive conception of constraints on freedom). The absence of all factors that could prevent the action *x* is, quite simply, equivalent to the realization of *x*. In other words, if there really is nothing stopping me from doing *x* - if I possess all the means to do *x*, and I have a desire to do *x*, and no desire, irrational or otherwise, not to do *x* - then I do *x*. An equivalent way to characterize the difference between such positive theorists and the so-called negative theorists of freedom lies in the degree of specificity with which they describe *x*. For those who adopt a narrow conception of constraints, *x* is described with a low degree of specificity (*x* could be exemplified by the realization of any of a large array of options); for those who adopt a broad conception of constraints, *x* is described with a high degree of specificity (*x* can only be exemplified by the realization of a specific option, or of one of a small group of options) (Nelson, Liberty: One Concept Too Many?)

<sup>339</sup> Christman, Saving Positive Freedom, p. 80

freedom”.<sup>340</sup> An additional example refers to Skinner. He argues that Berlin fails to capture a *separate* concept of liberty in regards to the notion of *internal constraints* since it would only extend the range of things that can count as constraints.<sup>341</sup>

I completely understand the reason why many authors categorize their theories in one camp or in another. Since their goal is to define which value of freedom they aim to prioritize, I do partly agree with MacCallum’s argument that categorizing writers as adherents of this or that kind or concept of freedom creates the basis for a *theoretical* distinction. However, I hold that this is not feasible in a concept of human freedom. Moreover, the fact that philosophers align their theories with one camp or another, yet include elements from the opposing camp, strengthens my argument. It is impossible to disregard elements that are interrelated in individuals’ lives; they can only be fully understood in a context of uniformity and completeness that accurately describes individuals’ experiences in their achievement of their freedom.

On one side I agree with MacCallum’s idea that we cannot imagine freedom without the absence of constraints and the presence of certain actions and conditions of character. But I argue that this *triadic* relation between agents, constraints and ends, as he proposes, is *unhelpful* in understanding the kind of obstacles (in the context *freedom from*) that block action. Moreover, it does not tell us the kind of action and conditions of character (*freedom to*) to be pursued neither the characteristics of the agent who is the subject of freedom. This last element plays a relevant role for feminist theories, as I will discuss in the last chapter.

There are four reasons why my advocacy for a *compounded* and *integrated* concept of liberty cannot be compared to MacCallum’s definition. First, which I consider the most important, I develop my argument by relying on Berlin’s *dyadic* structure of liberty, according to which there are “two rival concepts of freedom” and not *two* separate moments in a *single* concept of liberty, as proposed by MacCallum. Berlin’s distinction remains an important point of reference for discussions about the meaning and value of political and social freedom. I still find it valuable to differentiate between positive and negative concepts of freedom because it is crucial to understand which aspect limits individuals in their capacity or opportunity to act and achieve their goals. The second reason to move away from MacCallum’s triadic concept of freedom is the failure to differentiate between internal and external obstacles. Despite he acknowledges the existence of internal constraints, that might stop individuals from doing what they *really* want (in this case by referring to cases of

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<sup>340</sup> Christman, *Saving Positive Freedom*, p.86

<sup>341</sup> Skinner, *A Third Concept*, p. 239



ignorance and passion)<sup>342</sup>, his triadic relation fails to recognize the importance of such elements by grouping all kinds of *character* under the same category Y. Applying the same principle of differentiation between the two concepts, as discussed in the previous section, I hold that distinguishing among constraints is useful in comprehending the aspects that philosophers overlook in their attempts to formulate a *compounded* concept of freedom. The third reason relates to the lack of *control* necessary for individuals to make choices and fulfill their goals. MacCallum's notion of *freedom to* merely denotes the *potential* to carry out certain actions, focusing solely on the absence of constraints. In contrast, what matters in a concept of positive freedom is that individuals do certain things in a *certain* way, such as realizing their true selves and achieving self-realization.

### 3.5 Non-domination as starting point

After showing the reasons why my aim to have a *complete* and *uniform* concept of freedom cannot be equated with MacCallum's triadic concept, I can return to my argument in favor of a *compounded* way of thinking about freedom. Specifically, I will show how to achieve this goal by making Pettit's theory more realistic, adequate and applicable to our current male-dominated society.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, Pettit's theory is able to *further* develop the classical liberal concept of negative freedom by expanding the types of *external* obstacles that individuals might encounter in the pursuit of their freedom. In addition to the inclusion of constraints like manipulation or brainwashing, which affect the psychological sphere of individuals, and emphasizing political participation, which *partly* develops an aspect of positive liberty, are crucial. I believe Pettit's approach is essential for experiencing individual freedom and is *closer* to a complete theory of liberty than the concept of non-interference. However, this cannot be sufficient to capture all obstacles and needs that may deny individuals their freedom.

Despite the exceptional work made by Pettit, I argue that the neo-republican definition of freedom is still vulnerable, because it fails to consider relevant circumstances in which a lack of liberty might occur. What Pettit fails to recognize is that not only external restraints and the absence of arbitrary power, but also internal factors and the lack of self-mastery, self-awareness might contribute to make an individual unfree. Despite Pettit's

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<sup>342</sup> MacCallum, Negative and positive freedom, p. 331

partly recognition and interest in the inner and psychological sphere, internal obstacles give rise to new challenges which cannot be excluded from the discussion of the concept of liberty. Undercutting a person's freedom is only going to be possible if there is more than mere *absence* of external constraints but also the *absence* of internal impediments and the *presence* of self-realization. Indeed, it is important to remember that self-realization does not only require simply the overcoming of internal obstacles but also the development of *certain* desires under *certain* circumstances.

Pettit's theory not only falls short in explaining how and why individuals develop specific interests but also neglects to address whether these interests arise freely or are influenced by manipulation or corruption from others. Negative freedom appears to purely *instrumental*, in the sense that it just provides *space* to individuals to develop their *own* desires. It overlooks the significance of how particular desires, and consequently actions, are shaped.

This absence is highly significant because these actions will impact society and the decisions that affect not only each individual but the entire community as well. Considering again the right to vote, which is the most powerful tool that citizens have to let the state hear their voice. If this *voice* is not authentic, if it depends on false beliefs, if it is inauthentically internalized or if citizens are not able to understand its value, how could we say that negative advocates of freedom should not care about this in a concept of freedom and the state should *just* limit itself to provide right and equal opportunities to citizens? Pettit's theory is surely *superior* to non-interference, because it *enlarges* the kinds of obstacles and *partly* focuses on the inner status of individuals when including self-direction in his theory. However, human beings are not *passive* creatures that care only about the actions of others, but they have an *active* role both in private and public domain. In this context, their voices should be real and authentic, and need to be heard in the social and political contexts.

Although Pettit supports the establishment of democratic republics, in which certain rights and freedoms can be protected, the achievement of a certain mode of political life, for example manifested by the development of civic virtue, does nothing to establish and protect the ideal of citizens to be authentic, self-governing and self-realized agents. The necessity to enlarge the scope of non-domination and to embrace elements that may still damage individuals' freedom is not an *ideal* but a *necessity* for a concept of liberty. What Pettit's theory lacks is an *effective* incorporation of the development of each individual's self-realization into the inclusion of positive liberty in his theory. Merely attributing the

attainment of this ideal to the existence of a just legal order is inadequate in ensuring that individuals can cultivate true desires that translate into real and authentic actions.

The idea of *combining* the two ideals of non-domination and self-realization is not what I aim to achieve. In contrast, I agree with Berlin, who supports that any attempt to bring together particular judgments about freedom under a single theory “or overarching a single formula” will be a failure.<sup>343</sup> When I discuss the ideal of *one compounded* concept of freedom, I am convinced that, contrary to what proposed by MacCallum, we should retain the distinction between positive and negative liberty. In this way, scholars are able and willing to understand what their theories lack in achieving individual freedom. It is only by analyzing freedom from *each* perspective and in each camp that we appreciate a complete concept of liberty. However, I also think that what is required is to acknowledge that instead of each camp arguing, we should in fact find a way to have them genuinely engage with each other.

My aim is to develop an understanding of freedom that ensures negative liberty as non-domination and meanwhile can give the grounds for the self-realization of individuals. However, I do not aim to oppose the ongoing project of republican theory, but to depart from the limitations of Pettit’s theory.

I believe that freedom as non-domination is an important starting point for a concept of freedom. Democratic social and political structures that ensure *equality* among citizens and towards government may well minimize external constraints. However, it must also take into consideration the promotion of positive freedom, so that it can also attempt to confront obstacles that manifest themselves inter-personally. From these insights, I hold that the necessity to create a compounded theory of liberty that spans across the individual, social and political realm of human freedom must prevail in philosophy.

If we apply this principle to the current situation of women, the need to reframe a compounded notion of freedom becomes even more apparent. Despite significant progress in recent decades, women still face various forms of discrimination and inequality in different contexts, for example in pay, political representation, violence and harassment, reproductive rights, gender stereotypes and many others. Addressing these issues requires ongoing efforts at *all* levels of society, from grassroots activism to policy changes and institutional reforms. Achieving gender equality is not only a matter of justice and human rights, but also a crucial step towards building a more inclusive and prosperous society for

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<sup>343</sup> Skinner, A Third Concept, p.238

all. It would be unrealistic for contemporary theorists of freedom to ignore and neglect certain issues that impact not only women but the entire society across various domains: individual, social and political.

## Chapter IV

### FEMINIST CONCERNS ON REPUBLICAN THEORIES AND ON PHILIP PETTIT'S MALE DOMINATION

Republican and feminist theories have rarely found a common path in the field of political philosophy. Emerging from distinctly masculine origins, republicanism has been analyzed as an 'uneasy ally' to feminist ideologies and “far from (being) woman-friendly”.<sup>344</sup> Where republicanism focuses attention on the political framework within which we can challenge domination, feminism is more concerned with the background conditions that contribute to it.<sup>345</sup>

Despite the fact that feminism was born in a sense out of liberalism, many feminists have long sought inspiration in traditions that contest the liberal hegemony in shaping and controlling institutions, individual rights and free markets over political, economic and social structures. Mary Dietz, for example, supports that feminism could further strengthen its steadfast dedication to participatory democracy by aligning itself with the republican tradition rather than the liberal one.<sup>346</sup> Such a revival initially began with examining classical authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah Arendt through a republican lens. Both authors, acknowledged for their significant contributions to feminist ideologies, use some elements in their theories that clearly invoke the traditional republican values. Let me briefly explore the reasons why some feminist scholars have come to view the works of Wollstonecraft and Arendt as more aligned with republican approaches rather than liberal ones.

“A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” is widely regarded as a cornerstone and a seminal piece in the history of feminist literature. Mary Wollstonecraft personifies, as no

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<sup>344</sup> Phillips, Anne, 2000. Survey Article: Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 8 (2), p. 279

<sup>345</sup> Phillips, Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?, p. 290

<sup>346</sup> Mary Dietz, Context is all: feminism and theories of citizenship, *Daedalus*, 116, 4 (1987), 1-24

one else, the political and personal demands of feminism of her time. Published in 1792, this groundbreaking work criticizes the constrictions on women's lives and the imbalance between the sexes, which were not due to biological differences but to the lack of education and to women's socialization. She denied that women were inferior to men in ability and that limiting their roles to domesticity deprived society and public realm of the valuable contributions women could make to the betterment of humanity. In one of her famous quotes, Wollstonecraft states: "It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are in some degree independent of men. Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience".<sup>347</sup> This masterpiece was revolutionary for its time as it eloquently articulated the need for women to have access to education, intellectual development and the ability to participate equally in society. Wollstonecraft challenged the prevailing societal norms and perceptions about women's roles and capabilities. She emphasized how the influence of a social order defined by men was what stopped women from freely expressing their abilities.

Due to her significant contributions in feminist thoughts, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" has been analyzed from different perspectives. The most widespread analysis of Wollstonecraft is to be referred to be as liberal thinker. Due to her emphasis on individual rights, rationality, the equal access to education for women and the argument that women possessed the same capacity for reason and virtue as men, most feminist scholars have indeed interpreted Wollstonecraft's work within the liberal framework.<sup>348</sup>

If on one side such principles clearly resonate as liberal, on another side her focus on civic participation, virtue and the critique of oppressive social structures aligns with republican political thoughts. Even scholars who include her ideologies within the liberal framework, recognized that Wollstonecraft's "works from the 1790s are at least as infused with a language of republicanism as of legal rights"<sup>349</sup> and that there are "echoes of republican thinking" in her notion of a female citizen.<sup>350</sup> Indeed, Wollstonecraft emphasizes the importance of women's active involvement in society, cultivating virtues necessary for civic engagement and critiquing societal structures that limited women's autonomy. She

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<sup>347</sup> Wollstonecraft, M. (1998). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. New York: Norton. (Original work published 1792), p.158

<sup>348</sup> Several scholars and authors have interpreted Mary Wollstonecraft's work and philosophy through a liberal lens, emphasizing her alignment with liberal principles. Virginia Sapiro examines Wollstonecraft's contributions to contemporary democratic and liberal theory (*A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>349</sup> Virginia Sapiro (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

<sup>350</sup> Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 219

claims: “women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government”.<sup>351</sup> Nevertheless, women did not gain representation in the British Parliament for over 100 years after Wollstonecraft’s book was published.

While Phillip Pettit does not exclusively label Wollstonecraft as a republican, he has related her ideas to republicanism. When highlighting the importance of common knowledge of domination as a condition where individuals in the society are aware of their vulnerability to potential arbitrary interference by others, Pettit quotes Wollstonecraft: “It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are, in some degree, independent of man”.<sup>352</sup> Wollstonecraft, like Pettit, argues that “women are driven because of their dependency on their husbands - because of their slavery”.<sup>353</sup> Both supports an ideal of woman who does not have “to live at the beck and call of husband or father” or “to beg their leave or curry their favour”.<sup>354</sup>

Contrary to Pettit, Lena Halldenius clearly defines Wollstonecraft a “feminist republican”.<sup>355</sup> Halldenius argues that her feminism is articulated within and against the republican movement, which used the language of rights and liberty in favor of popular sovereignty and against despotic and aristocratic privilege. Indeed, at the very start of the book Wollstonecraft connects her work to the discussion of the rights of humanity that were taking place in the West at this time, especially in light of the American and French Revolutions. “If the abstract rights of man will bear discussion and explanation, those of woman ... will not shrink from the same test”.<sup>356</sup> Those rights, limited only to white men with property, should be discussed just as men’s have been and needed to extend to *all* citizens, including women. To strengthen her argument, Halldenius refers to those authors who read Wollstonecraft as liberal: “If by liberalism one simply means a philosophy based on natural rights and a principle of individual liberty, then Wollstonecraft was a liberal, but we do not gain any understanding of the particulars of her thinking in that way”.<sup>357</sup> On the contrary, Halldenius states that the republican conception of personal freedom, meant as independence or freedom from arbitrary rule, is at the heart of Wollstonecraft’s ideology. The sexism of traditional republicanism is found in the definitional association of liberty and

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<sup>351</sup> Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p.164

<sup>352</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.61

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139

<sup>355</sup> Halldenius, L. (2015). *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism: Independence, rights and experience of unfreedom*. London: Pickering and Chatto, p.4

<sup>356</sup> Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p.4

<sup>357</sup> Halldenius, *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism*, p.19

virtue with maleness. What is relevant to highlight for the sake of my argument is the centrality of a republican concept of freedom in the context of feminist ideologies as well as the interpretation of the causes and dynamics of women's subordination to male domination. Both elements highlight how Wollstonecraft, considered an icon of feminism, appears to be more concerned with the dependency and domination by men both in the private and public sphere rather than on women's social and economic conditions.

Another author who is considered most obviously indebted to republican thinking is Hannah Arendt. In her famous essay "What is freedom?", she explores the multifaceted nature of freedom and its relation to human existence and political life.<sup>358</sup> Arendt contends that freedom is not merely an individual's ability to act according to personal desires, as mostly supported in feminist ideologies, but is inherently connected to the public and political realm. Indeed, in her famous quote Arendt claims: "The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom and its field of experience is action".<sup>359</sup> She distinguishes between freedom as a subjective feeling of spontaneity or liberation and the political concept of freedom. The latter arises when individuals actively engage in the public sphere, participating in collective decision-making with "the company of other men who were in the same state and it needed a common public space to meet them - a politically organized world".<sup>360</sup> Thus, true freedom, in Arendt's view, emerges within a community where individuals have the capacity to express themselves, engage in dialogue and take part in shaping the common world. With her emphasis on political agency and autonomy, the importance of active citizenship and of the pursuit of common good, Arendt recalls themes of republican political thought.

The examination of Mary Wollstonecraft's and Hannah Arendt's works through a republican lens is important because it reveals a surprising proximity between historical feminist concerns and classical republican values. This observation contrasts the initial idea that republicanism is "far from (being) woman-friendly" and suggests converging points between the two ideologies.

Apart from these authors, the relationship between feminism and republicanism has recently shifted significantly, evolving from previous adversaries to potential allies. I attribute this shift to two main factors: first, a new focus on the nature of public sphere, which attributes to feminism a more 'public' face; and second, the revival of republican theories due to the contributions of Quentin Skinner and Phillip Pettit, who are able to

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<sup>358</sup> Arendt, Hannah, What is Freedom? in *Between Past and Future*. New York: Viking Press, 1961, p. 143-171

<sup>359</sup> Arendt, What is Freedom?, p.146

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., p.148



address many of the historical feminist concerns against republicanism. These two factors prompted feminists to start exploring their theories from a new perspective.

In this chapter, I will first explore three main elements behind the hesitance of feminist philosophers to embrace republican theories. Secondly, I will examine some attempts made by contemporary feminist scholars to align their theories with republicanism, particularly focusing on Pettit's concept of freedom as non-domination, which takes distance from classical republican ideologies. In the same section, I will also present some counter-arguments against Pettit's criticisms and illustrate how his concept of male domination could significantly contribute to addressing contemporary feminist concerns. I will conclude by highlighting which aspects still need to be addressed in a theory of freedom as non-domination able to more realistic, adequate and applicable to our actual societies, in which women still lack liberties both in the private and public sphere.

#### **4.1 Feminist critiques of classical republicanism**

Despite the existence of pertinent discussions of specific historical representatives of the feminist tradition in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah Arendt, the general project of exploring applications of republican ideas has not generated much interest among feminist scholars. The latter have been skeptical of republicanism's potential inclusiveness and of its attractiveness for feminist purposes. The primary reason relies in republicanism's historical record of denying women citizenship and the rights and liberties associated with it. At the time of the Greek polis and the Roman Empire the emphasis on political engagement as an essential component of the good life was exclusive to men and was leaving women on the sidelines. It is then obvious why feminists had this initial rejection.

In addition to the denial to grant women the status of citizen, there are additional factors contributing to feminists' reluctance in embracing republican principles. Firstly, I will examine the clear-cut distinction between the public and private sphere; secondly, I will explore the notion of freedom as an interrelation among people rather than an individual action; third, I will emphasize the lack of concern for socioeconomic equality. Because of the extensive feminist literature covering these three elements, I will delve deeply into each one primarily referring to authors who have used these elements to illustrate the gap between republicanism and feminism.

#### 4.1-I Private/public dichotomy

Since ancient times, women have predominantly been associated with roles confined to the private sphere, primarily involved in domestic duties, caregiving roles and maintaining the household. Whereas men were predominantly regarded as the primary participants in political life, holding decision-making powers within the realms of governance, lawmaking and civic responsibilities. This historical context highlights the stark gender-based inequalities that prevailed, underscoring the societal understanding of the good life being intrinsically tied to male participation in public affairs. The distinction between the private and public sphere in the philosophical context clearly highlights the assigned roles and societal perceptions of both women and men.

In the famous masterpiece “The Second Sex”, Simone de Beauvoir extensively discusses how social norms and historical contexts have limited women to the domestic and private sphere. She states:

she passively submits to her biological destiny. Because housework alone is compatible with the duties of motherhood, she is condemned to domestic labor, which locks her into repetition and immanence; day after day it repeats itself in identical form from century to century; it produces nothing new.<sup>361</sup>

The historically confinement of women to roles centered on childbearing and caregiving has significant consequences. This societal positioning has ever since relegated women to domestic and familial responsibilities, which causes economic subordination from their partners. It restricts women’s access to resources, opportunities and decision-making power. As mothers and housewives - roles often undervalued in society - women face restrictions on their participation in public affairs, consequently limiting their ability to fully engage in societal and economic activities.

Women’s exclusion from public deliberation and legislative politics constitutes a vicious cycle rooted in multifaceted challenges.<sup>362</sup> The first element is the lack of substantial influence in institutions which shape political discourse due to their limited engagement in public discussions and elected decision-making bodies. Secondly, the constraints on women’s time, due to balancing paid and unpaid domestic work, undermines women’s leadership capabilities and the expectation of conforming to masculine behavioral norms in political discourse. To make the situation even worse, issues pertinent to women are often

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<sup>361</sup> Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p.98

<sup>362</sup> For further details, see section on “Public Deliberation and Electoral Politics” in Baehr, Amy R., “Liberal Feminism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

dismissed as personal rather than political. This confinement was soon addressed by feminist scholars.

During the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the interest for the public sphere increased dramatically. With the slogan “*the personal is political*”, we find an important feminist critique of the rigid separation between public and private space and its consequent dichotomous way of understanding social relations.<sup>363</sup> Feminists aimed to highlight the interconnection between personal experiences and individual struggles, particularly those related to gender-based oppression and discrimination, political and social structures. It underscored that personal or private issues, such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, unequal pay, sexual harassment and gender roles, were not isolated incidents. They were rooted in, and influenced by, larger societal power dynamics and political structures. In other words, the challenges faced by women in their daily lives were not merely individual problems but were connected to systemic gender inequalities present in society. With this campaign slogan feminists aimed to bring attention to issues that were traditionally relegated to the private sphere and emphasized that they belong to a bigger problem in the broader political arena.

Throughout history, the distinction between the private and public spheres was analyzed in various ways; but most feminist theorists shared the common aim of challenging traditional gender norms and power dynamics.<sup>364</sup> While I will not cover the entire spectrum of literature on this topic, my aim is to concentrate specifically on four fundamental elements that feminist philosophers have explored when discussing the private/public dichotomy. These components are essential as they form the basis to demonstrate how Pettit’s concept of freedom as non-domination can effectively address most of these feminist concerns.

The first feminist critique of the private/public distinction lies in its reinforcement of traditional gender roles. As previously highlighted, it can perpetuate the role of women primarily linked to household activities, whereas men would keep dominating the public sphere. Well-known feminist scholars like Carol Pateman and Nancy Fraser have extensively

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<sup>363</sup> This concept was coined by Carol Hanisch, a radical feminist and a prominent member of New York Radical Women and the Redstockings, in her 1969 essay (Hanisch, Carol. 1970. “The Personal is Political.” In *Notes From the Second Year: Women’s Liberation: Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*, edited by Shulamith Firestone, and Anne Koedt, 76–77. New York: Radical Feminism).

<sup>364</sup> In the essay “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy”, Carole Pateman discusses the limitations and implications of the public/private divide on gender equality and women’s participation in political and social spheres. While addressing the problematic nature of this division, she emphasizes the need to reassess its impact on women’s lives and roles in society. (Carole Pateman, *Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy*, in *Public And Private In Social Life* 281, S. I. Benn & G. F. Gaus eds., 1983)

discussed this dichotomy and its connection to challenge gender inequality.<sup>365</sup> They argue that this separation is not a neutral or objective categorization but rather “assigns gender specific connotations to them (male or female), and by implication orders them hierarchically”.<sup>366</sup> On one side the public sphere is traditionally associated with masculinity, rationality, and objectivity; on another side, the private sphere is associated with femininity, emotionality and subjectivity. Judith Vega claims that male dominance and female subjectivities have resulted “in exposing the (sexual) politics of theory”.<sup>367</sup> Additionally, she acknowledges the republican “excessive dedication to public action, guided, moreover, by imperatives of action representing macho values”.<sup>368</sup>

Most feminists contest the rigid distinction between public and private that defines “so much characteristically *female* activity as non-political and leaves so much of what we call *women's issues* outside the scope of public life”.<sup>369</sup> Anne Phillips interestingly claims that “where others might look back nostalgically to a high point of public interaction, feminists are more prone to point out that the great moments in the history of the public sphere were themselves moments of female exclusion”.<sup>370</sup> Instead of glorifying these moments, Phillips emphasizes the gender-based exclusion that occurred during those times.

The second important element highlighted in the feminist literature is the challenge associated to women’s unpaid domestic labor. Indeed, “the debate around housework, in which gender-specific division of labor was brought up as the most important reasons for practical and social discrimination” represents one of the main components for the perpetuation of unequal power dynamics.<sup>371</sup> Since women’s roles have traditionally associated with “caring activity often not regarded as work, and very often not financially rewarded”, this creates also economic dependency on their partners.<sup>372</sup> In contemporary debates in particular, it is highlighted how care work must be instead considered an essential component for the functioning of the economy and society. This shift represents a new focus

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<sup>365</sup> See Carol Pateman (1983). *Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy*. In S. I. Benn & G. F. Gaus (Eds.), *Public And Private In Social Life*, and Nancy Fraser (1997). *Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy*. In *Justice interruptus: Critical reflections on the 'post-socialist' condition*. New York: Routledge. Both authors have written extensively on various aspects of feminism, including on the public/private divide and its gendered implications.

<sup>366</sup> Wischermann, U., & Mueller, I. K. (2004). *Feminist Theories on the Separation of the Private and the Public: Looking Back, Looking Forward*. *Women in German Yearbook*, 20, p.185

<sup>367</sup> Vega, Judith A, 2002. *Feminist Republicanism and the Political Perception of Gender*, *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage. Volume 2 The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, p.157

<sup>368</sup> Vega, *Feminist Republicanism and the Political Perception of Gender*, p.158

<sup>369</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p.292

<sup>370</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p.292

<sup>371</sup> Wischermann, Mueller, *Feminist Theories on the Separation of the Private and the Public*, p. 187

<sup>372</sup> Costa, M. V. (2013). *Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?* *Hypatia*, 28(4), p. 929

in feminist writings on the nature of the private and public sphere. However, this can also lead to negative consequences: on one side, women would still be undervalued and marginalized in the public sphere; on the other side, it can also create a double burden for women who are expected to work both inside and outside the home. This challenge can be overcome if there is collective responsibility and redistribution for these traditionally gendered tasks within familial and societal contexts. Acknowledging and valuing caregiving and domestic work are essential for achieving gender justice and equality.

The third point mostly used by some contemporary feminists is the importance of reimagining the public-private divide by advocating for a more pluralistic understanding of political life. For instance, Nancy Fraser argues that it is misleading to talk of *the* public sphere, conjuring up as this does, images of a parliamentary chamber, and more illuminating to refer to a multiplicity of publics, organized around different networks of public communication.<sup>373</sup> Since she believes that the public sphere is constituted by conflicts, strengthening oppositional public spheres, then, means allowing diverging opinions and questioning the hegemonic public sphere. The author emphasizes that through these “subaltern counter-public spheres” inequalities and exclusions come to light, and groups that are marginalized on the basis of class, ethnicity or gender can get a hearing. In this way, for instance, it becomes possible to include interests and problems that are “labeled 'private' by middle-class, masculinized ideology and thus treated as inadmissible”.<sup>374</sup> Fraser takes the view that the “plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public”.<sup>375</sup> This feminist critique generates a far “more plural and decentered understanding of what constitutes public life”.<sup>376</sup> Only in this way it is feasible to create more inclusive and diverse public spaces for women with the aim to promote greater gender equality.

The fourth and last point to emphasize in the exploration of the private/public dichotomy is the role played by the state in challenging gendered inequalities. There is substantial disagreement among feminist scholars concerning what the state should do and which actions it should take to remedy not only the public sphere but also the private domain.<sup>377</sup> Despite the disagreement where to draw its boundaries, feminist scholars mainly

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<sup>373</sup> Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy, *Social Text*, 25/26, pp. 56-80

<sup>374</sup> Wischermann, Feminist Theories on the Separation of the Private and the Public: Looking Back, Looking Forward, p. 190

<sup>375</sup> Fraser, Rethinking the public sphere, p. 66

<sup>376</sup> Phillips, Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?, p. 292

<sup>377</sup> For further development, read section on “Personal Autonomy and State” in “Liberal Feminism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

share the common idea that the state has historically been dominated by men. It “has served to uphold male domination of women by rendering power relations within the household as *natural* and immune from political regulation”.<sup>378</sup> For example, “old conceptions of the sanctity of the private space of the household and the role of women primarily as child-bearers and caregivers served to protect male domination in the household from public scrutiny”.<sup>379</sup> The state is then viewed not as a neutral or objective entity, but rather reflects and reinforces traditional gendered norms and values. Consequently, feminist philosophers have advocated for transformative change in the role of the state. This may involve not only the necessity to increase representation of women in political decision-making but also to promote policies that prioritize gender equality, such as work-life balance, affordable childcare and parental leave.

How much the state should intervene is a crucial question, especially for those scholars who are concerned about women’s individual liberty being restricted by the state’s influence. For example, Nancy Hirschmann highlights how “politics exists in many social relations that most of us paradoxically seek to keep private”.<sup>380</sup> She argues: “I hardly want the state to intervene if my husband shirks his share of the housework, even though I see the division of household labor as an important example of gender politics; that is a battle I would prefer to wage for myself”.<sup>381</sup> Despite this initial statement, Hirschmann continues by claiming that “the state needs to be conceptualized as a resource that can be brought into some private-political context: for instance, if I want the state to prevent my husband from beating me up”.<sup>382</sup> The state should effectively protect women from violence and discrimination, regardless of where the violence takes place.<sup>383</sup> Laws and policies that are sexist and paternalist are an unjust use of state power. They give control of women’s lives to others and steer women into preferred ways of life. For example, imagine laws restricting birth control and abortion; they take away a significant choice from women and, along with the societal expectation that women should primarily take care of children, push women into the social role of mother.

While some advocates argue that state intervention is crucial to prevent and address different issues, such as domestic violence or sexual harassment, critics often express

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<sup>378</sup> McAfee, Noëlle and Katie B. Howard, *Feminist Political Philosophy*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.).

<sup>379</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>380</sup> Nancy Hirschmann refers to ‘us’ as feminists deeply concerned with the significance of individual liberty. (*The Subject of Liberty*, p. 233)

<sup>381</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p. 233

<sup>382</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p. 234

<sup>383</sup> Cudd, Ann E. (2006). *Analyzing Oppression*. Oxford University Press, p. 85-118

concerns about potential intrusions into private life and the balance between protecting individuals and respecting their autonomy.<sup>384</sup> Women's deepening involvement "with the state entail exchanging dependence upon individual men for regulation by contemporary institutionalized processes of male domination".<sup>385</sup> This viewpoint suggests that politics among men inherently involves controlling, protecting and regulating women. Therefore, using the state for feminist goals contradicts this aim for liberation. Additionally, the state's concept of neutrality and universality masks its power, making women believe they gain empowerment when, in reality, they are further subjugated. This situation reinforces rather than challenges patriarchal views of women.

To summarize: while historical exclusion from the public sphere has been one the main factors in feminist critiques, the contemporary feminist stance on the public-private divide is multifaceted. It seeks to challenge gender-based assumptions, redefine societal norms and create more inclusive and equitable spaces that empower women in both public and private spheres.

Considering the discussion presented in this section, the question I wish to raise is: Do feminists oppose the distinction between public and private inherently, or is their resistance primarily due to the historical exclusion they faced in the public sphere? What I aimed to highlight with the brief exploration of these four points - the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, the unpaid domestic labor, the pluralistic understanding of political life, the role of the state - is the undeniable inherent connections between the domestic and public spheres. Especially when we focus on the power dynamics within both realms, it becomes evident that they are closely interrelated and cannot be isolated. Thus, I fully agree with feminists who challenge the notion that certain issues were purely personal and advocate for a social and political change both at an individual and systemic level. In addition, and fundamental for the sake of my argument, it is then also clear how these points elucidate the reason why classical republicanism, which prioritized significance solely within the public sphere, has been perceived as divergent from feminist concerns. The emphasis on the public sphere often disregarded the contributions and significance of women in broader social and political realms, contributing to the perceived discrepancy between these ideologies.

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<sup>384</sup> Supporting this view, Hirschmann refers to Drucilla Cornell and Wendy Brown, who hold doubts or outright opposition regarding feminists relying on the state as 'protector'. Cornell, for example, argues against banning prostitution or censoring pornography. She believes such actions replicate sexist state practices, like regulating abortion. Similarly, Brown criticizes feminists for not recognizing the state's power over women's lives. She urges them to reflect on how the idea of "protection" might actually serve as a tool of control and domination. (Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p. 234)

<sup>385</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p. 234

Back to the question just asked above, I believe that, undoubtedly, the historical exclusion of women from the public sphere has significantly shaped feminist critiques of the public-private divide. However, I argue that the crucial aspect was not merely the divide itself, but rather the establishment of a hierarchy where the significance of the public sphere was deemed superior to that of the private sphere. As states by Ulla Wischermann, this dichotomy not only “assigns gender specific connotations to them (male or female)” but it implies a hierarchical order between them.<sup>386</sup> I do not deny that a distinction between these two realms exist. However, we need to emphasize their equal importance without any pre-assigned gender roles. Unfortunately, women are seen as the primary caretakers in households and the argument of unpaid work poses a significant challenge. There is a growing acknowledgment that the participation of women in unpaid work contributes significantly to the functioning of society and the economy. While this recognition is important, it is equally vital to ensure that responsibilities are shared more equally and contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and the community. In some Western societies, there is a growing acknowledgment of men’s involvement in household chores, the reduction of their workload and their uptake of parental leave. These actions are now being embraced by men, signifying a shift in gender roles and a move towards greater gender equality.

Parallel with assigning same relevance to both spheres with no gender roles, I also argue that it is necessary to attend to the feminist issues that were excluded from the public realm. With the aim to contrast “those strands of feminism that have sentimentalized the virtues of the private sphere”, Mary Dietz, when describing Arendt’s ideal, supports that feminists should follow the “way to proceed towards politics”.<sup>387</sup> Despite feminist preoccupation with personal life should not be seen as a backing away from public participation, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more prominent *public* aspect of feminism in recent years.<sup>388</sup> Contemporary feminists have moved further and encompassed several key points related to gender equality, power dynamics and societal structures in the public realm.

To facilitate women’s empowerment and offer them genuine freedom of choice, it is imperative to grant equal significance to both the private and public spheres. By fostering an

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<sup>386</sup> Wischermann, *Feminist Theories on the Separation of the Private and the Public: Looking Back, Looking Forward*, p. 185

<sup>387</sup> Dietz, M. G. (1991). Hannah Arendt and feminist politics. In C. Pateman & M. L. Shanley (Eds.), *Feminist interpretations and political theory*. Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell; p.250

<sup>388</sup> Landes, J. B. (1998). The public and private sphere: A feminist reconsideration. In J. B. Landes (Ed.), *Feminism, the public and the private*. Oxford: Oxford University Press



inclusive public realm that acknowledges feminist concerns, women can authentically choose the lifestyle that aligns with their genuine selves. Such an approach enables the provision of appropriate opportunities for women, ensuring that they can exercise their freedom positively and meaningfully. Only with the same importance of private and public spheres and the creation of inclusive public-realm able to address feminist issues, will women be able to choose the kind of life they believe reflects their authentic and true self. Hence, they can be *positively* free.

#### 4.1-II Relationship among people

Until now I have defined women and men as two distinct and cohesive groups, following a gender binarism with *simplistic* conceptualizations of these categories. However, most feminist philosophers oppose this view and argue that it is essential to recognize the diverse range of experiences, perspectives and identity within the *woman* category.<sup>389</sup> In a philosophical tradition dominated by white and male philosophers, describing *femininity* as necessarily the opposite of one's conception of *masculinity* in a gender binary makes limited sense. With this respect, scholars of intersectionality point out that identities are not binary. This current of thoughts especially emerged as a critical component in the third wave of feminism. Mainly supported by black feminists and critical race theorists, it aimed to challenge traditional feminist approaches that tended to concentrate primarily on the experiences of a specific group of women, mostly white middle-class women.<sup>390</sup> In contrast, it places significant value on the recognition of diverse situations faced by women, whose experience of discrimination may differ based also on her racial background, economic status or other intersecting identities. Thus, these scholars asked to move beyond a monolithic view of women as a homogenous group and instead embracing the multifaceted nature of their existence within various societal structures.

An essential factor driving increased feminist interest in liberal theories relies precisely on the concept of intersectionality. The recognition of women's individuality is well addressed by the liberal feminist agenda due to its primary focus on individual rights

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<sup>389</sup> For further details, read section on "Intersectionality" in Norlock, Kathryn, Feminist Ethics, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>390</sup> *Ibidem*

and autonomy.<sup>391</sup> This perspective remains a strong current within feminist political thought as it addresses the necessity of recognizing the diverse intersections among women. To contrast, republicanism has encountered numerous challenges. Its failure to recognize intersectionality is connected to two additional aspects that feminists identify as reason to diverge from republicanism: firstly, republicanism focuses on relationships among people rather than individual action, thereby neglecting the importance of personal autonomy; secondly, it prioritizes the attainment of the common good and interest with the aim of promoting the well-being of *all* citizens. I will now dive into an individual analysis of each of these elements.

When discussing the notion of freedom, it is evident that republicanism historically focused on the collective life of citizens. Its primary focus lay in the relations between the citizenry and the state, thereby disregarding any differentiation among them. Furthermore, as previously explained, there was no recognition of the need to distinguish between men and women due to the denial of *female* citizenship. The first criticism of republicanism is not only typical of feminist theories but of all theories prioritizing individual action and autonomy. This approach was abundantly examined in Berlin's liberal approach. In this section, I want to emphasize my agreement with the critique that classical republicanism is problematic, not only for feminist purposes but also for theories seeking applicability in our contemporary society - vastly different from the needs in the ancient Greek Polis and the Roman Empire. However, as it occurs with other feminist critics against classical republicanism, I will demonstrate how this issue can be addressed and overcome through Pettit's framework.

The second element, considered problematic in republican theories by some feminist philosophers, is the importance attributed to the achievement of the common good in the society. In order to explain this challenge, let me focus on one aspect considered very important in the feminist political literature: the importance of plurality and diversity within the public sphere. In her book, "The Human Condition", Arendt claims:

Action would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with general laws of behavior, if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing. Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> For further details, Baehr, Amy R., "Liberal Feminism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>392</sup> Arendt, Hannah. (1958). *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 8

Central to Arendt's call for us to "think what we are doing" is for us to think about politics as occurring under the condition of plurality. In other words, this means taking into account that political actors are individuals with their uniqueness that affect how each of us participates. Although I have previously analyzed Arendt's ideals through a republican lens, it is in this citation that she considers individual action *singularly* in the public realm. For the sake of my argument, I will set this point aside and concentrate on the significance of plurality in her theory.

What makes Arendt's theory comparable with classical republicanism, instead, is her idea of civic engagement and political deliberation, where she defends constitutionalism and the rule of law and condemns all forms of political community based on tyranny. Indeed, she claims: "hence that tyranny was not one form of government among others but contradicted the essential human condition of plurality, the acting and speaking together, which is the condition of all forms of political organization".<sup>393</sup> Arendt conceives the public space as the place where citizens gather in order to deliberate and decide about all matters affecting the political community. When a multitude of diverse viewpoints and experiences coexist in the public realm, it creates a dynamic and vibrant space for political engagement. This diversity allows for a wide range of opinions and ideas to be expressed, debated and deliberated upon within society. It is within this space of dialogue and interaction that a richer understanding of political issues emerges and where different voices are heard and respected. As women's interests have historically been ignored or subordinated to those of men, the notion of silencing their distinct and individual voices has faced strong criticism.

The main question that arises at this point is: what guarantees that women's interests will be incorporated in the *common* good? This concern is typical of those feminist politics who insist on there being some differences between men's and women's interests. Indeed, "it is often the moment when women come to recognize this difference that sparks off their mobilization".<sup>394</sup> In line with this statement, Joan Landes noted that "when women during the French Revolution and the nineteenth century attempted to organize in public on the basis of their interests, they risked violating the constitutive principles of the bourgeois public sphere: in place of one, they substituted the many; in place of disinterestedness, they revealed themselves to have an interest".<sup>395</sup>

The most *sexist* aspects of republicanism have disappeared from the variants of the

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<sup>393</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 202

<sup>394</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p. 285

<sup>395</sup> Landes, *The public and private sphere: a feminist reconsideration*, p. 143

late twentieth century. Nowadays, there is hardly any glorification of masculine heroism or the belittling of women as merely *lesser*, as was evident in earlier versions. However, a feminist concern still remains in current theories. As Iris Young famously argued in her critique of Benjamin Barber: “In a society where some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, insisting that as citizens persons should leave behind their particular affiliations and experiences to adopt a general point of view serves only to reinforce that privilege; for the perspectives and interests of the privileged will tend to *dominate* this unified public, marginalizing or silencing those of other groups”.<sup>396</sup> This leads also to a *distaste* for interest-group pluralism which reduces politics to a “amoral bargaining and exchange”, which promotes a system of inequalities that leave one group incomparably more powerful than another.<sup>397</sup> Thus, the idea that there is some true identity and set of interests that women have as women - an essentialist or naturalist thesis which, ironically, would consciously be rejected by many feminists.<sup>398</sup> In line with this argument, the idea to define women as a homogenous group disregards the complex pluralism of many women’s voices. This critique has intensified notably with the emergence of third-wave feminism, emphasizing the diverse needs of women across various class, age, ethnicity, sexuality and racial identities.

#### **4.1-III Socio-economic equality**

The third and final critique of republicanism is that, as it primarily focuses on political citizenship, it tends to show indifference towards issues of socio-economic justice and equality. To understand this criticism, let me provide some historical context.

The first wave of feminism, which aimed to secure political rights, declined between the two world wars.<sup>399</sup> After the initial successes in securing suffrage in various countries, the attention shifted away from women’s issues, resulting in a temporary decline in feminist activism. The end of World War I brought some significant turmoil. During the Great Depression, for instance, many people were worried with economic survival, which diverted attention and resources away from social movements like feminism. Additionally, within the

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<sup>396</sup> Iris M. Young, Polity and group difference: a critique of the ideal of universal citizenship, *Ethics*, 99, 1989, p. 257

<sup>397</sup> Philipps, Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?, p.282

<sup>398</sup> Hirschmann, The Subject of Liberty, p.79

<sup>399</sup> For further reading on feminist history, read section “Feminist Beliefs and Feminist Movements” in “Feminist Philosophy”, McAfee, Noëlle, Ann Garry, Anita Superson, Heidi Grasswick, and Serene Khader, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.)

feminist movement itself there were internal divisions regarding the focus and strategies to pursue. Indeed, disagreements over priorities and approaches led to fragmentation and reduced momentum for the movement during this period. Conservative and patriarchal forces resistant to feminist movements further slowed progress.

Feminism experienced a resurgence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, known as the second wave. It was the historical moment when women had contributed significantly to the war effort, taking on roles traditionally held by men. Yet, post-war societal norms often enforced a return to traditional gender roles. In response, women became conscious of their contributions in the society and advocated for broader equality in areas such as education, the workplace and within households. This historical context pushed feminism beyond the initial pursuit of political rights, broadening its scope to address various aspects of gender equality. Thus, feminist analysis of women's subordination has been profoundly influenced by the materialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the more comprehensive egalitarianism that developed out of this.<sup>400</sup>

The stark material inequalities between women and men that have captured most attention in the twentieth century remain a prominent concern for most contemporary feminists.<sup>401</sup> The main current value associated with feminist concerns is the achievement of equality, meant as equal access to resources, opportunities and rights between men and women. This emphasizes the comparison between what men historically possessed and what women aspired to attain. For instance, when considering the enduring wage gap between men and women, the exceedingly long hours women dedicate to domestic responsibilities while also working outside the home, the pursuit of equal opportunities and the prevalence of discrimination towards women in the workplace, it becomes evident that these elements predominantly emphasize economic and social aspects rather than political ones.

Based on the current needs, it is clear why feminists took distance from advocates of republican theories mainly centered on political freedom. At that time feminist concerns

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<sup>400</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p.290

<sup>401</sup> Beyond liberal feminism, some contemporary feminist philosophers have expanded their view and found space in neoliberalism, especially the ways that neoliberal social and economic forces impact the lives of women. While some feminists find opportunities for empowerment within neoliberalism's emphasis on individual agency, others criticize its economic policies for exacerbating gender inequalities and undermining collective efforts to address systemic issues. During the same period, some feminist political philosophers have challenged ideas like economic determinism and the reduction of everything to economic relations. Despite the labels of socialist and Marxist feminisms may be less relevant today, some other feminist philosophers still prioritize understanding material life conditions and embrace the critical approach advocated by Marxist analysis. Due to various perspectives on how both neoliberalism, socialism and Marxism interwind with feminism, I will not focus on this point. For more details, read sections on "Feminist Engagements with Liberalism and Neoliberalism" and on "Socialist and Marxist Feminisms" in McAfee, Noëlle and Katie B. Howard, *Feminist Political Philosophy, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.)

were primarily focused on achieving equal treatment rather than adopting a concept of freedom that was predominantly defined by men and often excluded women. Indeed, this discrepancy steered feminists towards liberalism, which mainly emphasizes individual rights and socio-economic equality. Ann Cudd suggests that the expansion of opportunity and equality promised by liberal feminism “makes us all better off”.<sup>402</sup> She highlighted how it aligned more closely with their present objectives. Hence, the lack of opportunities in economic and social contexts was better addressed by liberal theories.

This preoccupation led to a shift of the feminist goal and a shift of prioritization. If first wave feminists, focused on the concept of freedom, even if limiting it to the public sphere, the second wave considered equality as a condition of freedom. Despite the fact that the achievement of equality “may not be intrinsically at odds with republican thinking, republicanism focuses attention on the political framework within which we can challenge domination. Whereas, feminism is more likely to emphasize the background inequalities that contribute to this”.<sup>403</sup>

To conclude, I agree with feminist critiques that traditional republicanism placed a strong emphasis on civic virtue in society, often overshadowing other crucial elements that are pertinent to individuals. Nevertheless, I advocate for prioritizing the concept of freedom over equality, a notion that Pettit further develops in his theory of freedom as non-domination.

## **4.2 Contemporary feminist alignments with neo-republicanism**

For centuries, feminist and republican theories have been in opposition primarily due to three factors mentioned earlier – the distinction between the private and public spheres, the focus on relationships among citizens over individual actions, and a lack of emphasis on social and economic equality. In the last decades there has been a shift in feminist interest towards republicanism. This revival is attributed to the emergence of neo-republicanism, a more recent development in republican thought, notably influenced by the work of Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit. While neo-republicanism shares many of the core principles of its predecessors - civic virtue, active participation in government and the common good - it mainly emphasizes the importance of protecting citizens from domination. It considers the

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<sup>402</sup> Cudd, *Analyzing oppression*, p. 237

<sup>403</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p. 290

arbitrary will of dominators of all types the worst evil to fight against. In response to contemporary challenges facing democratic societies, neo-republicanism ensures that citizens have the freedom and capacity to participate fully in democratic processes. In this section, I will show that their different perspectives on the relevance of freedom can serve as the key for feminist scholars to lay the groundwork for a feasible allyship with neo-republicanism, notably centered around Pettit's concept of non-domination. After the initial historical antagonism, feminist scholars have proposed some attempts to forge a *plausible* alliance between these two currents of thoughts.

Using the same three factors, the following section will explore some arguments proposed by contemporary feminist philosophers who have engaged with Pettit's concept of freedom as non-domination. Some scholars have analyzed his contributions positively, acknowledging Pettit's efforts to address women's concerns, while others have recognized limitations despite his endeavors.

#### **4.2-I Political participation, state intervention and the private sphere**

The first critique used by feminist scholars towards classical republicanism is the strict dichotomy of private and public sphere. As demonstrated above, it is evident that traditional republicans have mainly focused on the latter. The concept of republican freedom has been viewed as a matter that concerns the public realm and "has regarded the homely activities of the domestic sphere as a drain on the manly heroisms of public life".<sup>404</sup> In this context, contemporary feminist philosophers have recognized the importance of political participation and engagement. With the slogan *the private is political* and the more *public* face of feminism, feminists have been critical "of the elevation of public over private". However, "most have continued to view participation in public life as a key constituent of human freedom. This has always been a point of contact with republican thinking".<sup>405</sup>

Besides what Wollstonecraft and Arendt argued with their focus on the achievement of political rights, the importance of political freedom is not only a matter of interest to attribute to the first wave of feminism. The achievement of the right to vote and the recognition of female citizenship only scratches the surface of what the women's movement has advocated for over the last two centuries. One author who tries to align feminist theories

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<sup>404</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p. 279

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291

with neo-republicanism is Anne Phillips. She acknowledges the work of neo-republican philosophers to provide a new understanding of these concepts both as a political as well as an intellectual project. Indeed, Phillips argues that this change also influenced feminists, who again focused their attention on the importance of political freedom, intended as “the right to a be a participator in government, which was overcome by other ‘necessities’”.<sup>406</sup>

The notion that political participation fosters political agency is not new in the feminist literature. Some egalitarian-liberal feminists indeed define political autonomy as “being co-author of the conditions under which one lives”.<sup>407</sup> This idea aligns with what I have presented in *Chapter III*, where I discussed political participation as a means towards the achievement of self-direction in one’s life. I argued that, through his concept of freedom as non-domination and the emphasis on political participation, Pettit encompasses the requirements of a *compounded* notion of individual freedom. Pettit’s assertion that men and women are “by nature all equal”<sup>408</sup> and that “there is no reason to privilege any one citizen over others”<sup>409</sup> underscores that his argument for freedom as non-domination pertains to *all* citizens without any distinction based on gender. Based on what I argued in the previous chapter, I support that the feminist advocacy for political agency can be achieved by Pettit’s theory, particularly in the light of my analysis of his concept of political participation as self-direction.

Some feminist philosophers, however, have mistakenly reduced the achievement of political freedom to mere active participation. As already argued and agreed with Pettit, political participation is only a means towards a higher value of freedom as non-domination:

Democratic participation may be essential to the republic, but that is because it is necessary for promoting the enjoyment of freedom as non-domination, not because of its independent attractions: not because freedom, as a positive conception would suggest, is nothing more or less than the right of democratic participation.<sup>410</sup>

Immediately after this quote, Pettit references Hannah Arendt and critiques the inaccurate analysis of republicanism that has been linked to her arguments. Pettit states: “This point is important to stress because the term ‘republican’ has come to be associated in many circles, probably under the influence of Hannah Arendt, with a communitarian and

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<sup>406</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p. 281

<sup>407</sup> For further details, read section on “Political Autonomy” in Baehr, Amy R., *Liberal Feminism*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>408</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p. 83

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>410</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.8



populist approach”.<sup>411</sup> Pettit uses her example to argue against the idea of the people in their collective presence as master and the state as servant. In this scenario, the people ought to rely on state representatives and officials only where absolutely necessary; this is typical of a direct democracy. In contrast, Pettit supports a republican approach where “the people are seen as trustor, both individually and collectively, and the state as trustee: in particular, it sees the people as trusting the state to ensure a dispensation of non-arbitrary rule”.<sup>412</sup> Pettit confirms his argument against Arendt also in “On the People’s Terms”. He refers to Hannah Arendt’s “favourite phrase, it is the citizen who embraces the *vita activa* rather than the *vita contemplativa* - the active rather than the contemplative life - and in particular an active life in the realm of public affairs”.<sup>413</sup> In other words, Pettit argues against the romantic view of the actively involved public figure. This is very different from how older republican thinking viewed the *free* person, even though they might share the idea of a contestatory citizenry that challenges authority.

This critique of Arendt’s notion of political freedom has been addressed by Keith Breen, who states that Pettit has misinterpreted Arendt’s work.<sup>414</sup> However, at this point my aim is not to determine the accuracy of Pettit’s perspective on Arendt’s concept of political freedom. It is crucial to recognize that associating political freedom *solely* with active participation is mistaken. Political participation serves as a significant component in the achievement of the ideal of freedom as self-direction, and *partly* self-realization. Participating in the collective self-rule of society reflects people *exercising* control over their lives.<sup>415</sup>

In striving to achieve political freedom, Anne Philipps highlights a critical factor that could potentially bridge the initial feminist critique. This factor not only aligns feminism more closely with the legacy of republicanism but also distinguishes it from liberalism. She proposes to consolidate the commitment to participatory democracy.<sup>416</sup> Although Phillipps fails to clearly explain what she means by “participatory democracy”, I believe she refers to a democratic system where citizens actively participate in decision-making processes and

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<sup>411</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.8

<sup>412</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>413</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.18

<sup>414</sup> To counter Pettit’s argument, Breen advocates for Arendt’s position and argues that these criticisms are unfounded. A sympathetic reading of Arendt’s work reveals her deep-seated concern with domination, which is central to her analysis of totalitarianism and her critique of ‘command’ conceptions of politics. Moreover, Arendt is in no way vulnerable to the charge of advancing either communitarianism or populism, given her stress on the rule of law, her commitment to plurality and the dispersal of power, and her understanding of politics as the ceaseless interplay of diverse opinions. (Breen, K. (2019). Arendt, Republicanism, and Political Freedom. In: Hiruta, K. (eds) *Arendt on Freedom, Liberation, and Revolution. Philosophers in Depth*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. pp. 47-78)

<sup>415</sup> Taylor, *What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty*, p. 212

<sup>416</sup> Phillipps, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p. 280

policies that affect their lives. This would allow citizens to have a *direct* say in political issues, rather than solely relying on elected representatives. This form of democracy often includes mechanisms such as town hall meetings, citizens' assemblies, referendums and other platforms that allow individuals to contribute to the decision-making process, fostering greater civic engagement and empowerment among the people.

Despite the worthy attempt of Anne Phillips to align feminism with republicanism through the use of direct democracy, it is crucial to consider Pettit's interpretation of civic republicanism. His perspective draws from the Roman republican tradition rather than solely relying on the Aristotelian or Athenian model.<sup>417</sup> While the latter emphasizes direct citizen involvement in decision-making, with an emphasis on active participation by citizens within the political community; Pettit's civic republicanism places greater emphasis on institutional structures that prevent domination and uphold non-arbitrary governance. Pettit's focus is on the creation of political institutions that safeguard freedom by preventing the domination of one group or individual over others. As argued above, he does not solely rely on direct citizen participation in decision-making. Pettit wrote "Republicanism" not merely in order to revive a political perspective that had been historically lost, but "out of a wish to explore a new vision of what public life might be".<sup>418</sup>

In line with this argument, I argue that Pettit successfully addresses the majority of criticisms regarding state intervention raised by feminists. In *Chapter I*, I have described the concept of "interference without domination", which represents the relationship between the state and its citizens.<sup>419</sup> This means that the state should act to ensure that no one, individual or group, is able to exercise arbitrary power over others and that its interventions should be subject to democratic oversight and accountability. The state should act as a neutral arbiter to safeguard, to prevent abuses of power and to protect individual rights and freedoms.

Even in situations where the actions of the state do *interfere* with the lives of its citizenry, since the state is bound to tracking its citizens' interests and thus the interference is carried out non-arbitrarily, the citizens are not dominated. In this case, there is no infringement on liberty; rather there is only a restriction to it. Thus, Pettit believes that a legitimate state should interfere in the lives of its citizens to prevent domination by others as

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<sup>417</sup> For general discussions of "neo-republicanism" or "civic republicanism," and its distinctiveness from participatory or so-called "civic humanist" republican theories, see Cécile Laborde and John Maynor, "The Republican Contribution to Contemporary Political Theory," in *Republicanism and Political Theory*, ed. Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 1–9; and Frank Lovett, "Republicanism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (last modified 15 April 2014)

<sup>418</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 129

<sup>419</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p. 152

long as the state's interference does not itself amount to domination. This represents one of the major points of diversion between the neo-republican and liberal feminist idea of freedom. In Pettit's opinion, "devotees of freedom as non-interference" insist that all forms of coercion and especially all forms of state action, even if "well bounded and controlled", are an affront to a person's liberty. In contrast, according to Pettit, the sort of coercion that ensues from the enforcement of a non-arbitrary law, or interference without domination, is considered permissible and compatible with freedom. The republican state involves checks and balances, distribution of power and institutions designed to prevent individuals or groups from exercising arbitrary power over others.

As I do not intend to delineate the precise extent to which the state should intervene in individuals' lives, particularly women's lives, as such a definition would be overly expansive. Various feminist philosophers hold differing opinions regarding state intervention in public life. Nancy Hirschmann, for example, states that "feminism should be less hostile to state intervention per se than some feminists advocate, particularly those who recognize the importance of discourse to freedom".<sup>420</sup> She also adds that "it is not state intervention per se, but rather the *form* of such intervention, reflecting the interests of (certain groups of) men, that generally hurts women".<sup>421</sup> Some controversial topics are at the heart of feminist literature, like abortion, sexual harassment or pornography, which make problematic assumptions about the state, and indeed about the ability to escape the state. However, this does not mean that feminists should be sanguine about state power. Indeed, Hirschmann argues that feminist insights attest to the need to rethink what the state should be in a feminist vision and how feminists want to relate to it, rather than abandoning the state as a potential feminist tool. She proposed a "woman-friendly" feminist state that would be in a "better-informed position to intervene - and to refrain from intervention - in ways that respond to contextualized need, rather than in ways that systematically benefit some at others' expense".<sup>422</sup> Let's momentarily set aside the contextual aspect, which I will address later on in this dissertation. According to Hirschmann, such an approach could actually reduce such intervention by equalizing power among citizens, strengthening those who are currently less powerful. At the least, such an approach is not likely to increase intervention; rather, such intervention - in the protections and penalties it assigns to men and women - will be distributed more equitably.

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<sup>420</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Freedom*, p.234

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235

<sup>422</sup> *Ibidem*

As one of the most influential feminists aiming to develop a feminist concept of freedom, Hirschmann also emphasizes another important point. “Feminist fear of the state is based on the very same liberal fears of positive liberty that Berlin expressed: a fear of second-guessing, of being told what is in our best interest, of being forced to be free”.<sup>423</sup> However, she replies by arguing that such fears miss an important insight. Since “a feminist theory of freedom demands that the individual self must make her own choices”, “that self, its status and content, is continually in doubt and requires context and relationship with others in order to provide and sustain its meaning”.<sup>424</sup>

Drawing from Hirschmann’s proposal for a more “women-friendly” state, my goal is to propose Pettit’s perspective as a solution how to effectively tackle this issue within modern society.<sup>425</sup> Pettit’s concept of state intervention as non-dominator is able to overcome feminist fears about the state *potentially* becoming another oppressive force that could wield its power against women. Thus, Pettit’s view is able to better embrace feminist approaches also for its approaches to power. Traditional republicanism tends to focus on the distribution of power within the state, emphasizing the importance of balancing competing interests and preventing any one group from dominating others. Pettit’s neo-republicanism, on the other hand, is more concerned with the ways in which power operates in society as a whole and seeks to protect citizens from the arbitrary exercise of power by both state and other citizens.

Pettit’s alignment with feminist concerns extends beyond general worries about domination and arbitrary power, especially evident in his approach to addressing situations like domestic violence. Indeed, with the example of abusive husbands, he acknowledges the need for special protection of wives. He suggests that the measures that have to be put in place to:

give even a modicum of protection within relationships of this sort have to go beyond formal, legal rights. They could involve offering alternatives to those at a disadvantage, such as providing shelters for abused wives. They could also involve restricting options for those in positions of power, such as issuing a restraining order against an abusive husband or enabling the affected spouse to seek a divorce without having to establish fault.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Freedom*, p. 235

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236

<sup>425</sup> Michael J. Thompson shares my goal of developing a contemporary theory of freedom starting from Pettit’s theory. However, he fails to include the aspect of feminist issues, which is a relevant component in my framework. (Thompson M. J. Reconstructing republican freedom: A critique of the neo-republican concept of freedom as non-domination. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 2013, 39(3), 277-298)

<sup>426</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p. 115

However, Pettit acknowledges that in this situation “no such measures are likely to be effective, it should be said, unless the actions of the state are complemented by supportive norms of civil society”.<sup>427</sup> For women to get rid of the domination of abusive husbands, “then there must be a women’s movement that provides them with the support and solidarity of fellow spirits, should they fall on bad times. There is only so much the state can do on its own”.<sup>428</sup>

Focusing on the “political, often to the exclusion of the social and economic, and idealizing a once lively public that was never very lively for women”, Phillips argues, led some feminist philosophers to highlight the importance of their individual interests and the private sphere, rather than public life.<sup>429</sup> Contrary to this belief and the evidence presented earlier, some feminist philosophers argue that modernity has shifted the balance from the public towards the private, diminishing the significance of public discussion or the use of public space. In his thought-provoking book, Richard Sennett calls this phenomenon “the fall of public man”.<sup>430</sup> He offers a critical analysis of modernity and argues that public life has been impoverished and public spiritedness is on the decline, mainly due to rise of individualism and the erosion of communal connections. He highlights a transition from a more open, inclusive and socially engaged public life in earlier eras to a more privatized, self-contained and fragmented existence in contemporary society. Indeed, as society becomes more focused on individual aspirations and self-interest, there is a corresponding decline in meaningful public interactions and communal engagement. This shift leads to a sense of isolation and alienation among individuals, but also lost of trust and genuine communication in public spaces.

Following Sennett’s line of argument, Phillips defines this concern as one reason that underpins much of the current feminist interest in republicanism. She contrasts liberal feminists who “backs away from substantive public discussion of disputed issues of politics or morality, and tries to cope with the pluralism of modern society by leaving more matters up to the individuals themselves”.<sup>431</sup> However, the feminist critique of the private/public dichotomy is able to undercut some of the more damning analyses of political decline due to a far more plural and decentered understanding of what constitutes public life.

In addition to the more *public* face of feminism and the *pluralist* argument discussed

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<sup>427</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>428</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>429</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p. 293

<sup>430</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of the Public Man*: Vintage Books, 1978.

<sup>431</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p. 283

above, I believe that Pettit's greatest contribution to overcome the first feminist critique for public/private sphere, relies on the difference between private and public domination. As described in *Chapter I*, Pettit analyzed two levels of dominations: horizontal relations among citizens and vertical relations between the state and citizens. What I have described thus far regarding the role of the state pertains to Pettit's concept of public domination. Safeguarding against public domination necessitates ensuring political legitimacy, which requires a broad range of popular controls over the government. This approach "enables us to explain why and how government should be forced, in the title of the volume, to operate on the people's terms".<sup>432</sup>

Parallel with this latter concept, Pettit places significant emphasis on the notion of private domination which occurs among individuals. With the emblematic eye-ball test, Pettit requires that individuals can look each other in the eye without fear that a power of interference might inspire from others.<sup>433</sup> This image captures the republican value that "free persons are able to walk tall, live without shame or indignity, and look one another in the eye without any reason for fear or deference".<sup>434</sup> In this context non-domination can be possible only if people's *basic* liberties are equally protected on the basis of public laws and norms. With his theory of social justice and political legitimacy, Pettit is able to address form of dominations which occur both in the private and public sphere. Although these two concepts are analyzed separately due to their different demands, justice and legitimacy can come apart and are strictly independent. The legitimacy of a state might require a measure of justice and justice a measure of legitimacy.<sup>435</sup> I fully support Pettit's argument about distinguishing private and public domination. Indeed, Pettit does not interpret the clear-cut distinction between private and public to exclude a group from one dimension or the other. Instead, I advocate that his objective is to delineate two distinct dimensions - one between citizens and another towards the state - without discriminating against women, as was the case with classical republicans. It is precisely this distinction that forms a fundamental basis for addressing feminist concerns.

In addition to the many examples between husbands and wives to illustrate his concept of freedom as non-domination, I argue that Pettit advocates for a social justice theory able to accommodate also feminist concerns and to prevent domination within the private sphere. In this regard, scenarios where women are expected to lower their gaze upon their

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<sup>432</sup> Pettit, *On The People's Terms*, p.3

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84

<sup>434</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, p.130

husband would cease to exist. This does not pertain to the action itself but to the issue of arbitrary power dynamics among individuals. Pettit follows an Italian-Atlantic thought, typical of the Roman republican tradition, which hails the enjoyment of a publicly protected freedom also in the domain of private life, a freedom, that enables each citizen to stand equal with others, not depending on anyone's grace or favour. Moreover, Pettit is able to avoid a gendered construction of public sphere. This can be interpreted as the possibility of establishing institutions that actively listen to women's voices and prevent the private sphere from being solely the domain of women. If neo-republicanism can effectively address these challenges, the potential for allyship becomes feasible. At the same time, if we show that state does not become another dominator, using its power against women, I believe that most feminists would less likely perceive state intervention as a *denial* per se. In an ideal scenario, instead, all citizens, including women, would enjoy an equal status both in the horizontal relations with other citizens but also in vertical relations towards the state. Only in the absence of arbitrary power both from their husbands and from the state, women might be able to pass the eye ball test and meanwhile can take part within the political domain by controlling and influencing governmental decisions.

To conclude, the primary concern of feminist philosophers regarding the public sphere is not solely its attention but rather the exclusion of women from this sphere. Addressing feminist concerns within the public sphere does not automatically alleviate the tension with republicanism. As Halldenius claims:

The relegation of the female to the domestic and the domestic to the fringes of society, out of public sight, are functions of exactly that abuse of privilege which republicans should be intent on exposing and eliminating. A situation or relation becomes a public concern by the mere fact that there are people in or affected by it who are treated as or positioned as subordinate to others, in the republican sense of being denied status - of being unfree.<sup>436</sup>

The key emphasis is on allowing space for women's voices while ensuring the private sphere is not relegated to a hierarchy but interconnected. There is undoubtedly a new focus in feminist writing on the nature of public sphere, which allows feminist to come closer to Pettit's ideals. On the other side, Pettit is able to come closer towards feminist needs with his definition of female citizenship and male domination.

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<sup>436</sup> Halldenius, L. (2014). Freedom fit for a feminist? On the feminist potential of Quentin Skinner's conception of republican freedom. *Redescriptions*, 17(1), p. 93

## 4.2-II Common good and interest

The second reason why feminists distance themselves from classical republican theories is due to their concern about how women's interests are incorporated into the common good. This critique stems from feminist perspectives that reject the idea of a monolithic view of women, preferring to acknowledge the diverse and multifaceted nature of their experiences within various societal contexts.

In this section, I intend to examine how certain feminist scholars interpret Pettit's characterization of women as a collective group and their attempts, albeit with some misinterpretation, to tackle the notion of common interest. Furthermore, I will incorporate these viewpoints by analyzing Pettit's ideas on the common good and his proposed remedies to combat the tyranny of the majority.

Pettit claims that "the republican theory of social justice requires that people enjoy freedom as non-domination in their relationships with one another, whether as individuals to individuals, as groups to groups, or as groups to individuals".<sup>437</sup> Additionally, he argues that a person is free of domination only "so far as non-domination is ensured for those in the same vulnerability class" as she is, that is, "only so far as those of her *ilk* are also free of domination".<sup>438</sup> According to Pettit, an individual is dominated to the extent that others like her "in matters of resistance and exposure to interference" are also dominated. At the same time, women are free from domination only when others in the same vulnerable category are similarly liberated. In a scenario where women lack protection from abusive behavior, Pettit suggests that "any woman can be abused on an arbitrary basis by her husband" and "womanhood is a badge of vulnerability in this regard".<sup>439</sup> Consequently, Pettit contends that even a woman in a *seemingly* non-oppressive relationship may still be considered dominated.

Marilyn Friedman particularly challenges Pettit's perspective for grouping all women into the same category of vulnerability.<sup>440</sup> She argues that he overlooks the differences among women, that "not only make them vulnerable in different ways to male domination but that also make some women vulnerable to domination by other women".<sup>441</sup> As already discussed, over the past three decades, feminism has increasingly acknowledged the diverse positions and differences among women themselves, considering social factors like race,

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<sup>437</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p. 76

<sup>438</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 122

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123

<sup>440</sup> Friedman, M. (2008). Pettit's Civic Republicanism and Male Domination. In C. Laborde & J. Maynor (Eds.), *Republicanism and political theory*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 265-66

<sup>441</sup> Friedman, Pettit's Civic Republicanism and Male Domination, p.265



religion, sexuality, class, age or ableness varying privileges or disadvantages. This recognition has challenged the notion of a universal experience of oppression among women, highlighted for example by lesbian feminists challenging heterosexual feminists' and black feminists contesting white feminists' claims of oppression. These complexities within female identities underscore significant variations in experiences, interests and perspectives, suggesting that while individuals may *all* be women, their other social identities can lead to distinct interests and viewpoints that do not necessarily align "as women".<sup>442</sup>

Despite this criticism, Friedman recognizes Pettit's reinterpretation of Roman republicanism as a perspective able to oppose male domination. In particular, she supports that "the ideal of nondomination, as applied to all relationships between women and men, would eliminate all the various forms of arbitrary interference that men exert over women's choices. It would end men's interventions in, and affects on, women's lives that make no reference to either women's interests or their perspectives".<sup>443</sup>

While Friedman acknowledges Pettit's contribution, she *cannot* entirely adopt the neo-republican concept of liberty due to its limited consideration of intersectionality. Indeed, the solution she offers is to define the arbitrariness of dominating interference in individual terms. A woman experiences male domination when treatment disregards her opinions and judgments, with her perspective on intrusive treatment differing from other women. While Friedman agrees that "there is no need for uniformity in specifying this part of the account of domination", on the other side she states that "an individualistic treatment of arbitrariness does not preclude the institutional response to male domination".<sup>444</sup> In other words, Friedman acknowledges the role of social structures and institutions to prevent men *in general* to interfere in women's lives. Her main argument revolves around the absence of consideration for women's unique perspectives or desires. However, she does not hesitate to generalize about men when discussing *male* domination, analyzing it as a structural issue.

The central issue here is: How can institutions confront *male* domination without treating women as a uniform, monolithic group? In other words, how can institutions have general strategies against male domination while avoiding broad categorizations when considering women? Furthermore, should not the differences in subordination experienced by women across various contexts and societies also apply to men in similar ways? While feminists acknowledge male domination, should not there be an equal level of differentiation

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<sup>442</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, p.249

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, p.266

for both genders to avoid any kinds of discrimination? This brings up concerns about distinguishing between men and women regarding discussions of male domination and why this distinction is predominantly applied *merely* to women rather than men.

Revisiting a universal concept of women would imply disregarding historical differences, which most feminists oppose. However, if we advocate for the diversity of women, I believe the same should logically apply to men. Friedman fails to acknowledge this perspective, selectively applying a generalization of men when discussing social structures and institutions. This approach aligns with the main reason that male domination is a structural problem. Yet, as I delineated in the previous chapter, patriarchy is recognized as a male structure, yet it is fundamentally constructed and sustained by human agents, who possess the capacity to both establish and dismantle it. Even in the introduction of her article, Friedman defines male domination as “as a type of action or pattern of behavior that *individual males* can enact toward *individual females* and as a behavioral pattern that can pervade whole societies”.<sup>445</sup> She recognizes Pettit’s contribution of individuals and vulnerability, but when this leads to the categorization of women as a group, concerns emerge. In this regard, the contrast between the notion that women belong to various diverse groups, making it difficult to have a unified understanding of their vulnerability to male domination, and simultaneously asserting that this understanding does not hinder the recognition of male domination as a structural and institutional problem, seems contradictory in Friedman’s argument.

Friedman’s proposal advocating for a more *individualized* understanding of women’s vulnerability seems to overlook Pettit’s aim of recognizing male domination as a more widespread problem among women. Returning to an individualist approach would return to a concept of a liberal individual centered on the individual alone. I believe that reverting to individual arbitrariness does not present a viable solution to the problem. The essence lies in highlighting the common challenges faced by *all* women due to male domination. Hence, I argue that there can exist a uniform understanding of women’s vulnerability to male dominance.

An important contribution in favor of Pettit’s neo-republicanism - and partly for my argument in favor of a feminist neo-republican approach - is proposed by M. Victoria Costa in her article “Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?”.<sup>446</sup> She particularly recognizes Pettit’s contribution made use of the language of domination to articulate some historical

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<sup>445</sup> Friedman, Pettit’s Civic Republicanism and Male Domination, p.247; my italics.

<sup>446</sup> Costa, M. Victoria (2013). Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, *Hypatia*, vol. 28 (4), pp. 921-936.

and contemporary feminist concerns. Contrary to the past, there exist laws and policies designed to protect women, such as the ability to initiate divorce at will and more prevalent company regulations in numerous countries that safeguard against sexual harassment. Despite this protection, systematic patterns of domination against women are still present in our current days.

With the aim to support Pettit's outlook on male domination, Costa clearly argues against Friedman and Hirschmann, in particular their attempts to reduce non-domination as *actual* interference against dominating agents. Hirschmann in particular argues against Pettit who fails to recognize the social forces that characterize women's domination: "Rather than seeing that interference is often systematic and socially produced, and that individual actions take place within larger social structures that make those actions possible and give them meaning, Pettit maintains that we can have domination without interference".<sup>447</sup> The case of women who, after reading news about violent attacks on other women, are afraid of being assaulted and therefore refrain from going out at night plays an important role in this context. In Hirschmann's view, such women experience a kind of interference. Although the source of this interference is not individually located, it affects women's lives both as individual and as a group. Similarly, Pettit can describe the situation of women who are afraid of going out at night as involving the domination of women as a group, since women are not adequately protected from assault in the streets. What distinguishes the two authors lies into the fact that for Pettit such fear is not a consequence of social forces but as feasible attacks by individual criminals, threats by individual husbands or harassment by individual bosses - which could *actually* occur or not. Indeed, Costa supports that Pettit can acknowledge that as a consequence of women being dominated as a group, "some women adjust their behavior and expectations to the point that they are not fully aware of the opportunities they are missing".<sup>448</sup> What I aim to highlight in this part is the idea that women share some commonalities as members of a group, which includes also the adjustment of certain behaviors. These behaviors can be a lack of expectations but also of consciously avoiding others like in case of going out at night. This occurs even without actual interference and directly to them. This is exactly what Pettit aims to demonstrate; the existence of male domination addresses *all* women with no difference. Indeed, Pettit's theory acknowledges the impact of group dynamics, where belonging to various groups - such as being a woman, a member of the working class or an ethnic minority can render an individual susceptible to

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<sup>447</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Freedom*, p.28

<sup>448</sup> Costa, *Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?*, p.297

distinct forms of interference. If women experience fear when going out at night, this depends on the actions and behaviors of other individuals which detain arbitrary power over *all* women.

In addition to acknowledging Pettit's contribution to women as group, I argue that Costa also provides another relevant point which I consider it as a feasible answer to the objection of intersectionality. When comparing the notion of freedom as non-domination to "relational accounts of autonomy" proposed by some feminists, she states that "such accounts stress the fact that persons are socially embedded and that agents' identities are formed within the context of social relationships and shaped by a complex of intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity".<sup>449</sup> However, Costa adds that Pettit's theory differs from relational accounts because it focuses solely on specific relations where one entity holds arbitrary power to interfere with another's choices. She acknowledges that an individual can experience a variety of relations of domination - for example, by her husband, her employer, the police or the state.<sup>450</sup> This flexibility allows the theory to accommodate the influences of intersecting societal forces on women's freedom. The fact that individuals can encounter different forms of domination, deriving from both their gender and race simultaneously. However, it is important to recognize that this holds true for black men as well. In essence, it is highlighting the complex layers of oppression experienced by individuals based on multiple facets of their identity. While this does not entirely resolve the necessity of acknowledging the diversity among women, it demonstrates Pettit's capacity to recognize the diverse elements contributing to power asymmetry in each individual through the opportunity to address different forms of domination.

Let's now move to the importance of common good and how women's interests are incorporated into it. Pettit stresses that *arbitrary* interference does not mean *unjustified* interference; rather, it refers to interference that is unchecked in the sense of not being forced to track the interests of those who suffer it. In this sense, he works with two different notions of interests: the private interests of individuals, and the common interests of citizens.<sup>451</sup> Pettit holds that practices are in a person's net interest when their expected results are something that the agent *rationally* wants for himself or herself. In contrast, the common interests of citizens are goods that are supported by the cooperatively admissible considerations that are raised in collective processes of deliberation. The two notions are

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<sup>449</sup> Costa, Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, p.924

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., p.925

<sup>451</sup> Pettit, Philip, 2004, The common good, *Justice and democracy: Essays for Brian Barry*, ed. Keith Dowding, Robert E. Goodin and Carole Pateman, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp.150-169

important because they help him distinguish between two forms of arbitrary interference. As shown above, the first, also called private domination, is practiced by an individual agent, and it occurs when such interference is not forced to track the private interests of the interferee. The second, namely public domination, is practiced by the state, and it occurs when state interference is not forced to track the common interests of citizens. The kinds of interests that people share in their role as citizens are assembled in the common good. This contrasts the idea of public interests viewed as the avowable net interests that citizens have in common.

In line with this thought, Anne Phillips supports the idea that the individualist approach is wrong because public life should be more than looking just for its own individual interest. Interest-group pluralism should not be reduced to just “an amoral bargaining and exchange”.<sup>452</sup> Pettit provides the example of the idealized deliberations were participants reason together in such a way that they see their collective decisions as legitimate and as answering to the interests of all members. In this context, there are some “cooperatively admissible” considerations that participants need to identify:

neutral considerations that concern the general prosperity of the group, or its efficacy in attaining agreed ends, or the assurance available to each that no other members enjoy any particular privilege, and so on; and second, those more personal complaints that members of different groups may raise against various proposals and that secure acceptance as reasonable: ‘That’s going to make life difficult for those of us who are poor/who belong to an ethnic minority/who live in rural areas..’<sup>453</sup>

In addition to these “publicly admissible considerations”, Pettit argues that the public interest should be better identified with those measures - policies and practices - which follow “publicly admissible criteria”. In this way, “an initiative will answer to the public interest of the members of a group precisely when it is supported in some of the ways just rehearsed by the reasons publicly admissible amongst the members; precisely when it answers, directly or indirectly, to publicly admissible, supporting considerations, according to publicly admissible criteria of support”.<sup>454</sup>

In order to provide an account of day-to-day politics, Pettit emphasizes the importance of political institutions which play an important role in identifying and empower the public interest in practice. In particular he refers to institutions of an electoral-contestatory democracy that holds out the prospect that the public interest, so conceived, can

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<sup>452</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p.282

<sup>453</sup> Pettit, *The common good*, p.162

<sup>454</sup> Pettit, *The common good*, p.164

rule in the political life of a society. There are two sorts of danger that might arise: the first is that the system might fail to identify and empower all the public interests relevant to the polity. And the other is that it might misidentify or misrepresent certain private interests as public interests and proceed to empower them. The first, called the ‘false negative danger’, involves an ignorance of certain public interests; the second, referred as ‘false positive’, is an error about what those interests are.

I will now try to apply these two dangers to women’s situation. For the first scenario, consider a situation where a community is planning to construct a new public park, but considerations for accessible childcare facilities within the park for single mothers or caregivers are neglected. Similarly, consider a legislative agenda focused on urban development plan aimed at enhancing city connectivity. Despite its intentions to benefit the broader public, this plan overlooks the necessity of establishing safe and well-lit pathways for women in urban areas, which are crucial for their safety and accessibility, especially during evenings and nights. Both examples illustrate the ignorance of specific public decisions, particularly neglecting women’s interests.

Regarding the second danger of the misidentification of private interests as public interests, imagine a healthcare policy heavily focusing on funding for reproductive health services but primarily catering to male reproductive health needs. Despite being promoted as a public health initiative, this policy neglects crucial aspects of women’s reproductive health, like comprehensive prenatal care and affordable contraception. Another example occurs when a legislative proposal that aims to regulate dress codes in the workplace with the public aim to maintain professionalism. This implementation predominantly impacts women by imposing strict guidelines on their clothing choices. This will potentially be limiting their freedom of expression and comfort in the workplace. Both these examples demonstrating the misrepresentation of private interests as public interests.

Pettit mentions a variety of ways to keep the state power in check: electoral procedures, constraints on the implementation and enforcement of law, individual rights constraints, separation of powers, accountability measures and opportunities to contestation. With these elements, he is able to overcome the danger of a tyranny of majority or of elite, a crucial aspect for feminist scholars who fear exclusion from the public sphere and the silencing of their voices. This description resonates with Nancy Fraser’s argument provided above. There is a crucial need to perceive the public realm as diverse and multifaceted, allowing individuals the opportunity to express their voices across various contexts. By embracing this approach, every individual, including women with different intersections of

identity, can have their voices acknowledged and respected, ensuring that their legal rights are upheld and heard. In a society that values diversity and plurality, individuals are less prone to succumb to uniformity or oppression. The presence of multiple viewpoints encourages critical thinking, challenges dominant narratives and fosters an environment where freedom of expression and individuality can flourish. This issue of tyrannical control, be it majoritarian or elitist, is a concern shared among various minorities and historically marginalized groups who have suffered discrimination throughout history. It regards not only women but also ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.

Pettit is aware that “contestatory institutions reviewed, whether facilitating or forestalling in character, [do not] always work well in existing democracies. Their influence is frequently damped or warped so that they may do little good, or even do more harm than good”.<sup>455</sup> Indeed, he considers direct democracy “a very bad thing, since it may ensure the ultimate form of arbitrariness: the tyranny of a majority. However, democratic instruments of control will certainly be desirable and indispensable, but they are not the be-all and end-all of good government”.<sup>456</sup> (This also provides an additional answer to Anne Phillips who proposed the consolidation of the commitment to participatory democracy as a solution for addressing women’s interests, as argued above). Despite the great contributions, Pettit is aware that something along the lines of those institutions is needed in order to complement the role of electoral institutions. Nevertheless, he hopes that “enough has been said to show that it need not be an illusion”.<sup>457</sup>

I strongly support Pettit’s contribution to electoral-contestatory democracy. To further fortify his argument, I aim to use an important point highlighted by Phillips to support Pettit’s concept of common good. When discussing feminist arguments against the idea of women as group, Phillips argues that if “we put too much stress on difference - on the fact that people have different experiences and different interests, and that those with one set of experiences cannot ‘stand in’ for those with another - we seem to legitimate a vision of politics in which no-one addresses anyone else’s concerns and each just looks after her own”.<sup>458</sup> In order to clarify her idea, Anne Phillips makes a really provocative assumption and claims: “if we say, for example, that men cannot be relied upon to recognize and defend women’s interests (I find it hard to see how anyone could consider herself a feminist if she

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<sup>455</sup> Pettit, *The common good*, p.168

<sup>456</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.8

<sup>457</sup> Pettit, *The common good*, p.169

<sup>458</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?* p.287

did not argue some version of this), are we saying men should leave so-called women's concerns to the women and women leave men's concerns to the men?"<sup>459</sup> Additionally, she goes further and asks: "If we say that white women cannot be relied upon to recognize and act on the problems of racism, are we saying racism is only a problem for black people and does not have to be addressed by those who are white?"<sup>460</sup> I agree with Phillips that if we think that having different interests means that "members of a group have no responsibility towards the members of another - no capacity even for understanding their different point of view", then this would lead to a road that one would not like to pursue.<sup>461</sup>

At this point a crucial aspect comes to light: the concept of male allyship, emphasizing the importance of men advocating for women's interests. In contemporary discourse, men are increasingly viewed as main allies in promoting women's empowerment. Considering the scenarios mentioned earlier, could men not advocate for urban planning to enhance women's safety or for accessible childcare facilities in public parks? Men can stand for men; but also, for women. This alignment might facilitate a clearer separation between advocating for women's political representation and the restricted notion that confines women solely to representing their own interests. This principle extends to men as well. As provided by Phillips, republicanism offers a more dialogic understanding of public justice and public good to resolve the issue of false unities and the responsibilities of groups that might not be affected by a certain issue. She also adds that "if politics becomes a marketplace where different groups bargain about their specific interests, the existing power structures stay the same".<sup>462</sup>

Following this argument, the absence of political representation for women would not inherently imply that their interests are neglected. What truly counts is ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men to engage in society. However, this response addresses objections raised by feminists regarding the classical republican notion of the common good. Furthermore, Pettit introduces more nuanced elements beyond the straightforward classical ideals of active political involvement or the pursuit of the common interest. I argued that he provides an answer to this concern by offering a more deep understanding of public justice thanks to his concept of social justice among citizens and political legitimacy with regard to the state. The electoral-contestatory democracy is able to

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<sup>459</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>460</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>461</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, p.284



take on board different arguments and perspectives and to frame our own demands in terms that will be compelling to those with whom we disagree.

To conclude, Pettit's emphasis on the common good should not be viewed as problematic for women's interests. Public interest should not be treated just as an amalgam of private preferences. Public life should be more than a vehicle for looking after one's own. Strictly related to the request of pluralist public space by feminists, this can bring benefits and challenge the problematization of the common good.

#### **4.2-III Social justice and equality**

The third and last reason why throughout history feminists have mainly tended to rely on liberal ideologies rather than on republicanism is due to its lack of concern that the latter puts on the emphasis of social and economic equality. As Lena Halldenius claims: "The [classical] republican myth is that economic and social matters are non-political concerns of the household and therefore not part of - or should not be part of public life".<sup>463</sup> Classical republicans did not consider economic and social issues as political concerns. Hence, "focusing on the political, often to the exclusion of the social and economic, and idealizing a once lively public that was never very lively for women" was exactly what created distance between feminism and the republican tradition.<sup>464</sup>

In the famous article "What is the Point of Equality?", Elisabeth Anderson explores the multifaceted nature of equality, emphasizing its significance beyond mere material or distributive aspects.<sup>465</sup> The main point of equality is to end oppression. She suggests that the significance of equality lies in advocating for a society where individuals engage in non-oppressive relationships with others. Hence, true equality is not solely about equal distribution of resources or income but encompasses broader societal structures that enable individuals to participate as equals in various aspects of life. This is tied to the communal aspiration for a world free from oppressive structures and dynamics. Hence, Anderson's concerns are not the issues of moral luck or of policing the distinction between outcome and opportunity, which have occupied many philosophers of equality, unless those things serve in the larger political concern of securing non-oppressive relationships.<sup>466</sup> In this regard,

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<sup>463</sup> Halldenius, *Freedom Fit for a Feminist*, p. 93

<sup>464</sup> Phillips, *Feminism and Republicanism: Is This a Plausible Alliance?*, p.293

<sup>465</sup> Anderson, Elisabeth S., 1999, *What is the Point of Equality?*, *Ethics*, 109: p.287-337

<sup>466</sup> Halldenius, *Freedom Fit for a Feminist*, p.89

Halldenus suggests that those agreeing with Anderson's view, defining equality as the end of oppression, would struggle to separate a commitment to equality from a commitment to freedom.<sup>467</sup> Indeed, she states:

There is no conceptual distinction to be made between equality and freedom conceived in terms of independence. Independence is inherently social since it is a function of relations in which you stand to others. Social life is not possible without rules. Indeed, social life is constituted by rules; there can be no rules of regulation without logically prior rules of constitution. Within the network of rules in which we live our social lives, freedom will be a matter of the social and political conditions for being an equal.<sup>468</sup>

This statement aligns with Pettit's argument that one's account of liberty can ever be independent, or understood independently of one's larger political theoretical commitment, or of the function one sees liberty serving in our understanding of political life. Akin to freedom, equality is not a standalone trait detached from an individual's social or political setting. Similarly, the concept of equality is inherently relational because it prompts the inquiry "equal to whom?". For feminists, this question is particularly crucial as it exposes the existing disparities between men and women in various spheres of life.

Adding to Halldenus, I will now expand upon her argument by presenting further details on how Pettit incorporates social and economic equality into his notion of freedom as non-domination. Already in "Republicanism", Pettit recognizes socioeconomic independence as one of the five broad areas of policy-making in which we can expect such a state to involve itself.<sup>469</sup> This independence implies possessing the necessary resources to function adequately within society without relying on others' beneficence.<sup>470</sup> In contemporary society, achieving socioeconomic independence demands not only meeting basic needs but also encompasses acquiring essential capabilities, such as literacy, access to information, legal knowledge and cultural empowerment. The absence of these capabilities exposes individuals to potential domination or exploitation by others, limiting their scope of undominated choices. Thus, lack of socioeconomic independence could subject individuals to forms of exploitation or manipulation by exploiting their vulnerabilities, such as financial dependence, lack of access to medical or legal services. With his definition of socioeconomic independence, Pettit is able to explain cases of women who do not have control

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid., p.88

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., p.95

<sup>469</sup> The five primary areas of policy-making are: external defense, internal protection, personal independence, economic prosperity and public life. In all of these areas it is possible to discern the broad and often distinctive outlines of what a republican philosophy of government would require (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.150)

<sup>470</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.158-163

over household finances and make them vulnerable to decisions made by male family members, which could impact their well-being. Or even cases of domestic abuse or unfair treatment, where women might not seek legal assistance due to financial constraints or fear of societal repercussions, thereby becoming more exposed to exploitation.

In his renowned work “On the People’s Terms”, Pettit distinctly elaborates on how his concept of freedom as non-domination encompasses the pursuit of equality, especially in his exploration of social justice. Earlier, I discussed Pettit’s delineation of two forms of domination experienced by individuals: private and public domination, where the first refers to relations of domination among individuals; and the second pertains to the dynamic between the citizenry and the state. In order to explain these concepts, Pettit “starts from the normative assumption that the state ought to be expressively egalitarian in this sense”.<sup>471</sup> Indeed, he adds:

the connection between social justice and expressive equality is scarcely surprising, for the very paradigm of injustice is the scenario where those of a certain caste or colour, religion, gender or ethnicity suffer discrimination under the institutions established by the state. The just system, so the lesson goes, cannot be a system that discriminates on any such basis between its members; it is inherently impartial.<sup>472</sup>

We live in a society where some people have such power in relation to others that dominate them whether culturally, economically or legally. Pettit aims to establish a system where all citizens can live on equal terms with others and not claim a special position for themselves. Freedom as non-domination is a central political value within the historical republican tradition. But he also argues that this political ideal can be used as the building block for a truly egalitarian theory that is adequate for the conditions of contemporary democracies.

The relationship between equality and freedom has been extensively debated in philosophical discourse. Rousseau defines that “which ought to be the end of every system of legislation is ... freedom and equality”, where freedom is understood in the sense of non-dependency and equality is valued “because freedom cannot subsist without it”.<sup>473</sup> Contemporary feminists like Halldenius state: “If freedom is conceptually unconnected to equality and fairness, then surely it could tell us nothing about the constitution of society”.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p. 78

<sup>472</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>473</sup> Rousseau, J.J. (1997). Rousseau: ‘The Social Contract’ and Other Later Political, Writings, trans. Victor Gourevitch. Cambridge University Press: ii.11.1 in Pettit, *On People’s Terms*, p.12

<sup>474</sup> Halldenius, Freedom fit for a feminist?, p.89

Similarly, Drucilla Cornell claims: “Social equality [should be] redefined so as to serve freedom” because “there is nothing more fundamental for a human being”.<sup>475</sup> Unlike these authors, there are others who prioritize freedom as the primary value. For example, Berlin argues that “[e]verything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice”.<sup>476</sup>

One distinguishing aspect of Pettit’s theory, which can effectively address feminist concerns, is thus its ability to encompass equality as well. Indeed, Pettit claims: “The achievement of that discernible and applicable ideal would make, intuitively, for the equality of people in their status as free persons or citizens”.<sup>477</sup> He aims to establish equality for people in the enjoyment of freedom: that is, to ensure an equal status among all individuals. However, Pettit does not solely emphasize the political aspect but also underscores the significance of social and economic independence. Feminist philosophers have predominantly focused on egalitarian concerns, particularly social and economic equality. For feminists, freedom is rarely seen as the primary goal but rather as a means toward achieving equality, lacking intrinsic value. While feminists prioritize social and economic equality and view freedom as a general concern, Pettit, in contrast, regards freedom as the principal value. As previously mentioned, the intrinsic worth lies in attaining freedom, with social justice and political legitimacy serving as means toward this ultimate value. Hence, this feminist criticism appears relatively mild. Neo-republicanism does not inherently oppose feminist goals. Significant inequalities constitute a form of domination, aligning with Pettit’s perspective. It is primarily a matter of emphasis.

In conclusion, I showed how Pettit’s theory of non-domination can address the feminist concern regarding socioeconomic issues, as this represents just one element of potential domination over citizens, including women. In conjunction with gender equality, the concept of domination can extend to various other forms of inequality such as social, economic, educational, racial, legal, environmental and political disparities. In the upcoming chapter, I will further explore the feminist disinterest in the concept of freedom.

### **4.3 Feminism and neo-republicanism: a feasible allyship?**

While republican and neo-republican theories share many core principles, neo-

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<sup>475</sup> Cornell, Drucilla, 1998, *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex, and Equality*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press in “Liberal Feminism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

<sup>476</sup> Berlin (1969) in Halldenius, *Freedom Fit for a Feminist?*, p.125

<sup>477</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p. 47

republicanism represents a more contemporary and nuanced approach to these issues, emphasizing the importance of individual freedom and protection from domination in democratic societies. Pettit's new concept of non-domination has brought feminists closer to this ideology, moving beyond just liberal theories. In this chapter I have addressed three elements that feminist philosophers have mainly used to criticize classical republicanism - the distinction between the private and public spheres, the focus on relationships among citizens and a lack of emphasis on social and economic equality. In the second part, I have used the same components to demonstrate how certain feminists have further amplified these criticisms or presented arguments aimed at countering most of the critiques directed at classical republicanism, favoring Pettit's neo-republican perspective. Moreover, I have presented additional arguments demonstrating how Pettit effectively counters these three criticisms.

Feminists have recognized shared similarities between feminist and neo-republican theories, particularly in their emphasis on promoting equality and challenging hierarchical power structures. Pettit's reinterpretation of Roman republicanism as a perspective that opposes male domination is a welcome development for several feminists. In many of its details, Pettit's position overlaps with those widespread among feminists. For example, "Pettit frequently uses the example of relationships between husbands and wives to illustrate aspects of his theory of nondomination and he calls clearly for an end to male domination of women within heterosexual marriage and family".<sup>478</sup> Friedman also adds that "Pettit would surely also agree that male domination of women should be eliminated in all the nonmarital social contexts in which it arises, for example, in the workplace and in all heterosexual sexual relationships".<sup>479</sup> An interesting point was highlighted by Costa when she claimed: "Though I cannot be sure, I suspect that many feminists worry that appeals to the republican tradition carry too much historical baggage, and therefore they wish to avoid any association of their views with it. This worry, for example, surfaces in the work of Carole Pateman, who shares many theoretical commitments with the republican tradition, but refuses to call them *republican*".<sup>480</sup> If the central goals shared by feminists is to end oppression and to develop normative theories based on women's experience,<sup>481</sup> I have shown the potential usefulness of Phillip Pettit's theory of freedom as non-domination for those with these feminist goals.

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<sup>478</sup> Friedman, Pettit's Civic Republicanism and Male Domination, p.249

<sup>479</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>480</sup> Pateman, Carole (2007) Why republicanism? *Basic Income Studies* 2 (2): 1–6.

<sup>481</sup> See Mansbridge, Jane, and Susan Okin. *Feminism* (2017). In "A companion to contemporary political philosophy", ed. Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit, Thomas Pogge: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. (first published in 1993): p.332-359

Both feminism and neo-republicanism are concerned with the problem of domination and the ways in which power can be used to oppress and subjugate individuals. At this point, it is important to briefly readdress the crucial distinction between *having* power over someone and *exercising* domination over them. If one person holds more power over another, it does not automatically qualify the one with power as a dominator. For example, consider a situation when a woman is sick and the husband takes care of her. In this case, no male domination exists. The key factor distinguishing this situation from domination is the absence of arbitrariness - abuse of power to control, manipulate or harm his wife against her own interests. It is a manifestation of power asymmetry due to differing conditions, not an act of dominance. Hence, domination involves an element of coercion, where the more powerful party actively imposes their will upon the other.

Although there have been some feminist discussions of the historical representatives, the body of literature on feminism and neo-republicanism remains limited. However, as supported in most of the articles cited, “Pettit’s theory does not offer a detailed examination of the full phenomenon of the domination of women. But until such an examination is attempted it would be hasty to conclude that his theory could offer no tools to illuminate the phenomenon”.<sup>482</sup> Furthermore, there seems to be “an unease among feminists towards republicanism which, perhaps, has more to do with certain other features of the republican tradition than with the conception of freedom itself”.<sup>483</sup> Halldenius suggests what we need to do to this conceptual claim in order to make it fit for a feminist. Additionally, she makes an important point for the sake of argument:

As long as freedom is allowed to remain in the grip of a Berlinian binary between absence of coercion and presence of self-mastery, a binary that looks like a trap for feminists, equality will look like the more promising concept if you are concerned with the subtleties of oppression rather than the crudeness of force. In order to understand well how republican freedom – freedom from dependence or subjection – relates to this binary, and its potential for unlocking the feminist trap, we need to remind ourselves why the distinction between negative and positive freedom mattered...<sup>484</sup>

Halldenius acknowledges the relevance of freedom as non-domination able to support feminists to escape the *trap* to position themselves between one concept of another. Similarly, Nancy Hirschmann agrees with Pettit in rejecting the idea that freedom as mere non-interference by others (Berlin’s “negative liberty”) is far from sufficient to ground a

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<sup>482</sup> Costa, Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, p.928

<sup>483</sup> Halldenius, Freedom Fit for a Feminist?, p.92

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., p.90

complete political philosophy.<sup>485</sup> Following the same line of argument, Friedman agrees with Pettit's argument regarding the insufficiency of mere non-interference as the basis for a comprehensive political philosophy.<sup>486</sup> At the same time, she also defines Pettit's concept of non-domination as more demanding than the liberal notion of negative liberty.<sup>487</sup> I fully agree with Costa, Hirschmann and Halldenius on these perspectives. I find their points particularly supportive of my argument advocating for the superiority of Pettit's concept of individual freedom over Berlin's negative notion. Their observations contribute significantly to my understanding of Pettit's relevance to contemporary feminist concerns and the concept of freedom.

In contrast to feminist philosophers who predominantly focus on women's issues, Pettit diverges from that perspective and champions non-domination as a political ideal for *all* individuals, encompassing minorities historically subjected to discrimination. Indeed, Pettit claims: "In the vision of contemporary republicans, this ideal ought to be extended to an inclusive citizenry; freedom as non-domination ought to be secured for all more or less permanent residents, independently of gender or property or religion".<sup>488</sup> While Pettit does not extensively discuss how his theory applies specifically to the domination of women, his focus lies in the relationship dynamics between master and slave. Indeed, he includes the privileges men historically hold over women as a crucial issue. The central idea of his theory is to prevent anyone from detaining arbitrary power over another. In this regard, his framework forms a basis for a feminist perspective on democracy and an egalitarian state. Therefore, I strongly advocate that Pettit's concepts align with many feminist objectives, particularly thanks to his notion of social justice and private domination. These notions represent a significant departure from traditional republicanism, aiming to address the complexities of contemporary society. Neo-republican freedom offers a more nuanced approach capable of addressing political, economic, social and civic needs.

Pettit's approach to non-domination aligns with many feminist approaches, but I argue that certain gaps still remain. His concept of freedom lacks an important element needed to adequately address women's concerns. In contrast to the feminist objections outlined in this chapter, I aim to propose adjustments to Pettit's promising framework of freedom as non-domination. Contrary to other minorities, I believe that women face specific challenges, regardless of their race, ethnicity or social group. These challenges relate to

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<sup>485</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Freedom*, p.16, 26

<sup>486</sup> Friedman, *Pettit's Civic Republicanism and Male Domination*, p. 249

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251

<sup>488</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.8

women's *capacity* to develop desires, *exercise* their freedom and achieve self-realization. These aspects have historically been controlled, manipulated or undermined by a patriarchal society consisting of husbands, male politicians or leaders. While Pettit appears to advocate for positive freedom and women's empowerment, what he overlooks is the achievement of women's self-realization by overcoming their internalized external barriers. My aim is to broaden Pettit's theory by incorporating these aspects, extending it to encompass positive freedom in order to comprehensively guarantee the authentic and true desire of women. In the forthcoming concluding chapter, I will deep into a more detailed discussion of this matter.



## Chapter V

### FEMINIST NEO-REPUBLICAN CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

The preceding chapters have detailed the evolution of my argument, which will now provide the key elements for developing of a new theoretical perspective, termed *feminist neo-republicanism*. This framework seeks to incorporate feminist concerns alongside the innovative aspects of Philip Pettit's theory. At this point, let me now revisit the initial research questions posed in the introduction: *Is neo-republicanism as conceived by Philip Pettit with its negative concept of freedom as non-domination able to acknowledge the importance of positive liberty, and more specifically the vital role this kind of freedom plays in women's self-realization? As discussed, Pettit's emphasis of, and reliance on, a purely negative understanding of liberty suggests that the answer to this question is "no". Which features must neo-republicanism include to make it more realistic, adequate and applicable to our actual societies, where the role of women is still challenged both in the private and public sphere? Is it feasible to rely on a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom to overcome this lack effectively?*

To address these questions, I began by examining the classical distinction between positive and negative notions of freedom. Indeed, in *Chapter I*, I have contrasted Isaiah Berlin's concept of non-interference with Pettit's notion of non-domination and argued for the superiority of non-domination over non-interference in understanding individual freedom. Regarding the positive notion, in *Chapter II*, instead, I have supported Charles Taylor's idea of an *exercise* concept of self-realization. Additionally, I have illustrated the necessity of incorporating both negative and positive elements to understand freedom. In *Chapter III*, I have extended this argument to the status of women's subordination which further underscored the need to have a *compounded* concept of freedom. Finally, in *Chapter IV*, I have attempted to merge feminist and neo-republican theories, highlighting their shared concerns such as male domination, challenging hierarchical power structures and promoting

equality. While demonstrating how Pettit's theory can address main feminist criticisms of classical republicanism, I have also acknowledged some of their differences.

In concluding the previous chapter, I have outlined what Pettit's theory lacks to *fully* align with feminist goals, particularly emphasizing women's *capacity* to develop real and authentic desires and to achieve freedom as self-realization. However, I have highlighted the potential for collaboration between Pettit's theory and feminist objectives. While Pettit needs to address feminist concerns, on the other side, I believe that feminists also need to find – and acknowledge - the common path towards neo-republicanism. Following this necessity, in this chapter, I will answer the following question: What elements should be retained and improved upon from Pettit's perspective, and similarly, from feminism? It is essential to recognize that both feminist and neo-republican perspectives must intersect and find a common path, given their shared goals. A feasible alliance is indeed not only possible but can serve as the foundation for the development and implementation of a new perspective and framework: *feminist neo-republicanism*.

This chapter is divided into four parts, each exploring key elements that a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom should encompass. Firstly, I will emphasize a freedom-centered approach to addressing women's challenges and expand on why feminist philosophers should prioritize the value of freedom over *autonomy* or *equality*. I will draw on insights from Linda Zerilli's work on political freedom and Nancy Hirschmann's theory of freedom. Secondly, I will examine how Pettit can respond to objections that his theory is inadequate in addressing the entrenched problem of patriarchy. This discussion will consider objections rooted in social constructionism, which represents significant feminist critiques of my argument. Thirdly, I will demonstrate how Pettit could integrate the achievement of women's self-realization into his theory of non-domination. Lastly, I will summarize the key elements that the new framework of feminist neo-republicanism must consider.

## **5.1 Freedom as main value**

Since ancient times the concept of freedom has been considered the main value by many philosophers because it is seen as essential for the flourishing of individuals and societies alike. Whether referring to negative freedom, where individuals are free from coercion, oppression or arbitrary authority, or to positive freedom, which empowers individuals to exercise control over their lives and acting according to their own will,

freedom has consistently embodied an *intrinsic* value that societies, states, communities and individuals aim to achieve. As Pettit emphasizes at the beginning of his masterpiece: “Freedom is not meant to be the only value in life, or the only value that ultimately matters”.<sup>489</sup> Although freedom as non-domination is “not the only value in politics, in the account defended here it serves a gateway role: if we pay the price of securing freedom as non-domination in a suitable measure, we will have paid enough to secure social justice and political legitimacy”.<sup>490</sup> Ensuring freedom as non-domination is the fundamental prerequisite for establishing a just state, where all other values are typically regarded as subordinate to it. Pettit asserts that his political ideal can serve as the foundation for developing a genuinely egalitarian theory that effectively addresses the complexities of modern democracies.

Following Pettit’s principle, I agree that the fundamental value to consider when framing feminist neo-republicanism is freedom, with all other values deriving from its achievement. However, this claim diverges significantly from the foundations of many feminist theories. Indeed, contrary to the arguments put forth by Philip Pettit, Isaiah Berlin and Quentin Skinner, who advocate for the fundamental value of freedom, feminist philosophers - particularly those of the second and third wave - have often assigned only marginal importance to freedom. Instead, they have emphasized values like autonomy and equality as more central and prevalent in their philosophical frameworks. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, feminists have referred to the ‘devaluation’ of equality as one of the three reasons for their divergence from republican theories. In contrast, I have shown how Pettit’s neo-republicanism effectively addresses this criticism through his notion of social justice.

In addition to equality, the other value that holds particular importance for feminist scholars is the achievement of autonomy. Given the significance of and extensive literature on this topic, particularly concerning women’s struggles, it is worth paying attention to this concept. However, as already asserted in *Chapter II*, I will not dive into all the conceptual variations of autonomy nor its implications in moral and political philosophy. My aim is limited to highlight the importance that this concept holds for feminists. Specifically, for the sake of my argument I will focus on the reason why, when discussing a *compounded* feminist concept of freedom, it is essential to include some *form* of autonomy in the new approach I aim to support. This will be discussed below in this chapter.

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<sup>489</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.3

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127

In feminist literature, various interpretations have been associated with the notion of autonomy. Despite the different explanations, it is agreed that autonomy is “usually understood by feminist writers... as self-government or self-direction: being autonomous is *acting* on motives, reasons, or values that are one’s *own*”.<sup>491</sup> In a historical context where women have long suffered domination and subjugation, autonomy emphasizes the importance of women’s agency, which enables them to make choices about their lives free from coercion and oppression. As described in *Chapter II*, this would include not just ensuring that women are free from external obstacles but also ensuring that their desires are not manipulated and are developed according to their own motivations. So explained, the notion of autonomy partially recalls elements familiar to Pettit’s non-domination, specifically when describing that someone is free when she is not subject to someone’s else will, and neither manipulation nor domination takes place. However, what sets the concept of autonomy apart from non-domination are two additional elements: the *action* according to one’s own will and the process of developing *capacities* for being self-realized.

As discussed in *Chapter I*, I have shown my belief, akin to Pettit, that the status of being dominated should be considered *superior* to that of not being interfered with as suggested by Berlin. The same argumentation applies to the concept of autonomy as well. Indeed, I hold that, when considering the condition of women, the *status* of being dominated should be considered more ‘relevant’ than their *actual actions*. Let’s revisit the example of Nora and her husband, who “did not manipulate or deceive her in her exercise of those choices”. But she still experienced some lack of freedom.<sup>492</sup> Indeed, Pettit states:

freedom as a person requires more than just being let alone, just benefitting from noninterference; it requires richer assets than any that Nora enjoys. To be a free person you must have the *capacity* to make certain central choices - choices about what religion to practice, whether to speak your mind, who to associate with, and so on - without having to seek permission of another. You must be able to exercise such basic or fundamental liberties, as they are usually called, without having to answer to any master or dominus in your life.<sup>493</sup>

In addition to what has already been discussed, an important point highlighted by this quote is the *capacity* that Nora, and all women living under the domination of others, should possess to make certain choices. Pettit uses the term *capacity* when describing Torvald’s ability to interfere on an arbitrary basis in attempting to manipulate his wife in his desired direction. However, Pettit also refers to the capacity that *Nora* must have to make certain

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<sup>491</sup> Stoljar, Natalie, Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman

<sup>492</sup> Pettit, P. (2014). *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, XIV

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV-XV

choices. This element leads me to underscore again the *implicit* importance and acknowledgement that Pettit attributes to the achievement of positive freedom. Whether he is concerned in addressing this issue explicitly is another matter. Below in this chapter, I will amply describe the importance of developing this *capacity*, particularly because it constitutes a key element in achieving women's self-realization. This aspect – which represents a fundamental basis for a concept of autonomy - is what I consider absent in Pettit' theory and which needs to be included to make non-domination more *women-friendly*.

The last point worth mentioning when discussing autonomy in feminist philosophy is the concept of relational autonomy. This is often utilized to differentiate feminist reconceptualization of autonomy to “notions of autonomy that are thought to presuppose *atomist* conceptions of the self”.<sup>494</sup> The latter allegedly tend to promote an “unattractive ‘masculinist’ ideals of personhood as self-sufficient”, taken to operate “in a vacuum unaffected by social relationships, or as an abstract reasoner stripped of distorting influences such as emotions”.<sup>495</sup> In contrast, relational autonomy emphasizes the influence of interpersonal relationships and social contexts in shaping individuals' capacity to act autonomously.<sup>496</sup>

I briefly touched upon this notion in the previous chapter while discussing Costa's response to authors who compare Pettit's non-domination with relational autonomy. The fact that Pettit focuses on *dominating* relationships - where someone holds arbitrary power over another, creates differences with this concept of autonomy. Relational autonomy encompasses *various* types of relationships that can constrain women's autonomy, beyond just those characterized by arbitrary power dynamics.<sup>497</sup> For example, supporters of relational autonomy may argue that family dynamics characterized by traditional gender roles might restrict women's choices and opportunities, such as expectations to prioritize caregiving over personal ambitions. However, Pettit would classify this as a dominating relationship only if women's choices are potentially manipulated by an abusive father or husband.

Although I partly agree with Costa, due to the different nature of relationships, I can still see some similarities between relational autonomy and non-domination. Both

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<sup>494</sup> Stoljar, Natalie, Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

<sup>495</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>496</sup> Relational accounts of autonomy stress the fact that individuals are socially embedded and that agents' identities are formed within the context of social relationships and shaped by a complex of intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity (Christman, 2004, Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves, *Philosophical Studies*, 117: 143–64).

<sup>497</sup> Costa, Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, p.924

frameworks examine the absence or presence of freedom within interpersonal contexts, rather than within isolated individuals.<sup>498</sup> Individuals must be recognized as members of a society and cannot be fully understood or analyzed in isolation; rather they must be considered within the social and community context. I agree with the idea that our choices, behaviors, identities are influenced by the environment around us; this is true for all communities around the world. For instance, in Western society and Islamic countries cultural expectations and social norms are different but still play a role in shaping one's desires and choices. However, what I disagree with is the *primary* role placed by feminists on the social context and the analysis of each element in their theories as socially constructed. I will explore this point of divergence when discussing Hirschmann's concept of freedom and her main argument for social constructionism.

To summarize what has been demonstrated thus far, I also believe that autonomy and freedom are closely related concepts, but they are not identical and do not always overlap. Indeed, as Nancy Hirschmann states "a key feature of freedom, and what distinguishes freedom from autonomy, is that it involves a combination of what individuals do and what happens to them, it is about making choices within the parameters and limitations of conditions over which they have no control".<sup>499</sup> But the question to ask now is: how would the interconnection between these two concepts change, if we focus specifically on the *positive* freedom, and not on freedom in general? I believe that there are clear parallels between autonomy and positive freedom, specifically as interpreted by Taylor. Both concepts extend beyond mere absence of external constraints - or "what happens to them" - and encompass the presence of enabling conditions, or capabilities, as I previously discussed, that empower individuals to govern themselves and actualize their authentic selves. Both frameworks aim to ensure that formation of one's goal occurs through a process over which the individual has control, rather than being driven by actions desired as a result of brainwashing or oppression by external forces. In other words, what is needed in this process is for individuals to be able to reflectively and critically develop their *own* desires according to their own will, free from coercion, deception or manipulation by others. These concepts address both the internal, psychological realm of the individual and the coercion exerted by external forces. Referring back to the section on the distinction between internal and external obstacles in *Chapter III*, it is evident that both concepts give importance to both *types* of constraints. These may include instances of manipulation, brainwashing, pressure, deceit,

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<sup>498</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.66

<sup>499</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.31

gaslighting, emotional abuse or isolation, as well as internal obstacles such as distorted judgment, ignorance, irrational desires, illusions and fear. However, as discussed, it remains important to emphasize that overcoming these obstacles serves only as a means toward achieving a higher value represented by freedom.

If autonomy is described as satisfying the need for a *compounded* concept of freedom, because it includes actions that can be limited by both internal and external constraints - then the question that arises at this point is: why still considering Pettit as a primary reference for a feminist understanding of freedom? I argue that what autonomy lacks is an important aspect of non-domination. Indeed, although autonomy *might* address issues like brainwashing, manipulation and discrimination, which are omitted from the concept of non-interference, it fails to consider the importance of overcoming arbitrary power wielded by others and ensuring a non-dominated status for citizens to enjoy equal opportunities. This is where Pettit's proposal comes into play, advocating for the presence of a state that ensure social justice and political legitimacy. After all that has been discussed and will be added below, I remain in favor of Pettit's concept of non-domination. It not only closely aligns with a *compounded* understanding of freedom but also advances it further by emphasizing equality of status between women and men, as well as among all individuals, rather than solely prioritizing autonomous action.

After clarifying these points, my intention is not to portray freedom and autonomy as enemies. The fact that there are similarities between them, it does not alter the essence of my argument. It is evident that many concepts in philosophy overlap and have some common elements. However, if this is indeed the case that autonomy and freedom have these similarities, we should now ask: Why do feminists significantly distance themselves from the concept of freedom? One of the main reasons is that most feminist philosophers have critiqued traditional notions of freedom as being inherently male-biased. Similarly, in the introduction of this dissertation, indeed, I refer to *masculinist* concepts of freedom, which primarily focus on interference and external constraints, rather than the ability to make meaningful choices in one's own life, as emphasized in the concept of autonomy.

Feminist philosophers criticize traditional liberal and classical republican understandings of freedom as inadequate in addressing the ways in which women are oppressed and constrained within patriarchal power structures. This criticism mainly comes from the historical association of freedom as non-interference or as purely political freedom as advocated by classical republican theories. Most contemporary feminists argue that it is essential to articulate the conditions necessary for autonomous choice in order to understand

gender oppression. Classical notions of freedom, such as those proposed by Berlin, are considered insufficient in addressing this need. In contrast, neo-republican theories address injustices like oppression and can then incorporate them into the concept of domination. This offers a more nuanced understanding of freedom that aligns with feminist critiques of patriarchal power dynamics. More details on this discussion will be provided below.

To summarize: freedom has been mainly associated with negative freedom, which pertains to the absence of constraints or limitations on an individual's actions or choices as supported by advocates of non-interference as well as absence from arbitrary power by neo-republican scholars. Autonomy, on the other hand, refers to an individual's capacity to govern themselves as well as to make their own choices without external coercion. Given this distinction, it is obvious that feminists have distanced themselves from these traditional notions of freedom, as they do not fully encompass the aspect of autonomy that is crucial to women's perspectives. Consequently, feminists have developed their own conception that integrates both aspects - freedom from constraints and the ability to autonomously make choices - reflecting their concerns and priorities.

I agree with feminist philosophers that, if a concept of freedom *only* addresses external obstacles, it fails to encompass all aspects that are significant to address women's challenges. However, I believe that the concept of freedom should be reexamined by feminists as the primary value because it has the potential to incorporate *all* necessary dimensions, including positive freedom. Additionally, it can also address external obstacles in terms of the absence of actual interference and coercion, as well as arbitrary power dynamics and achieving a status of non-dominating freedom, as supported by Pettit. Thus, I advocate for prioritizing the advancement of freedom over autonomy and equality. In the meantime, I do not aim to undermine the significance of these two elements. As demonstrated, freedom as non-domination is compatible with other values such as equality and justice. What is required for Pettit's theory to be valuable for our current male-dominated society is an expansion of scope that can effectively address feminist concerns.

Until now, the emphasis on autonomy and equality thus has come at the expense of the concept of freedom. The latter notion has only indirectly influenced feminist literature. In contrast to the traditional approach, in the following two subsections, I will shift the focus on two authors who analyze their feminist theories with an emphasis on revitalizing and prioritizing freedom as the main value: Linda Zerilli and Nancy Hirschmann.



### 5.1-I Linda Zerilli and the Abyss of Freedom

Linda Zerilli's 2005 book "Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom" presents a highly original and philosophically challenging perspective where the notion of freedom is central. The book begins with a clear message from its title, "Why Feminism and Freedom both begin with the letter F", establishing that "feminism has been the struggle for women's freedom".<sup>500</sup> What makes Zerilli's work compelling is not just the aim to revive a freedom-centered feminist theory, but more importantly, to reclaim feminism's "lost treasure": the foundational and radical demand for political freedom.<sup>501</sup> Zerilli explores the multifaceted nature of freedom and its relationship to political life, and highlights the importance of reevaluating freedom as inherently linked to the public and political sphere. Her aim is to reconnect with the essence that initially drew her to feminism; namely, the radical insistence on women's political freedom and their right to participate in public affairs.

With this goal in mind, Zerilli criticizes all three waves of feminism. The first two waves are accused to deny the *abyssal* character of political freedom by framing it *simply* as a *social* or a *subject* question, or by scripting the claim to freedom as a necessary historical development that flowed directly out of women's liberation from oppression. As for third-wave feminism, it appears to be so entrenched in the challenges associated with these perspectives that it has lost sight of what Arendt referred to as the "lost treasure" of the American Revolution - political freedom itself.<sup>502</sup> Feminists of the second and third waves have predominantly focused on equality and autonomy, placing less emphasis on politics. As previously explained, one of the causes for this exclusion was due to the historical dichotomy between private and public spheres that has traditionally excluded women from political life and engagement.

Zerilli's exploration begins by referencing Mary Wollstonecraft, known for advocating women's political rights, and John Stuart Mill, a strong proponent of women's claims to political freedom. However, Zerilli's primary focus lies on Hannah Arendt, particularly her influential article "What is Freedom?". As already mentioned in the previous

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<sup>500</sup> Zerilli, Linda M. G. (2005). *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, University of Chicago Press, p.4

<sup>501</sup> In her book, Zerilli explores several facets of her freedom-centered theory, with a notable emphasis on identity politics, especially as it pertains to women. While acknowledging the significant impact of identity politics in this domain, I will refrain from discussing it here, as it does not directly contribute to the specific argument I aim to develop in this thesis.

<sup>502</sup> Hannah Arendt refers to the "lost treasure" of the American Revolution in her book "On Revolution" (1963) to highlight the diminishing of the revolutionary spirit and ideals over time. She argues that the original emphasis on political participation and freedom during the American Revolution has been gradually replaced by bureaucratic systems and a decline in genuine political engagement. Arendt underscores the importance of reclaiming and preserving the foundational principles of political freedom that characterized the revolutionary era. This concept emphasizes her belief in the necessity of maintaining revolutionary ideals for meaningful political life in contemporary society (Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.26)

chapter, Arendt's emblematic phrase is considered: "The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom and its field of experience is action". It is precisely with this statement that Zerilli opens her book, clearly outlining the two main elements of her theory: politics and action. Indeed, Zerilli, like the majority of feminists, draws upon liberal theories that emphasize the importance of action in her analysis.

The question now is: How would reclaiming freedom as the *raison d'être* of feminism allow us to rethink the political project of feminism itself?<sup>503</sup> Zerilli states: "Any answer to this question must begin by recognizing that the project of a freedom-centered feminism cannot be thought apart from the project of democratic politics more generally. Such a political subject comes into being only through the practice of politics, that is, through collective action, contest, and debate".<sup>504</sup> In developing her argument, Zerilli examines freedom from various angles: as a *social* question, as a *subject* question, and as a *world* question. Let me examine each of these perspectives individually.

In examining freedom as a social question, Zerilli criticizes feminists who have denied the existence of boundaries between social and political issues. She argues that some feminists have defined women's claim to freedom solely in terms of achieving social justice. According to Zerilli, Western feminists on both sides of the Atlantic have tended to justify the claim to freedom in terms of addressing the social question, social justice or social utility. However, she states that this approach ultimately "turned, in the last instance, not on freedom as the very practice of democratic politics or as the reason we engage in such politics. Instead, freedom became a [mere] means to some other end: an attenuation of the problems associated with the social question".<sup>505</sup> Following Arendt, she wonders whether the pursuit of political freedom is perhaps being not enabled, but rather displaced, by the social question. In other words, she questions whether the emphasis on social justice and social utility has led to the displacement of political freedom as a primary goal within feminist discourse and activism.

Throughout history, "women came to be seen more as a sociological group with a particular agenda than as an emerging political collectivity with unqualified democratic demands".<sup>506</sup> The entanglement of women and the social, then, has deeply influenced what can be heard as a political demand for freedom.<sup>507</sup> The earlier claim to women's full political

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<sup>503</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.165

<sup>504</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7

<sup>507</sup> The term "social feminism", coined by the historian William, describes women who were municipal civic reformers, club members, settlement house residents, and labor activists. This term captures the new idiom in which the struggle for

memberships as a good in itself was seen as selfish and narrow. For social feminists and, indeed, for anyone who made the case for women's rights on the basis of social utility, be it in terms of difference or equality, the right to vote was not seen as an end in itself but rather as a tool to achieve a larger goal: the improvement of society. For Zerilli the issue concerns the:

...politically problematic inheritance of contemporary feminism. If the task is to try to understand more fully the consequences of that inheritance for feminist democratic politics today, then we need to think carefully and critically about how the social question (and the economy of utility in which it dwells) has framed both our conception of what freedom is (for example, a means to an end: the betterment of society) and what an argument for freedom must look like if it is to be heard as such (for example, point to something beyond the practice of freedom). Most important, it is to become critically aware of the costs of the social question to freedom itself.<sup>508</sup>

I agree with Zerilli that simply reducing the political to the social, and any welfare issues, undermines its true nature. When politics is reduced to simply fixing social problems, it diminishes the significance of political action to merely fulfilling social determinants. Zerilli argues that "the assimilation of the political to the social restricts political action to an instrumental, means-ends activity that entails the micro- and macro-management of social relations".<sup>509</sup> Political freedom should not be viewed as merely a means to an end, nor should the state be reduced to serving purely economic utility. Similarly, the economy should not be solely focused on maximizing production and utility for growth. This instrumental perspective must be transcended when contemplating the concept of freedom.

Nowadays, one of feminism's primary concerns is the struggle for social justice, meant as achieving equal distribution of resources and opportunities. For example, this includes addressing contemporary issues such as gender pay disparities, where women earn less than men for similar work, gender discrimination in hiring and promotion practices, combating stereotypes and biases that limit women's opportunities in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, advocating for affordable and accessible childcare options to support working mothers, and so on.

Despite the denial of entanglement of freedom in social justice arguments, Zerilli asks: "If issues of housing, poverty, fair wages, and childcare are by definition social, not

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American women's political rights after 1900 was fought. What matters for Zerilli is not only the displacement of the political by the social but also the connection to identity politics - the idea that someone had to fight in one's name. Indeed, she mentioned Nancy Cott, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism'; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 3 (December 1989): 809-29. As explained above, I will not dive into the identity politics' topic.

<sup>508</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.8

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

political, what on earth would people talk about when they come together politically? Why would they come together politically at all?”<sup>510</sup> I agree with Zerilli, that the goal is not to exclude social issues from politics because they are inherently part of political discourse. Her primary objective is to emphasize the central importance of political freedom within feminist theory. This aligns closely with the views of Philip Pettit, who incorporates social justice as a key element in his theory of freedom as non-domination. According to Pettit, while ensuring social justice is crucial for preventing domination, it is not his primary objective. What is significant to emphasize is that Pettit demonstrates it is possible to prioritize freedom while still achieving social justice, without undermining its importance. As addressed in the previous chapter, this becomes particularly relevant when considering Pettit’s concept of non-domination as a framework that can effectively address feminist concerns and promote equality within society.

Zerilli’s second criticism is directed towards feminists who focus on freedom as a *subject* question. In other words, she argues against the prevalent tendency in feminist philosophy to view every aspect of freedom through the lens of the subject. This approach centers primarily on how this is formed and influenced by internal and external factors that restrict its freedom.<sup>511</sup> Referring to Simone de Beauvoir’s masterpiece “The Second Sex” Zerilli acknowledges that women face significant external constraints on their freedom. At the same time, Beauvoir also highlights how women can contribute to their own subjugation by avoiding the risks associated with their freedom. Zerilli criticizes third-wave feminist philosophy for focusing excessively on the concept of the subject, which she believes has occluded the crucial question of how women can come together to constitute political collectivities in the service of freedom. In contrast to this tendency, Zerilli aligns herself with Arendt’s perspective on freedom as political action, who emphasizes the importance of political engagement and collective action over the notion of freedom as merely a phenomenon of the will. Indeed, Zerilli argues:

based on Man in the singular, freedom of the will - clearly crucial to but hardly exhausted by the liberal concept of freedom that is dominant in most Western democracies is entangled in a dangerous fantasy of sovereignty, writes Arendt, according to which “perfect liberty is incompatible with the existence of society”.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.3

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9; quote in Arendt, *What’s Freedom?*, p.155

This quote highlights a significant distinction between the liberal and republican perspectives on the role of the state. Zerilli, similar to thinkers like Arendt and Pettit, does not view the state as a mere dominator but recognizes its role in establishing boundaries through law. However, unlike traditional liberals who may prioritize individual autonomy and view state restrictions as impediments to personal liberty, Pettit emphasizes the importance of non-domination and the rule of law in protecting individuals from domination. This recalls the concept of “interference without domination”. Together with Arendt, they acknowledge the value of legal frameworks that establish clear boundaries and prevent the concentration of arbitrary power.

Returning to the subject question, it is important to distinguish between freedom of the will, which relates to a mental capacity and desire (“I-will”), and freedom of action (“I-can”). The latter is well explained by Arendt who defines it as “freedom as an accessory of doing and acting”. Questions surrounding identity and subjectification often limit “our vision and contain our aspirations more to the problem of the I-will than the I-can”.<sup>513</sup>

At this point, Zerilli poses an intriguing question: “What if instead we, together with Arendt, were to shift the problem of freedom outside its current subject-centered frame?”<sup>514</sup> Zerilli argues that freedom should be reoriented from an internal focus to an external perspective. She supports that within the subject-centered framework, the notion of agency not only fails to address the primary concerns of democratic and feminist politics but also leads to misunderstandings about political action. Moreover, Zerilli states that “the requirement of agency is entangled in an identification of freedom with sovereignty and an instrumental conception of politics which deny the very condition of democratic and feminist politics, namely, plurality”.<sup>515</sup> Bringing up Arendt once more, Zerilli agrees that plurality is a condition of politics. This means that individuals engage within “existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable convincing wills and intentions”.<sup>516</sup> Arendt holds that politics is the realm of action and can only exist through interaction with others. This aspect will be deeper analyzed when Zerilli discusses freedom as a world-question. This notion of politics as a realm of interaction aligns closely with Pettit’s view, emphasizing the importance of collective engagement. As already highlighted throughout this dissertation,

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<sup>513</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.12

<sup>514</sup> The reason why Zerilli asks this question is to avoid the paradox of subject formation and the endless cycle of agency. These concepts are tied to a political perspective that makes agency the essential requirement for any form of political existence. This means that the formation of a collective “we” in feminist practice of freedom appears entirely dependent on an individual’s ability to act - agency. As a result, this perpetually brings the subject back into a cycle where it repeatedly experiences the struggle of being subjected or dominated. (Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.12)

<sup>515</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.12-13

<sup>516</sup> Arendt, *The Human Conditions*, p.184

individuals are members of a society and cannot be fully understood or analyzed in isolation; instead, they must be considered within the context of political communities.

Zerilli's rejection of making the subject question a central concern of politics is clear; however, like for the social question, she does not intend to diminish the significance of the *self* in relation to political freedom. Her goal is to challenge the traditional Western philosophical understanding of freedom, emphasizing the importance of political freedom as a relational concept tied to the world and others. Freedom cannot solely be about the individual subject, as it only exists within a political community.

In contrast to the previous notion, the last way to describe freedom is not “about the subject (for example, its stability/instability or its capacity/noncapacity for agency)” but “about the world (for example, its contingency) into which the subject is arbitrarily thrown and into which it acts”.<sup>517</sup> Since freedom takes place in the intercourse with others, not in isolation, it requires not only ‘I-will’ but in particular ‘I-can’ connect to the political actions with others. Thinking with Arendt, Zerilli reorients feminist political thinking away from subject-formation and worries about agency, toward “the world” which is not nature or the earth as such but “is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together”.<sup>518</sup> It is “the space in which, when we act politically, we encounter others who, too, act and take up the effects of our action in ways that we can never predict or control with certainty”.<sup>519</sup> The interaction with others occurs “in a wide array of settings whose sole principle is freedom” - “the desire not to be dominated,” meant as “the desire not only for an end to slavery but for a space in which one can move in word and deed among equals”.<sup>520</sup>

Zerilli goes on to claim that “political freedom in this sense of world-building . . . must involve, from the start, relations with a plurality of other people in a public space created by action, that is, by the very practice and experience of freedom itself”.<sup>521</sup> Indeed, she states:

In this space, plurality is not merely a numerical matter of the many identities of people who inhabit the earth or a particular geographical territory, nor is it an empirical question of the wide variety of groups to which they belong (that is, what people are). A political rather than ontological relation based on the ongoing constitution of the world as a public space, plurality marks the way in which subjects as members of political communities, as citizens, stand to one another. What is crucially important for democratic and feminist politics, but mostly

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<sup>517</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.14

<sup>518</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.52

<sup>519</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.14

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16

occluded by the subject question, is that citizens be situated in a relation of distance and proximity, relation and separation.<sup>522</sup>

Zerilli thus argues in favor of a world- and action-centered frame because she believes it can create space for thinking about feminism as a practice of freedom that is creative or inaugural.

After exploring the three approaches to addressing the question of freedom, how can Zerilli's argument support my goal of developing a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom? I have now identified three main reasons why this is the case.

Firstly - and most obvious point, Zerilli's emphasis on a freedom-centered approach aligns perfectly with the foundational principles of feminist neo-republicanism. She attributes freedom as the primary good and posits that all other good values stem from or are derived from it.

Secondly, Zerilli is one of the few examples in contemporary feminist political philosophy who emphasizes political freedom as the primary value that feminism should prioritize. Indeed, she calls for a revival of the radical insistence on women's political freedom and their right to participate in public affairs. This stance is particularly noteworthy given the historical antagonism of some feminists towards the public realm. As Pettit also states: "Democratic participation may be essential to the republic, but that is because it is necessary for promoting the enjoyment of freedom as non-domination".<sup>523</sup> As discussed, I support that political participation serves as a significant component in achieving the ideal of freedom as self-direction. As supported by Taylor, participating in the collective self-rule of society reflects people *exercising* control over their lives.<sup>524</sup> Zerilli's advocacy for women's political freedom lays a foundation for supporting the alignment of feminism with the concept of non-domination, which begins with the development of political freedom as a fundamental principle.

The third point of connection between my argument and Zerilli's is that she emphasizes the importance of not dismissing the issues framed by social and subjective questions as politically irrelevant. Rather, she contends that feminism has often overlooked political freedom and needs to rethink these issues in ways that prevent the displacement of this kind of liberty by the social and subject frames in which freedom has been thought. To analyze it from a different angle, Zerilli's critique of these concepts suggests that reducing

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<sup>522</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.19

<sup>523</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.8

<sup>524</sup> Taylor, *What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?*, p.212

the concept of freedom *solely* to social or subjective dimensions is overly restrictive and insufficient. However, I believe that the same occurs also for political freedom, which alone is *too* limited to fully address individual freedom. We also need to consider the social and subject aspects of freedom to comprehensively understand and promote freedom in society. What I agree about her theory is the idea that supporting a political concept of freedom does not require us to deny other important aspects such as subjectivity or social justice. Embracing one aspect does not inherently negate the relevance of others.

Several years later, Pettit was able to develop a theory that further addressed some of these points. Zerilli published her book in 2005, while Pettit's "On the People's Terms" in 2012. I have no doubt that if Pettit's book had been published earlier, Zerilli would have certainly acknowledged his contribution to a feminist theory of freedom. However, there is still much to be developed, and certain other feminist concerns require better addressing. If properly developed, a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom should be able to encompass personal, social and political dimensions. Zerilli concludes her book by affirming that to reclaim "our lost treasure of political freedom", which "cannot be proven like a truth or possessed like a substance, it must be practiced and enacted by present and future generations of feminists".<sup>525</sup> This is the primary goal I aim to fulfill through my dissertation.

### **5.1-II Nancy Hirschmann and Social Constructivism**

The other author who aims to develop a freedom-centered feminist theory is Nancy Hirschmann. Her thematically parallel book "The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom" is in many ways the implicit object of Zerilli's critique. This book was published in 2003, two years before Zerilli's book. Although both authors operate within the political discourse and emphasize the goal of action as the primary focus of their theses, they differ in their formulation of the freedom question. Zerilli focuses merely on political freedom as action, while Hirschmann's topic is centered around freedom as the ability of the self to make choices and consequently act upon them. Indeed, Hirschmann questions "what or who the 'self' is that makes these choices", highlighting thus the focus on the subject in her discussion of liberty.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, p.182

<sup>526</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.4



Similar to Zerilli's theory, I share Hirschmann's goal of reorienting feminist political theory around the value of freedom. I also acknowledge her focus on the subject - although I have some reservations and limitations. Specifically, I diverge from her theory for two main reasons: her critique of Pettit's concept of non-domination and the foundation of her argument on social constructivism.

Before diving into these two criticisms, it is important to explain the motivations that led Hirschmann to develop her theory. Her argument is founded on the belief that the prevailing Western understanding of freedom have failed to offer a conceptual framework for accurately capturing women's experiences.<sup>527</sup> Starting from Berlinian liberal freedom to Taylorian exercise concept, she however highlights that both concepts provide important insights into freedom that must not underestimated. Negative liberty focuses on external barriers to successful choice, whereas positive liberty extends the analysis of freedom by focusing on choice-making. Regarding this latter concept, Hirschmann analyzes positive notion by taking distances from Berlinian theory and its potentially coercive molding of the citizen for the purposes of the state.<sup>528</sup> This aligns with the critique against Berlin's concept of positive freedom outlined in *Chapter II* of this dissertation.

Despite acknowledging the valuable aspects of each notion of freedom, Hirschmann ultimately concludes that neither the negative nor positive concepts, including Taylor's, adequately address the complexities necessary for analyzing and overcoming women's oppression.<sup>529</sup> Hirschmann's main point is that negative freedom overlooks the context, processes, and situations that shape the formation of desires, choices, and the will of choosing subjects. Indeed, she claims:

Like classic negative-liberty theorists, I maintain that the ability to make choices and act on them is the basic condition for freedom. However, like positive-liberty theorists, I maintain that choice needs to be understood in terms of the desiring subject, her preferences, her will, and identity.<sup>530</sup>

Although Hirschmann acknowledges and supports both notions, if analyzed in deep or even considered individually, they are insufficient for fully defining individual freedom.

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<sup>527</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.15

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

<sup>529</sup> Hirschmann argues that Taylor's idea of identifying higher desires as "mine" oversimplifies positive liberty. She contends that Taylor's individualistic approach leads back to the atomistic view criticized in negative-liberty theory. Despite Hirschmann acknowledges the importance of including internal barriers in a theory of freedom and avoiding the "totalitarian menace" of second-guessing typical of Berlin's theory, she criticizes Taylor for overlooking the inherently social dimension of internal barriers and the relationship between internal and external factors. (Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.10)

<sup>530</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.30

Similar to Zerilli, Hirschmann's feminist perspective aligns with the concept of negative liberty as non-interference, where freedom is viewed as the ability to choose. However, she criticizes theories that reduce freedom to *mere* choice-making abilities, as they overlook the crucial conditions under which these choices are made. Throughout her book, Hirschmann thus develops her argument by reexamining prevailing Western notions of freedom through the lens of women's real-life experiences, such as domestic violence, welfare and Islamic veiling. She contends that the conventional approach to freedom in political philosophy oversimplifies the concept and fails to accurately explain all different challenges that women face in society. The true complexity of women's subordination is better understood by incorporating these practical issues.

While I agree with Hirschmann that classical notions of freedom are insufficient for addressing feminist concerns, I mainly diverge from her perspective when she frames freedom *solely* in terms of choices. My argument for a feminist neo-republican understanding of freedom prioritizes the status of women rather than just focusing on their actions, aligning closely with Pettit's emphasis. Now, I will further explore Hirschmann's critique of Pettit, which represents one of the two main points of divergence between our arguments.

Hirschmann starts by discussing Pettit's work, acknowledging its potential to offer "a more feminist-friendly approach to liberty with his argument that freedom should be defined in terms of non-domination".<sup>531</sup> However, in response to the inadequacies of the negative/positive dichotomy, Hirschmann's critique of Pettit follows a similar line of argument. She accuses him of developing a theory that is too individualistic to adequately capture the domination of women, mainly because he fails to address social forces that enable such domination. Hirschmann notes that "despite the *apparent* social understanding of power that his recognition of domination offers, however, and despite his acknowledgment of the restrictions such power may impose on liberty, Pettit undermines the potential of his argument by falling back on an individualistic framework".<sup>532</sup> With the phrase "apparent social understanding of power", Hirschmann recognizes Pettit's potential contribution. However, I believe this criticism may be misleading and fails to capture Pettit's intended point. Let me explain the reasons behind this interpretation.

According to Hirschmann, even if a woman is not physically beaten, "social norms of masculinity and femininity restrain her own behavior in ways that her husband

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<sup>531</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.26

<sup>532</sup> *Ibidem*

expects”.<sup>533</sup> And she continues by arguing that Pettit’s theory “is as individualistic as his claim that *discretion* is the price of liberty. For Pettit assumes that since the individual does not *notice* the interference, and since no particular individual is engaging in identifiably interfering behavior, then interference simply does not exist”.<sup>534</sup> Hirschmann discusses the requirement that certain behaviors must be noticeable and evident to individuals. However, this perspective is limited because it solely focuses on actions that are *observable or visible*. Even more controversial is Hirschmann’s point that “if the dominus *never* interferes with the actions of the dominated, [...] then domination can no longer be said to exist”. She continues to make her view even stronger by claiming: “if all men refrained completely from assaulting women, men’s “power against” women would diminish, if not vanish entirely”.<sup>535</sup> I have already discussed this example in the preceding chapter, where I highlighted Hirschmann’s misinterpretation of the concept of non-domination. In the scenario where a woman is afraid to go out at night, despite not experiencing direct assault, I explained that this fear is a result of pervasive male domination affecting *all* women. Although no specific individual directly interfered with this woman, her fear stems from the actions and behaviors of others that have entrenched internal obstacles in women. The act of making choices and taking action does not align directly with Pettit’s argument. However, Hirschmann essentially reverts to the traditional criticism posed by liberal advocates. She concludes her critique by stating “I am arguing, against Pettit, that domination always requires interference”.<sup>536</sup>

Another noteworthy point to highlight is Hirschmann’s reference to Pettit toward the end of her book, where she agrees that “freedom also requires nondomination”.<sup>537</sup> Specifically, Hirschmann acknowledges Pettit’s “desire to unite what he calls the “psychological” and “political” dimensions of freedom” and recognizes that his understanding of freedom “has definite feminist applications”.<sup>538</sup> Based on these elements, she claims “Pettit’s argument might seem similar to mine”. However, she makes clear that there are many points of divergences. In addition to the criticisms already mentioned, Hirschmann distances herself from Pettit also because of his definition and use of discourse, which are quite distinct from the one developed in “The Subject of Liberty”.<sup>539</sup> Most of

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<sup>533</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.26

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27

<sup>535</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, p.206

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, p.206

<sup>539</sup> When developing her argument of social constructivism, Hirschmann dives into the topic of the discursive control. (Hirschmann, 206-7) Pettit develops freedom as discourse in his book, *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency*, p.65-103. Given that it does not directly contribute to the main goal of my dissertation, I will not delve

Hirschmann's critique of Pettit is directed toward the book "A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency", published in 2001, where Pettit explores the concept of freedom from psychological and political perspectives. Similar to Zerilli, however, Hirschmann's "The Subject of Liberty" predates the publication of "On The People's Terms", where Pettit further develops his neo-republican theory. As argued in the previous chapter, I believe that Pettit's expanded theory can address many of the feminist criticisms, including those raised by Hirschmann, which I have no doubt she would have likely acknowledged as valuable.

What Pettit would still struggle to address, and which Hirschmann importantly highlights - and with which I agree, is the significance of the internal aspect of individuals in the development of the concept freedom. To understand how she develops this argument, it is necessary to integrate it into her main discussion on social constructivism, which will be my primary focus in the following section.

Hirschmann starts her book from the assumption that "most, if not all, conceptions of liberty have at their heart the ability of the self to make choices and act on them".<sup>540</sup> Strictly connected to this idea, she claims that "the self that makes choices, including her desires and self-understanding, is socially constructed".<sup>541</sup> According to Hirschmann, "choices and the selves that make them are constituted by context, discourse, and language; such contexts make meaning, selfhood, and choices possible".<sup>542</sup> She argues that "there is no such thing as 'human nature'".<sup>543</sup> For this reason, she claims that "social constructivism . . . suggests that the values that we hold in the modern era, the meanings we give to words like 'freedom' . . . are in no way essential or natural but rather the product of particular social formations and relationships that have developed through time".<sup>544</sup> When Hirschmann advocates for a social constructivist concept of freedom, she refers not only to the social supports provided for individuals' choices but also to the social construction of the context of choice and of the subject of freedom itself.

The connection between individual choices and the context is important for two reasons. First, it helps to understand the barriers, the disadvantages or advantages, and the high or low cost associated with certain choices for individuals in different social positions.

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into specific details here. However, I do want to emphasize that there are additional noteworthy connections between feminism and Pettit's concept of non-domination that might merit attention in the literature.

<sup>540</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.3

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, ix

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, p.76

Second, considering the context is crucial for understanding how desires, preferences and choices of individuals are shaped and influenced by external factors as well as internal constraints. To put it differently, social construction sets the parameters for choice, in two senses. First, it determines what choices are available; customs, laws, and practices make certain options possible and foreclose others. Indeed, Hirschman claims that “oftentimes, we tend to accept the options that are available with a shrug - if other options are not available, then they are just not available; the limitations we face are a function of nature, or the inadequacy of knowledge”.<sup>545</sup> Secondly, social constructivism requires that individuals consider the *why* of availability. In addition to the choice-context, the meaning of freedom cannot be left simply at the *objective* level of options available but must include consideration of subjective preferences and desire. In this sense, Hirschmann claims that the social construction of desire, however, is even more complex and difficult to discern. Indeed, she explores “how external factors shape the internal self, how restraint and opportunity form and influence desire, preference, and choice”.<sup>546</sup> Hirschmann argues that what our desire will always be influenced and shaped by social context; desire is itself socially constructed. And yet desire is considered be the most “internal” aspect of liberty. Specifically, she conceptualizes freedom in terms of the interaction and mutual constitution of the external structures of patriarchy and the inner selves of women. Based on this distinction, the concept of freedom proposed by Hirschmann asserts that the internal sphere of individuals is also social constructed just like external conditions.

I extensively explored the development of true and authentic desires in *Chapter II* through Taylor’s exercise concept, and in *Chapter III* by analyzing different kinds of obstacles, including inauthentically internalized constraints, and their impact on women’s experiences of domination. However, what I find important to emphasize for the sake of my argument in favor of a compounded concept of freedom is Hirschmann’s “understanding of freedom that advocates the need to see the relation between inner and outer factors of freedom”.<sup>547</sup> She argues that individuals’ choices are influenced by factors both internal and external to the subject. When considering women’s challenges, Hirschmann examines how the rules and norms of a patriarchal society get internalized as constraints on women’s sense of choice.

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<sup>545</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.94

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30

<sup>547</sup> *Ibidem*

While I disagree with Hirschmann's critique of Pettit, her main emphasis on individuals' choices and the key role of social constructivism - which will be discussed right below, I acknowledge her contribution in highlighting the need for a freedom-centered feminist theory. Additionally, I agree with the author that the conventional understandings of liberty and of constraints found in the positive/negative debate are inadequate to address women's subordination. First, she recognizes that lack of freedom can be influenced by both the material conditions in which these choices are made and the internal conditions of identity and self-concept that shape the will and desires of women. Second, Hirschmann emphasizes that both internal and external constraints are equally significant and play a comparable role in limiting freedom.

While maintaining that freedom is linked to the choices, Hirschmann moves one step further by recognizing the importance of positive freedom and by including it in her theory of freedom. In contrast to Zerilli, who distances herself entirely from freedom as subject question, Hirschmann's theory aligns with my main objective, demonstrating that even a concept of political freedom must encompass the positive aspect - both as self-direction towards other members of the community and towards oneself as self-realization.

## **5.2 Non-domination: an answer to patriarchy**

In contemporary Western societies, feminist scholars have critically examined the discourse surrounding freedom. Specifically, in relation to the concept of liberal freedom, many feminist philosophers have been accused of being overly individualistic, focusing solely on the importance of choices in their theories without adequately considering the contexts in which those choices are formed. In connection with this concept, Miranda Kiraly and Meagan Tyler affirm that:

the emphasis on 'choice' in much liberal feminist writing is actually rather extreme. It strips women's lives of context and makes it sound as though our 'choices' are made in a political and cultural vacuum. Each of our contributors, therefore, seeks to talk about the importance of power, context and culture, rather than individual choice and agency alone. Understanding and acknowledging the environment of women's inequality goes to the heart of what is meant by the 'freedom fallacy' of this collection's title. That is, there can be no freedom, no liberation, when the available choices are only constructed on the basis of gross inequity. More 'choice', or even a greater ability to choose, does not necessarily

mean greater freedom.<sup>548</sup>

What is claimed in this quote represents the reason why Hirschmann argues that a theory of freedom that neglects to consider how the subject and specific choices are socially constructed, will be insufficient for addressing the challenges women encounter in social and political contexts.

Many feminist philosophers might object to my argument - in favor of a feminist notion of freedom grounded in Pettit's concept of non-domination - by relying on social constructivism. They may argue that this understanding of freedom is insufficient to address the diverse experiences of women and might overlook the complex ways in which gender norms, social structures and cultural practices shape and constrain women's choices and opportunities. I agree with feminists who emphasize the importance of considering context to understand women's domination, as gender intersects with power dynamics to produce specific forms of oppression and inequality. In my discussion, I will demonstrate how Pettit's concept of non-domination can effectively address the complexity of patriarchy.

Rather than solely emphasizing liberal feminism, it is important to explore the common ground among feminist theories. What matters for feminism is the recognition, addressing, and resolution of the systematic conditions of women's inequality through effective tools to challenge them. I have no doubt that we would all agree that it is crucial to identify strategies for combating entrenched power structures that perpetuate women's subordination. At this point, the critical question to address is: can Pettit's theory of freedom achieve this goal? And more specifically, is a feminist non-republican notion of freedom capable of challenging and overcoming the patriarchal structures that have concerned feminists throughout history and continue to do so? Before answering these questions, let me first consider what it is generally meant by patriarchy.

Jennifer Einspahr defines "patriarchy as a structure of domination that systematically reproduces unequal gender power and therefore systematically favours men as a group over women as a group".<sup>549</sup> Whereas, Hirschmann argues that "patriarchy is premised on women's powerlessness and men's power".<sup>550</sup> In feminist philosophy, there are various interpretations and definitions of patriarchy, reflecting different theoretical perspectives and approaches. While these definitions may differ, the common aim of patriarchy among

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<sup>548</sup> Kiraly, M., & Tyler, M. (2015). *Freedom Fallacy: The Limits of Liberal Feminism*. Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd., xii

<sup>549</sup> Einspahr, J. (2010). Structural domination and structural freedom: A feminist perspective. *Feminist Review*, 94, Sage Publications, Ltd., p.12

<sup>550</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.205

theories is to uphold and maintain the current social system where men dominate positions of power and privilege while subordinating women. This leads to perpetuate gender-based inequalities and reinforce traditional gender roles.

Let me now provide an answer to the question posed above. At first glance, when considering the examples of slavery and coverture provided by Pettit in “Republicanism”, they may initially seem misleadingly selective, as both involve legally enforced domination of groups, in which the law denies the status and protections of citizenship to those who are dominated. Indeed, Victoria M. Costa argues: “as a result, one might doubt whether Pettit’s theory can help us understand the domination of women in contemporary societies, in which the law grants them - at least in a formal sense - equal status”.<sup>551</sup> However, the law is only one factor that can contribute to denying women their freedom. Indeed, Costa points out that “laws and public policies, as well as social norms effectively protect women from arbitrary interference in their lives”.<sup>552</sup> Pettit can effectively address the objection of social constructivism because his concept centers on *relationships* of domination, which can encompass the influence of social context, law, and social norms. While Pettit’s focus is on individuals, he analyzes freedom in a *communal* rather than purely *individual* sense.

Regarding the situation of women specifically, Pettit argues that patriarchy constitutes a specific form of domination. Indeed, he states that “an employee may be dominated by an employer in a tough labor market, a wife by a husband in a sexist culture, or an illegal immigrant by the citizen who gives them a job and a living”.<sup>553</sup> In a sexist society, Pettit points out that the husband does not necessarily need to actively interfere to have domination. Whether domination occurs within the private sphere, in the workplace or in the public realm, the different aspects of these relationship are considered individually with their differences and uniqueness. However, they all include the presence of a master. It is precisely the mere existence as master’s that creates a form of domination over the wife, as well as the employee, or immigrant.

As amply discussed throughout this dissertation, domination occurs when a person or group has the power to interfere with the choices and actions of others in an arbitrary and unaccountable way, even if they do not actually use that power. Non-domination goes beyond the absence of active interference and considers the presence of power relations that

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<sup>551</sup> Costa, Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, p. 925

<sup>552</sup> Despite Costa’s important contribution to the argument, she chose to stop here and did not delve further into the topic. The reason for this choice I believe relies on her main focus on the concept of eradicating interpersonal domination among women and other forms of power (Costa, Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?, p.925)

<sup>553</sup> Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.78; Pettit, *On The People’s Terms*, p.62



can create a condition of subjection or vulnerability for those who are dominated.<sup>554</sup> This power dynamic can be evident in gender relations, where women may face domination from men, who have historically held greater social and political power. While Pettit recognizes the importance of gender-based oppression as a form of domination and the need to promote greater gender equality, his primary focus is on developing a general theory of non-domination that can be applied to a range of political issues. However, by including women in his theory of non-domination, Pettit acknowledges the ways in which gender inequality can lead to domination and the need for equal standing between men and women to ensure equal freedom.

An additional point that supports my response to the objection about Pettit's ability to address challenges posed by social contexts is related to intersectionality. Indeed, a crucial aspect of domination is that, following the same principle, it is able to address intersectional forms of power dynamics and domination. This capability is particularly significant for third-wave feminists who emphasize the importance of intersection of gender with other dimensions of identity and oppression. Although I initially indicated in the Introduction of this dissertation that I would treat women and men as homogenous groups, I now see the value in providing an additional response to this objection. As explained in *Chapter IV*, an individual can experience a variety of relations of domination - for example, by her husband, her employer, the police or the state.<sup>555</sup> This flexibility in Pettit's theory allows for the accommodation of intersecting societal forces that influence women's freedom. In other words, this demonstrates Pettit's capacity to acknowledge the diverse factors contributing to power asymmetry in individuals by addressing various forms of domination. For instance, it can help explain the unique challenges faced by black women compared to white women due to the systemic form of race discrimination; or the differing experiences of women in Western and Islamic countries due to cultural, religious and political factors; or the experiences of indigenous women, LGBTQ+ women of color, disabled women, or immigrant women, who often encounter unique forms of oppression that derive from the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. Pettit's domination is able to address the complex interplay of *various* forms of discrimination thanks to his consideration of arbitrary

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<sup>554</sup> Some feminists have critiqued Pettit's relations of domination as overly broad. They argue that it classifies certain relationships as involving domination, even though women do not perceive these relationships as morally problematic. One example is care relationships, which inherently involve an asymmetry of power between caregivers and those receiving care or neglect. This distinction should not be confused with relational accounts. Pettit's theory narrowly focuses on specific relationships where one entity exercises arbitrary power over another without regard for the other's will. Indeed, by Pettit, this occurs "only in the interactions between people who stand in relations of non-domination to one another" (Pettit, *Republicanism*, 5, p.107; *On the People's Terms*, p.91).

<sup>555</sup> Costa, *Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?*, p.925

power dynamics.

In addition to the points discussed so far, I believe that what Hirschmann and other feminists with a strong liberal background - aiming to develop a freedom-centered feminist theory - *simply* do is an *expansion* of the concept of freedom beyond mere non-interference to better address feminist concerns. They argue that traditional liberal notions of freedom, centered on individualism, are limited to understand the full scope of women's experiences, particularly in terms of the opportunities available to them and how certain choices are shaped. As Kiraly and Tyler assert in the quotation above, the emphasis on individualism within traditional liberal frameworks can be seen as excessively narrow. Due to their reliance on liberal theory, the only feasible proposed solution seems to analyze women within their specific contexts to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges they encounter. However, I argue that by moving away from a focus solely on actions and choices, we can effectively address women's concerns and go beyond many of its limitations. How can a feminist non-republican concept of freedom overcome these challenges?

Patriarchy is a pervasive system that has persisted throughout history and is upheld by social norms and in some cases even by legal regulations. It is deeply ingrained across various spheres of society including the public sphere, private life, and the workplace. In many cases where sexism is normalized, barriers to gender equality can become invisible. It is precisely in these contexts that a feminist theory of freedom must strive to develop effective tools and strategies to challenge and dismantle the entrenched patriarchal mindset, paving the way for alternative and more equitable approaches to societal norms and structures.

If patriarchy is viewed solely as a structural problem – as many feminists support - I believe that we might perceive it as an *elusive and abstract entity* to combat. This perspective could lead individuals to feel powerless and helpless, believing that patriarchy is something they must accept and cannot change. This description can contribute to hinder efforts to challenge and dismantle patriarchal systems effectively. In contrast, while Pettit's framework can address patriarchy, it is crucial to remember that we must consider the role played by human actions when analyzing this scenario. Non-domination is understood as a *relational* and *dynamic* concept that necessitates consideration of the social and political environments in which individuals operate. Indeed, "domination without agents is conceivable but impracticable".<sup>556</sup> When examining the master/slave relationship, it

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<sup>556</sup> McCammon, Christopher, Domination, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

naturally directs attention to domination by agents: being dominated by a master inherently involves being dominated by an agent. Building upon this foundational example, Pettit analyzes institutions, systems, and ideologies as sources of power that enable mastery rather than as independent sources of domination without agents.

As discussed in the section titled “human agents vs. social structures” in *Chapter III*, the impact of social structures and the obstacles they create does not *directly* cause a lack of freedom. In other words, I argued that it is not the structure itself that dominates individuals, but rather the actions and behaviors of individuals who have established and continue to perpetuate those systems. To put it differently, individuals are the only morally accountable and responsible human agents responsible for their own freedom or lack thereof, and in the case of male domination, for the domination of others as well.

Individual human agents have contributed to the creation and maintenance of patriarchal structures. However, many may argue that these structures exist and operate on a *systemic* level and are not simply a matter of individual actions or beliefs.<sup>557</sup> In this line of argument, Marilyn Friedman argues that “a policy of punishing men for individual acts of dominating women will be insufficient to bring male domination to an end. Male domination as a social problem is not merely the aggregated result of individual men engaging in acts of domination of individual women. Instead, male domination is a structural and institutionalized feature of a whole society”.<sup>558</sup> On one side, I completely agree that reducing patriarchy to simply the sum of individual men’s actions is overly simplistic. Male domination has been a deeply entrenched condition throughout history, rooted in systemic structures and cultural norms. On the other side, my point here is that assigning individuals to a fixed state of systematic oppression from which they cannot escape is counterproductive. Individual agents bear responsibility for their actions and the impact everyone has, both men and women, on perpetuating or challenging patriarchal systems.

Throughout history, we have witnessed individuals taking moral accountability and actively working to change the course of societal norms. Some examples are women’s suffrage movement and the granting of voting rights in many countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or the civil rights movement, challenging racial segregation and discrimination while also advocating for women’s rights within the movement. If we view patriarchy through the lens of the agent, the focus of a feminist understanding of freedom shifts from solely addressing social problems to emphasizing agent responsibility. This also emphasizes the importance

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<sup>557</sup> Hirschman, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.75-102

<sup>558</sup> Friedman, Pettit’s Civic Republicanism and Male Domination, p.256

of empowering individuals to accept accountability for their actions and actively work towards dismantling systems of inequality and domination. This perspective allows us to better explain revolutions that have challenged the *status quo* in the past and continue to do so today.

Whether through direct intervention or by advocating for broader societal changes, each person has a responsibility to resist and oppose structures that perpetuate domination. Let me now offer some concrete examples that illustrate effective ways to dismantle practices perpetuating gender inequality in our society. In the familiar environment men can actively participate in the household activities or could take on equal responsibility for childcare tasks. In the workplace, instead, men can use their positions of influence within organizations to advocate for gender equality initiatives, including equal pay, promotion opportunities, and policies that support work-life balance for all employees. Or men can advocate for and take parental leave to share caregiving responsibilities with their partners after the birth or adoption of a child. Regarding the public sphere, political institutions are established and shaped by individuals, with a predominant representation and thus influence from men who hold power within society. These individuals, often occupying positions of authority and leadership, play a significant role in designing and governing political systems. They have the ability to enact laws, policies, and regulations that can either reinforce existing power dynamics or challenge them. Men can become the most powerful allies in supporting women's emancipation and self-realization.

To conclude, I have demonstrated how a feminist non-republican notion of freedom, grounded in Pettit's concept of domination, effectively addresses feminist critiques of patriarchal power dynamics and intersectionality. This understanding of freedom embraces the complexities of gendered experiences and the broader social structures influencing them. By engaging with these critiques, I aim to cultivate a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of feminist freedom that aligns with diverse feminist perspectives.

After addressing these two objections, it *may* appear that a notion of freedom within a feminist neo-republicanism framework is complete and requires no further consideration to address challenges in women's subordination. However, this is not the case. In the previous chapters, I have aimed to emphasize a crucial point from various perspectives: the lack of consideration for the internal domain in Pettit's theory. This cannot be overlooked when developing a notion of freedom. In the next section, I will examine how a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom could incorporate this internal aspect into its theory.

### 5.3 The capacity for self-realization

Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated why Pettit's theory represents a valuable alternative to liberal theories when addressing feminist issues and how it effectively addresses many of the critiques against his concept. Now, I aim to emphasize the limitations of Pettit's concept of non-domination that must be considered when developing a new framework termed feminist neo-republicanism. I will focus on the main element that I highlighted earlier in *Chapter II*: the importance of positive liberty. Before diving into this argument, I will now briefly revisit what I have discussed.

Charles Taylor views negative concepts of freedom as an *opportunity-concept*, describing them as focusing solely on what individuals are allowed to do and "what is opened to us to do".<sup>559</sup> However, he criticizes liberal theories that suggest that "it is a sufficient condition of one's being free that nothing stands in the way".<sup>560</sup> Taylor argues, and I fully agree with him, that simply considering whether individuals are obstructed in their actions is too simplistic to fully grasp the concept of freedom.

After critiquing the Berlinian notion of positive liberty, particularly due inner citadel and tyranny arguments, Taylor introduces the *exercise-concept*. He states that a person is free "only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life".<sup>561</sup> Taylor draws attention to the following questions: What motivates individuals to act? Do these motivations arise from internal obstacles or from oppressive external environments? Taylor further clarifies that *real* desires are those *strongly evaluated* by the individual, *i.e.* they must be experienced by the individual in question and cannot be decided and imposed upon her by an *external* force. He emphasizes the importance of *discriminating among motivations*, highlighting that it is not enough to merely act according to one's desires but crucial to act on *what one really wants*.<sup>562</sup> In this discussion, Taylor underscores the complexity of freedom by emphasizing the importance of real and authentic desires and the internal determination of one's life path.

Within the framework of choices deriving from a real and authentic self, and

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<sup>559</sup> Taylor, What's Wrong with Negative Liberty, 213

<sup>560</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>561</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>562</sup> This concept recalls second-order desires addressed by the influential philosophers Harry Frankfurt (in Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person, *The Importance of What We Care About*, Cambridge: 1987, Cambridge University Press, 11–25). Although his view was not explicitly on the concept of autonomy, but rather of freedom of the will, the account has been absorbed into the literature on autonomy as a model of that notion. For Frankfurt, for instance, such second-order desires must actually have the structure of a volition: wanting that the first order desires issue in action, that they comprise one's will. Moreover, such identification, on his view, must be "wholehearted" for the resulting action to count as free (autonomous). (Christman, John, Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

grounded in liberal principles, Taylor presents important reasons to integrate the internal dimension into the concept of individual liberty. While he does not directly make any reference to women or feminist theories, I believe his theory can be effectively applied to address the challenges women encounter in developing desires that translate into actions that are *truly* their own, free from internal obstacles and external impositions. This includes overcoming external obstacles like legal constraints, as well as internalized inauthentically desires arising from dominant social and cultural norms.

What I believe is now important to examine in depth for the sake of my argument is the importance and meaning of self-realization. In his work, Taylor suggests that “we can fail to achieve our own *self-realization* through inner fears, or false consciousness, as well as because of external coercion”.<sup>563</sup> He further emphasizes that “we cannot say that someone is free, on a self-realization view, if he is totally unrealized, if for instance he is totally unaware of his potential, if fulfilling it has never even arisen as a question for him, or if he is paralyzed by the fear of breaking with some norm which he has internalized but which does not authentically reflect him”.<sup>564</sup>

After thoroughly analyzing his argument and emphasizing the significance of self-realization, I will now go beyond what Taylor claimed and take an additional step forward. My aim is to show that self-realization consists of two elements: the capacity and the exercise. To be self-realized, which means to be positively free, an individual needs to first develop the *capacity* that will then translate into *action*. To put it differently, the capacity to be self-realized is a prerequisite for *exercising* action. I argue that the *capacity* to develop one’s own desires based on their true self, differs from exercising control, which is analyzed as the *actual* implementation of controlling one’s own life. The comparison of these two concepts already sounds familiar and draws parallels with notions of non-interference, understood as *actual* impediment, and with non-domination, viewed as the *capacity* to interfere on an arbitrary basis. However, before explaining this parallelism, I will now go deeper and clarify the distinction between *having* the capacity for self-realization and *exercising* one’s freedom. I will provide some examples that illustrate this difference clearly.

The capacity for freedom refers to an individual’s ability, potential or capability to choose freely. In feminist literature, this has been explained in various ways. It may involve possessing the inherent power or potential to exercise freedom based on one’s autonomy,

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<sup>563</sup> Taylor, What’s Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.212

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., p.213

rationality and agency.<sup>565</sup> On the other hand, exercising freedom means actually *taking* action or *making* choices that reflect that potential. Following this description, Christman states that effectiveness of an agent is “manifested not only in one’s internal or psychological *capacities* to govern oneself but also in one’s ability to carry out one’s wishes through *action* in the world”.<sup>566</sup>

The distinction between exercise is also acknowledged by Pettit, who claims that “to be a free person you must have the capacity to make certain choice”.<sup>567</sup> However, he considers that an individual “must be aware of having such a capacity”.<sup>568</sup> As discussed in *Chapter II*, Pettit makes clear that his theory is not concerned about this concept. Indeed, he claims:

[We are not concerned] with what makes you into an agent with the capacity, *however that is understood*, to take one or another option in a given choice. What we have just seen is that equally we are not concerned with what gives you psychological free will, enabling you to form your will autonomously, *however autonomy is understood*. Our concern is solely with social free will or, in effect, political freedom: that is, with what is required for it to be the case that however *imperfectly* formed your will may be, you are in a position to make your choice, without vitiation or invasion, according to that will.<sup>569</sup>

This quote once again emphasizes Pettit’s lack of interest not only in understanding the meaning of this *capacity* but also in considering what happens within the internal sphere of individuals, specifically regarding the alignment of choices with their desires. His primary concern is *simply* the prevention of domination in decision-making processes. However, this exclusion is precisely what we cannot ignore when examining the challenges women face in developing a true and authentic desire that leads to the exercise of an action. But let me now return to the situations that can highlight the distinction between capacity and exercise freedom.

There can be instances where an individual possesses the capacity to be self-realized but may not always exercise it due to various factors such as external constraints, social influences or personal choices. This distinction is clearly exemplified by the emblematic

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<sup>565</sup> For an overview on the different ways how the concept is addressed by feminist philosophers, see Stoljar, Natalie, *Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.)

<sup>566</sup> Christman, *Saving Positive Freedom*, p.80

<sup>567</sup> Pettit, *Just Freedom*, xv; In *On the People’s Terms*, Pettit clearly states that he avoids addressing the ability or capacity to perform any option explicitly in the current text, which refers to the perceptions that an individual could have in the scenario X (26); however, immediately after in a note he claims “For the record, my own view is that we should identify free will in the metaphysical sense with conversability: a capacity to register and respond to reasons, as they are presented in interpersonal conversation” (27).

<sup>568</sup> Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, p.36

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49

example of Harriet Taylor. Despite developing her capacity for freedom through her intellectual abilities and aspirations, she was unable to exercise this freedom due to legal barriers imposed by her marriage to John Stuart Mill. Mill, in “The Subjection of Women”, argues that patriarchy “was the primitive and spontaneous form of society, framed on the model of the paternal, which is anterior to society itself”.<sup>570</sup> This societal structure can both limit and enhance capacities, preventing individuals not only from acting on certain desires but also from forming such desires in the first place.

One interesting point to highlight is how the same example can also be used to explain the difference between non-interference and non-domination. Harriet Taylor, upon marrying John Stuart Mill, was subjected to the law of coverture, which subordinated women’s legal personalities to those of their husbands and granted husbands extensive powers to interfere in their wives’ life. Despite Mill’s personal qualities - being thoughtful, receptive to his wife’s opinions, and loving - the law did not allow him to renounce his legal powers as a husband. Consequently, Mill effectively dominated Taylor from the moment they married, even though he explicitly promised not to use his legal privileges against her will and was never inclined to break that promise. However, more important for showing the importance to develop capacity to be self-realized: this example illustrates how a woman can develop certain capabilities while being dominated. To contrast, advocates of freedom as non-interference might contend that Taylor enjoyed more freedom than other married women because Mill did not actually interfere with her. This recalls the example of the Gentle Giant discussed by Kramer and Pettit’s example for Nora of Ibsen’s *Doll House*. However, the broader legal context of coverture highlights how these constraints can still impose domination, even in the absence of direct interference.

In contemporary democratic societies, social norms have become more egalitarian compared to Mill’s era. Nowadays, marriage is based on consent and love, and divorce provides an avenue to terminate it if desired. Furthermore, present-day examples presume the availability of employment options for women and, in some cases, various forms of public or private support that enable realistic opportunities to exit a marriage at will. Consequently, marriage - at least in these contexts - does not inherently entail domination or arbitrary power over the wife. However, the situation is definitely different in countries where forced marriage remains a reality, or in cases of domestic violence where women are often manipulated and indoctrinated by their husbands.

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<sup>570</sup> Mill, J. S. (1869). *The Subjection of Women* (4th ed.). London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, p.23



Despite *possessing* the capacity to be self-realized, individuals like Harriet Taylor were often constrained by systemic barriers that impeded their ability to fully act on their potential and exercise their freedoms in society. This example highlights the struggles faced by women whose capacity for self-realization and thus achieving freedom may be hindered by external factors such as legal restrictions and societal prejudices.

Contrary to what has been demonstrated until now, I will now provide another example that contrasts the situation just discussed involving Taylor and Mill. Let's consider a scenario where a woman living in a Western country like Switzerland who is free from any legal impediments or her husband's manipulation, chooses to become a full-time mother and housewife. In pursuit of this choice, she opts to forego higher education to fully commit herself to the roles of wife and mother. Additionally, she is aware of potential consequences, such as financial dependency on her husband.

The questions that arise are: What desires lead women to make the decision to prioritize staying at home and being a 'good' wife and mother? Why might some women opt out of pursuing a professional career and instead choose to focus on family life? Although many would consider this choice controversial, there can be several valuable reasons why some women might choose not to pursue a professional career and instead decide to stay at home and care for their family. The main reason could simply be personal preference. Some women might feel fulfilled and happy in the role of a homemaker and find satisfaction in taking care of their family's well-being. In this scenario it could be that another reason for this decision depends on social norms and prejudices can also influence a woman's preference. For some women, societal expectations may play a significant role, pressuring them to conform to traditional roles of wife and mother. In some cultures, these expectations can be deeply ingrained from family members or the community, perpetuating the idea that women are expected to prioritize their family's needs over their own career aspirations. Another reason for making the decision to become a full-time mom and housewife could depend on financial considerations. In situations where childcare costs are high, it may not be economically feasible for a woman to pursue a professional career. In such cases, staying at home to care for the family can be a practical choice that aligns with the family's financial needs.

The decision for women to prioritize family over career is complex and multifaceted. However, I believe personal preference should still be seen as an option. At this point, I want to ask the following question: Does this mean that all choices conforming to old social norms should be seen as indoctrinated or coerced? If a woman chooses to be a full-time mom, does

that mean she has been manipulated? The only way to answer these questions is by considering the formation process of her desire, which must be free from any internal and external impediment. To make this possible, women must possess the capacity to develop authentic desires based on their own values and identities that can be then transformed in life decisions. These can depend on personal experiences, values and beliefs, aspirations and goals. Moreover, preferences are not static, but they can change overtime.

Women should have the capacity to choose the path that best aligns with their personal values, goals, and circumstances. If a woman possesses the capacity to achieve self-realization and pursue her true desires, then there should be no objection against her choices. Some feminists might still argue that choosing to become full-time homemakers goes against women's interest and perpetuates gender stereotypes. However, I believe we should recognize and *respect* that whether a woman pursues a professional career, stays at home, or chooses another path, it is a personal choice. No option is inherently superior or inferior to another, even if they challenge conventional views of gender roles and career aspirations. Another example is when a woman decides to pursue a career as a nurse. If this decision comes after thoughtful reflection on her motivations, beliefs, and values then this should be considered a true and authentic desire that exist independently of patriarchal influence.

What I want to emphasize in these examples is that I do not overlook the influence of social norms and patriarchy. Rather, I want to emphasize the importance of developing the capacity to make real decisions based solely on true self and values, free from external influences. Without this capacity, no exercise of freedom, no authentic choice could be made. Indeed, I argue that the essence of women's self-realization is not merely manifested in actions like pursuing a career, as some might assume, but rather in pursuing what feels authentic and meaningful to them. For this reason, I believe that developing a capacity *precedes* the exercise of a particular action.

The concept that women can freely choose whatever represents their true and authentic desires aligns with what feminist philosophers have termed content-neutrality.<sup>571</sup> Supporters of this approach argue that there is no single correct answer to how a person should live their life. For instance, consider a Muslim woman who adheres to fundamentalist doctrines commonly followed by her family and community. According to Christman's historical procedural account, this woman is considered positively *unfree* if her desire to

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<sup>571</sup> For an overview, see the section on "Procedural Conceptions" in Stoljar, *Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

conform was imposed upon her through indoctrination, manipulation, or deceit.<sup>572</sup> On the other hand, “she is considered *positively free* if she arrived at her desire to conform while aware of other reasonable options and she weighed and assessed these other options rationally”.<sup>573</sup> Even if this woman *seems* to have a preference for subservient behavior, the nature of her desire depends not on its *content* but on its mode of *formation*.<sup>574</sup> According to this perspective, forcing her to do certain things rather than others would not increase her freedom.

On content-neutral conceptions, there is no value or set of preferences that an individual must endorse. Therefore, society should not force its members into given patterns of behavior. Preferences for relationships characterized by care and dependency such as those within marriage or other family structures can be just as authentic as preferences for self-reliance or relative social isolation. Similarly, preferences for cultural and religious norms into which individuals are born can be equally true and real as preferences to reject these norms.

A very interesting but controversial example could be a situation in which a woman desires to be a full-time mom and wife but decides not to pursue this path due to current social expectations in some countries advocating for gender equality. Women might feel ‘responsible’ to contribute to this social change by pursuing other aspirations or roles outside traditional domestic roles. I believe this example clearly highlights once again the distinction between capacity and exercise of freedom. It is important that women, like men, have the freedom to choose the life path that aligns best with their preferences. While women today are more empowered compared to previous decades, it remains important that they have the liberty to make decisions that resonate with their true selves and values, even if these might follow traditional domestic roles.

The principle of content-neutrality also aligns with feminist goals of acknowledging and preserving the diversity among women. Feminists recognize that their life plans and conceptions of the good are shaped by various social factors such as race, class, and gender.<sup>575</sup> Embracing content-neutrality respects the multiplicity of agents and their unique

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<sup>572</sup> Christman, *Liberalism and Positive Freedom*, p.359

<sup>573</sup> Christman explains the formation of desires through the lens of rationality, particularly emphasizing the minimum requirements of rationality involved in this process. This implies that desires should align with basic principles of reason and coherence. While I find this argument valuable, particularly in its ability to address Berlin’s paradox of positive freedom, rationality is not the primary focus of my argument. (Christman, *Saving Positive Freedom*, p.79-87). See also Arneson, R. J who argues against “identifying freedom with the satisfiability of any constellation of wants, home-grown or otherwise” (in *Freedom and Desire*. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 1985 15, 425-440).

<sup>574</sup> For further details, read the section on “Positive Liberty as Content-neutral” in Carter, *Positive and Negative Liberty*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

<sup>575</sup> Stoljar, *Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

perspectives. This approach rejects the notion that all individuals, including men, should conform to a singular ideal or set of behaviors, emphasizing instead the importance of embracing differences and allowing individuals to define their own paths and values based on their authentic desires and experiences.

One objection that may arise concerns the scenario where women choose to stay with their abusive husbands or in servile roles. Many Western feminists might assume that any Muslim woman who wears a veil is oppressed, because they believe that no woman who could freely choose would decide to adopt such a covering. Similarly, the situation of a battered woman who chooses to stay with her abuser is valued as illegitimate, assuming that in an abusive relationship she has so little sense of self that she cannot possibly know what she *really* wants. In this scenario, it might be objected that such desires, which are considered true and authentic, are contradictory to the very idea of freedom. Furthermore, when women make these choices, they reinforce the very institutions that oppress women. Critics may also add that these choices derive from a process of desire formation that is itself compromised by oppression. In this context, in the last chapter of the book Hirschmann claims:

I do think that feminist freedom requires that women's decision be respected, regardless of what they choose; feminists must support, in principle, if not politically, women's choices to oppose abortion, stay with abusers, not report rape or sexual harassment, or become full-time mothers and housewives... But such respect is motivated at least as much by recognition of oppression – as in the case of the battered woman who returns to her abuser because she has nowhere else to go or fears for the safety of her family – as respect for freedom – as in the case of pro-life women who believe that abortion is murder.<sup>576</sup>

Although Hirschmann clearly supported the idea of social construction of the subject and their choices throughout her book, I believe that this quote is very important as it describes the different perspectives that woman can have also, even on crucial issues like abortion. According to procedural accounts, even false stereotypes that have been internalized by women may seem like the agent's own. What needs to be considered is that the motivations that lead a woman, for example, to return to an abusive relationship due to financial constraints, are misleading and ambiguous. In this scenario, it is evident that domination persists, where individuals lack the necessary range of opportunities to make a free choice. What is important here is to acknowledge the significant impact of internalized oppression on women's motivational states, while still applying the same principles of authentic desires. As stated by Charles Taylor "having the opportunity to be free requires

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<sup>576</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.237-8

that I already be exercising freedom”.<sup>577</sup>

To achieve self-realization and decrease certain challenges, it is imperative that individuals reside in a society that offers equal opportunities to all citizens and operates under democratic governance. I have extensively explored this concept in earlier chapters of my discussion. The content-neutral principle can only be applied in non-dominated contexts, free from violence, oppression, and manipulation, as these factors are inherently antithetical to freedom. This would bring me back to what argued by Pettit that “positive freedom can be “facilitated”; however, as shown it is not “actively promoted by non-domination”.<sup>578</sup> The presence of a democratic state ensures that basic liberties are protected. However, as demonstrated women still need to undergo a process of forming authentic desires to achieve their self-realization.

We are all undoubtedly influenced by the environment in which we live, and the opportunities available to us can vary depending on the context. These barriers and influences can also be culturally variable. Thus, it is not realistic to claim that women, and all individuals, are immune to societal influences, as we all exist within the framework of everyday experiences shaped by social and historical factors that are impossible to fully escape or ignore.

In many parts of the world, women encounter deeply ingrained social stigmas and high levels of sexual violence, often without adequate legal protections that marital rape law affords. Activists globally continue to advocate for the rights of girls and women to be free from mutilation, exploitation, and the thriving industries of pornography and human trafficking that perpetuate sexual exploitation.<sup>579</sup> The existence of these injustices are interconnected with other forms of inequality, such as the sexual division of household labor, issues of identity and autonomy within marriage, sexual harassment laws, and the harmful impact of the beauty and diet industries.<sup>580</sup> Together, these factors contribute to women’s social, cultural, political, and material subordination. Understanding the social context surrounding choices and how individuals’ unique experience shapes their preferences and desires is crucial for assessing the freedom of desired choices.

If *exercise* should precede the concept of *opportunity*, then it is implausible to imagine a negative notion without a positive one either. I have already argued that the achievement of positive freedom is *equally* significant as negative freedom. As discussed in

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<sup>577</sup> Taylor, What’s Wrong with Negative Freedom, p.214

<sup>578</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

<sup>579</sup> Kiraly and Tyler, *Freedom Fallacy*, xiii

<sup>580</sup> *Ibidem*

*Chapter III*, human beings do not consider the negative concept of freedom alone as sufficient; they are not agents who will count as free just to the extent that they are not subjected to interference or domination from others. Overcoming internal obstacles and promoting self-realization play crucial roles in individuals' lives when striving for liberty. While promoting equal opportunities is important for ensuring everyone has the *chance* to exercise their freedom, this is not a direct consequence but rather a fundamental starting point and basis for achieving a compounded concept of freedom.

After elaborating on the implications of the examples mentioned earlier, let me revisit my initial point: the significance of developing the capacity for self-realization. Given the persistent challenges that women still encounter, a feminist neo-republican notion of freedom should prioritize not merely the *exercise* of specific choices - which could risk moving away from the fundamental principle of ensuring that women live free from domination - but rather the development of their *capacities*.

#### **5.4 Towards Feminist Neo-Republicanism**

To conclude, I will now return at the core of my argument, which raises the following questions: Which features must neo-republicanism include to make it more realistic, adequate and applicable to our actual societies, where the role of women is still challenged both in the private and public sphere? Is it feasible to rely on a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom to overcome this lack effectively?

What Pettit needs to embrace within his notion of non-domination is definitely positive freedom. I have demonstrated that this concept implies two distinct elements: self-realization and self-direction. The latter ensures that individuals can develop their *capacity* to make decisions in the public sphere and translate these decisions into action through political participation. Pettit can address *this* aspect effectively and with any doubt within his theory. Now, what about self-realization? In this section I have presented various examples to illustrate how self-realization consists of two elements: the *capacity* to develop one's own desires and exercising control over one's *actual* action. Additionally, I have argued that the *capacity* to be self-realized is a prerequisite for *exercising* action.

Let me recall Pettit's definition of domination: "Domination is defined as the *capacity* to interfere arbitrarily in someone else's choices, not necessarily the *actual* interference in her choices. Domination exists when someone has the power to interfere with

another, even if the one with that power does not *exercise* it”.<sup>581</sup> The challenge for Pettit arises not from whether the master *actually* interferes but from the master’s *capacity* to interfere arbitrarily. Similarly, I propose that we can apply this rationale of domination, focusing not on the *actual* exercise of interference but on the *capacity* to interfere, to the concept of self-realization. In other words, just as Pettit emphasizes non-domination in his negative concept of freedom, where the emphasis is on maintaining a non-dominated status rather than specific choices or actions, feminist neo-republicanism can prioritize the development of capacity over the exercise of actions.

This parallelism is viable because it diverges from what Taylor asserts, which relies on Berlin’s binary distinction between positive and negative freedom, defined as non-interference in actions. In contrast, within a feminist neo-republican framework, I advocate for prioritizing the “capacity to interfere” for the negative freedom and the “capacity to be self-realized” for the positive notion. I believe that attempting to incorporate the concept of exercise, which pertains to the actual practice of an action, may be incompatible with the foundation of Pettit’s negative concept, as well as within feminist neo-republicanism.

In the context of male domination, where feminist scholars have emphasized the importance of ensuring women have equal opportunities and that their desires and choices are not manipulated or influenced by patriarchal constraints, I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation how a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom can *effectively* address the challenges faced by women in our society today. Pettit’s theory not only responds to feminist critiques of classical republican and neo-republican theories but also underscores the value of freedom, a concept that has been overlooked by most contemporary feminist philosophers.

By drawing a parallel with Pettit’s concept of non-domination, I could find an alternative approach to embracing the essence of women’s self-realization based on what feels authentic and meaningful to them. By emphasizing capacity development, we can address how women can overcome internal obstacles, including those that have been inauthentically internalized. Furthermore, if we ensure that women can develop these capacities and are not subjected to manipulation or any external constraints, then feminist neo-republicanism can effectively integrate women’s subjectivity, address the gaps highlighted by feminist critiques against neo-republican theories, and promote genuine empowerment for women. In this way, addressing the core concerns of male domination and

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<sup>581</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.2-3

women's empowerment can lay the foundation for the new framework of feminist neo-republicanism.



## CONCLUSION

The journey undertaken in this dissertation began with the aim of elaborating a concept of individual liberty that could include both freedom from external constraints, known as negative freedom, and freedom within oneself, termed as positive liberty. I moved away from the initial belief that Pettit's theory is considered *masculinist*. Instead, through my research, I demonstrated how it can incorporate feminist perspectives and respond to various critiques while overcoming traditional liberal boundaries. Moreover, I underscored the importance of reconceptualizing freedom through a feminist lens and constructing normative and political frameworks rooted in women's experiences. I argued that feminism should diverge from conventional liberal paradigms and embrace a more neo-republican approach capable of addressing the multifaceted challenges of contemporary society, including intersectional dynamics.

Having outlined feminist criticisms of classical and neo-republican theories, I have demonstrated the potential for collaboration between feminism and neo-republicanism. I advocated for the creation of a unified and genuinely feminist neo-republican framework, one that critiques male dominance and society as a whole. Drawing on Pettit's theory and emphasizing the capacity for self-realization, it is possible to comprehend and resist women's domination. However, I do not claim to have developed a new theory; much work surely remains to be done. My intention was to initiate discourse and lay the groundwork for further exploration of freedom through a feminist neo-republican perspective. To advance this objective and enhance the project's viability and feasibility, I will now outline additional and practical considerations essential for shaping a truly feminist neo-republican theory.

In the preceding chapter, I discussed Pettit's oversight in failing to incorporate the concept of freedom as self-realization, which is crucial for making his theory more realistic, adequate and applicable to contemporary societies. In many contexts, women's roles are still

contested, both in private and public spheres. I argued that a theory of feminist neo-republicanism must prioritize the development of women's *capacity* for self-realization, not just the mere *action*. Now, the question that arises is: How can women cultivate this capacity? Who can support them in empowering them to make decisions aligned with their own desires and *eventually* translate this potential into action? What steps remain to be taken? These are the issues I will now address.

In response to these inquiries, I maintain that revising Pettit's theory of liberty is again the most viable approach. This choice is grounded in the *inherent* features of a republican framework, which already acknowledges the state's role in restraining and abolishing arbitrary power through initiatives such as universal education, access to transportation and communication services, social security, healthcare, legal aid, and similar measures.<sup>582</sup> Pettit's theory underscores the importance of institutions in safeguarding freedom and emphasizes citizens' collective responsibility to ensure that societal structures do not perpetuate domination or subjugation.

In reference to positive liberty, instead, Pettit is convinced that the state will *facilitate* its citizens' self-realization due to the presence of a government that protects them from domination by others, allowing them to contest government decisions.<sup>583</sup> Consequently, Pettit argues against the necessity of having a concept of freedom that should "explicitly embrace the richer ideal of promoting people's personal autonomy", and thus "there is no need to give state explicit responsibility" to promote this value.<sup>584</sup> Furthermore, he explicitly states that the development of this capacity does not concern his theory.

Pettit's electoral-contestatory democracy offers a potential solution to many feminist critiques by incorporating diverse arguments and perspectives. This approach ensures that women's voices are not only heard but also respected, fostering institutions that actively engage with and value women's perspectives. Self-direction within this framework guarantees that everyone has – or at least should have - a stake in decision-making processes. In this way women can *partly* achieve their positive freedom.

In this context I agree with the fact that the public, social, and private spheres are *strictly* interconnected, acknowledging that decisions made in the public realm clearly influence the private domain. For instance, public policies regarding maternity leave directly

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<sup>582</sup> Pettit, Freedom as Antipower, p.591-592; Pettit, *On The People's Terms*, p.110-117

<sup>583</sup> Before analyzing non-domination as a political ideal, Pettit persuaded scholars that there is no need to give the state explicit responsibility for promoting people's personal self-mastery, although his aim is to reach an ideal society (Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.81)

<sup>584</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.82

affect women's lives in the private sphere in family dynamics, childcare arrangements and household finances. However, it is essential to recognize that the capacities women may develop in the public sphere for political participation, for instance necessary for the right to vote, differ from those required to make use of state-provided opportunities effectively within the private sphere. Empowering women to utilize these opportunities in their private lives demands a distinct set of strategies and considerations.

As outlined in the introduction, I can now respond to the question whether a society ought to design institutions that promote positive freedom. In line with Christman's perspective, I advocate that "a just society must protect or promote freedom construed in this positive way and see as an ideal the ability of citizens to act as authentic, self-governing agent (that is, to be self-realized)".<sup>585</sup> Furthermore, Christman adds that "certain political institutions and policies may well remove or minimize constraints faced by an agent but do nothing to establish to protect those powers".<sup>586</sup> However, the ability for critical self-reflection in shaping value systems and plans of action "do not merely emerge naturally, but must be developed through various processes involving educational, social, and personal resources".<sup>587</sup> When discussing resources, we should not confine ourselves solely to a definition that limits resources to material possessions or opportunities provided by society. Instead, we should also consider personal capabilities and intrinsic attributes that may contribute to an individual's agency and self-realization.

I believe that there is thereby a need to construct institutions that both prevent domination and find *ways* of enhancing self-realization within its citizens. Consequently, republican structures should not solely aim to immunize individuals from the tyranny of others. Instead, they should be meticulously arranged, structured and designed to furnish individuals with the necessary capacities and resources for self-realization - without necessarily leading to totalitarianism as argued by Berlin.

In contrast to Pettit's argument, I firmly believe that the state *does* have the responsibility to promote an equitable society where principles of social justice, political legitimacy as well as positive freedom – both as self-direction and self-realization - thrive. If the state were adequately fulfilling this responsibility, many instances of women in Western countries struggling to develop true and authentic desires, as discussed in the preceding chapter, would not persist. However, the reality in our societies demonstrates

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<sup>585</sup> Christman, *Saving Positive Freedom*, p.85

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 87

<sup>587</sup> *Ibidem*

otherwise. Cultural traditions, social norms and a lack of empowerment tools hinder women from making decisions that are truly their own.

Let's dive more into practical solutions and reframe the previous questions: What actions can the state take to foster positive liberty? To put it differently, how can women be empowered to make use of the opportunities and overcome internal barriers, which might, for example, derive from eradicated social norms? What strategies enable women to achieve self-realization? Furthermore, is *only* the state responsibility for advancing toward a society that is equal and just?

The primary and most important tool at the state's disposal is surely education. In a society committed to equality and fairness, it is imperative that both women and men receive equal access to education. As Friedman states: "Institutions of public education can promote egalitarian treatment of females and males in all educational contexts and thereby provide models of mutually respectful interaction between the genders. Although Pettit does not emphasize these structural social reforms, they are *not* inconsistent with his account and suggest an additional amendment to his account that would improve its ability to deal with male domination".<sup>588</sup> Similarly to Hirschmann and Zerilli, Friedman made this statement prior to Pettit's publication of his seminal work in 2012. Indeed, "On the People's Terms", Pettit refers to education as a cornerstone of an infrastructural program crucial to a republican theory of justice. He claims:

The first requirement is that children in the society each have access to the sort of education necessary to provide them with essential skills, to bring their particular talents to fruition, to give them a full sense of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and indeed to let them see how bad it is for anyone to suffer domination in the sphere of the basic liberties. Let people be lacking in such developmental ways, and they will be incapable of asserting themselves with others, or assuming the status of free persons; indeed they may even be a danger to others, not recognizing the reciprocal, freedom-based claims that are made upon them.<sup>589</sup>

Despite acknowledging the importance of education, in particular in reference with connection with others, Pettit still fails to go into details and explain how the state could ensure that individuals can make use of these tools. Setting aside the potentially controversial example of children, I advocate that education remains crucial to women's freedom. When discussing state-sponsored education, the focus extends beyond children to include dedicated programs tailored specifically for women. These initiatives, aimed at empowering power, span various domains. For instance, the state could fund psychological support services

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<sup>588</sup> Friedman, Pettit's Civic Republicanism and Male Domination, p.256-7

<sup>589</sup> Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p.110-111

supporting women who suffer from domestic violence, sexual harassment or discrimination at work, or to manage stress and work-life balance, or pregnancy-related mental health issues such as postpartum depression. Additionally, state could promote programs that support women in developing financial knowledge and putting attention on the importance of financial independency. By investing in comprehensive educational programs tailored to women's needs, the state demonstrates a commitment to acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges and barriers women may encounter on their journey towards self-realization.

If analyzed from a different perspective, education is crucial not only for women's informed engagement in politics and their entry into various professions but also for their '*effectiveness*' in fulfilling roles as wives and mothers. Let me clarify what I mean by this last point. This notion echoes Mill's perspective, where he argues that men themselves will be better off if they have more intelligent and better-educated wives.<sup>590</sup> Indeed, he states that "a man married to a woman his inferior in intelligence finds her a perpetual dead weight, or, worse than a dead weight, a drag, upon every aspiration of his to be better than public opinion requires him to be".<sup>591</sup> By contrast, educated wives can engage in meaningful conversations and inspire their husbands to strive for continuous improvement. Furthermore, as more knowledgeable, intellectually engaged, and *fulfilled* mothers, these women can play a pivotal role in nurturing a future generation of critically thinking citizens.<sup>592</sup>

Even though Mill's masterpiece dates back two centuries, the themes he addresses remain remarkably relevant today, providing a foundation upon which to further develop my argument. Several of these points resonate with discussions from the previous chapter, where I asserted that women should be free to choose the life path that best aligns with their true desires, whether that involves full-time dedication to roles as wives or mothers. However, the fact that they decide to stay at home does not mean they have to be *less* educated. Choosing to prioritize family responsibilities does not preclude women from pursuing education or developing *intelligent* skills relevant to household tasks or whatever other interests they might have. For instance, women who opt to be full-time mothers can still pursue higher education - even considering that desires and circumstances may evolve over time. Simultaneously, there are other women who pursue careers outside the home, contributing to professions. Mill claims that beyond the family, removing barriers to

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<sup>590</sup> Mill, *The Subjugation of Women*, p.576

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p.568

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, p.560-61

women's participation in the public sphere would result in "doubling the mass of mental faculties available for the higher service of humanity" in political office or professions such as medicine or law, and will thereby improve the quality of politicians, doctors, and lawyers.<sup>593</sup> I agree with Mill's perspective that the inclusion of women in various spheres of society would foster healthy competition and encourage continual self-improvement among all individuals, regardless of gender. For example, the presence of women in traditionally male-dominated fields may prompt male counterparts to elevate their own performance, leading to overall improvements in professional standards and outcomes.

A very important point, when shaping educational policies, is to ensure that the state does not coerce individuals into specific patterns of behavior. Instead, the focus should be on promoting programs and educational initiatives that develop *content-neutral* positive liberty. This principle, which aligns with the formation of desires discussed in the previous chapter, underscores the importance of state intervention aimed at "public enlightenment". This may involve subsidizing certain activities to encourage a diverse range of genuine options for individuals.

For instance, let's consider the topic of religion in schools. In today's highly globalized society, it is crucial to provide young people with the tools to develop their capacities and make informed choices that align with their values and beliefs, even if these choices may *seem* to contradict prevailing norms of gender equality – for example, what might occur with the *controversial* case of the Muslim veiling. Similarly, for adult women, education aimed at financial independence is essential. Providing them with resources and support in cases of divorce or domestic violence empowers them to be aware their rights and face challenging circumstances with more confidence. However, if a woman chooses to be financially dependent on her husband, she should have the freedom to do so. This principle underscores the importance of content-neutral education, which respects individuals' autonomy to make choices aligned with their values and preferences. In line with this argument, Hirschmann also addresses these points and provide some examples:

battered-women's shelters provide new contexts in which a woman can come to understand her experiences and her selfhood in new and different ways that can help her end the violence, whether by leaving the batterer or by more effectively identifying and accessing the tools at her disposal. Muslim women's networks are key to their abilities to change cultural practices that are restrictive and harmful to them, without rejecting their faith or culture. Welfare rights organizations like the NWRO or the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, as well as informal women's networks through which child care arrangements are often set up, contribute to

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<sup>593</sup> Mill, *The Subjugation of Women*, p.561

women's ability to survive poverty and take control of defining their identity away from powerful, predominantly male politicians.<sup>594</sup>

These tools differ in their origin, foundation, structure, and specific function. While acknowledging these distinctions, Hirschmann recognizes that they serve a similar purpose of offering “safe spaces” for women to explore and define their identities and aspirations.

It is essential to note that education should not only be provided to women but also to men. This inclusive approach ensures that both genders have access to the tools and resources necessary for personal growth and fulfillment. Let's consider the scenario in which men who believe that detaining abusive and physical power over their wife is what means to be ‘a good and respected man’. In such cases, the state should offer programs aimed at demonstrating alternative ways of understanding *masculinity* and of ‘being a good man and husband’. For instance, within rehabilitation communities, initiatives can be introduced to arise awareness, challenge traditional notions of power and encourage men to adopt more collaborative and equitable behaviors towards their wives, female colleagues and community engagement. Additionally, by engaging in self-reflection and learning in this way, men can educate themselves about gender issues, feminism, and the impact of patriarchy.

The question of where to draw the line for state intervention without infringing upon individuals' privacy is an enduring issue, which I do not intend to explore extensively in this dissertation. However, I am aware that this statement may cause objections from liberals who argue against *excessive* state intrusion into private matters. To briefly reply to a possible objection, in the development of a feminist neo-republican framework, it is important to prioritize the protection of fundamental values. Without going too much into details, I will recall a point discussed in the preceding chapter where I claimed that a woman who opts to stay with an abusive husband cannot be considered truly free. In my view, state intervention should be guided by the preservation of fundamental values and the principle of non-domination, as articulated by Pettit. Thus, when it comes to situations involving an abusive husband, it is strictly *necessary* and required for the state to intervene where the fundamental values of liberty and respect have been *clearly* violated.

In summary, every woman should possess the tools and education necessary to decide her own path in life, tailored to her unique desires and aspirations. For this reason, I advocate for political institutions to adopt a supportive role in empowering women to achieve their self-realization. This support should contribute not only to the development of women's talents and intellectual capacities but also the promotion of information, awareness-raising,

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<sup>594</sup> Hirschmann, *The Subject of Liberty*, p.216

discussions, solidarity and activism. However, the ultimate decision rests with each woman, determining which choices to translate into action. It is this decision over one's desires that defines true freedom, regardless of whether those desires are acted upon or not.

If the state has the responsibility of ensuring that women have access to the tools and opportunities needed to develop their capacities for self-realization, relying solely on state intervention is insufficient. As discussed in the previous chapter, individual agents also hold responsibility for their actions. Just as individuals are responsible for overcoming patriarchal structures, they also have the responsibility for overcoming domination and developing their capacity for self-realization. Additionally, I hold that relying solely on state intervention may give the impression of imposition rather than *genuine* empowerment. Change must also occur within families, workplaces, and other social environments to truly empower women. This highlights the importance of collective effort and individual agency in achieving a more equal and fair society.

Individuals are not merely passive recipients of structural forces but are active agents who can resist and challenge the *status quo*. On one hand, our society witness numerous successful women who have learned to cultivate their capacity for self-realization. As highlighted in *Chapter III*, Pettit's perspective supported "the oppressed are not simply passive victims but active resisters, seeking to transform the structure of domination that confines and limits (opportunities to) them".<sup>595</sup>

Women are no longer confined to passive roles, subordinate to male authority. Instead, they now walk into rooms without fear, raise their voices, assert themselves confidently, and rise to positions of power. Let's consider the *courageous* women who have led and continue to lead revolutions to secure their rights to gender equality. Some examples range from the remarkable suffragettes who fought for the right to vote, to advocates for girls' education in developing countries, and those leading the contemporary conversations about sexual harassment and discrimination. These women, who have successfully developed this capacity for self-realization, have a responsibility to support and empower other women. This phenomenon is observable in various contexts within our society. For instance, in business networking events, mentorship programs, sponsorship initiatives, and even within neighborhoods women are coming together to inspire and empower each other. This collective effort demonstrates the power of solidarity and collaboration in dismantling barriers and advancing gender equality.

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<sup>595</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.26-27



On one hand, we see women empowering each other; on the other hand, men, who have historically shaped current power dynamics, also have a responsibility to take action in supporting women's journey towards self-realization. In *Chapter IV*, I briefly touched upon the importance of allyship in the fight for gender equality. I argued that men can play a vital role in advocating for women's interest, in that case in areas such as political representation. However, men have to recognize the importance of listening to women's voices and learning from their experiences. For instance, discussing the right to abortion solely among men would be inadequate, as they may lack the understanding of certain dynamics and emotions surrounding this issue. Nonetheless, this does not preclude men from expressing their support or opposition to it.

It is important to clarify at this point that it is not men *per se* that feminists are critiquing but again the *structure* of patriarchy. Patriarchy refers to the system of power and privilege that perpetuates gender inequality and male dominance. This distinction is important because it encourages and stimulate men to join forces with women in resisting this oppressive structure. Nowadays, there are numerous initiatives that men can address aimed at fostering these changes. Let me provide some examples in different contexts.

In familiar settings, men can play a significant role in supporting and encouraging their partners', wives', girlfriends' or daughters' achievement of self-realization. For instance, men can participate in household responsibilities; they can actively listen and create a safe space for open communication; they can support their partners' or daughters' personal and professional goals. This may involve advocating for their partner's career advancement, education, or pursuit of hobbies and interests considered not *women-friendly*.

In the business environment, there is growing emphasis on the concept of *male allyship* in the workplace. Many organizations are implementing initiatives aimed at empowering women, which are evident not only in formal written policies or sponsorship programs but also in everyday behaviors and attitudes. Fostering an inclusive culture may involve ensuring that women's voices are heard and respected during meetings and, for instance, avoiding negative comments towards women who for example take maternity leave. Some women may experience feelings of guilt or inadequacy when balancing work and family responsibilities, and supportive organizational policies and attitudes can alleviate these pressures. By providing support and creating an equal and inclusive environment, organizations can help women overcome internal obstacles and develop their capacity for self-realization. This demonstrates the importance of both structural support and cultural shifts in promoting gender equality and empowering women in the workplace.

So far, I have predominantly explored how patriarchal societal norms impact women, yet the same also applies to men. Those, being in positions of power and having contributed to these dynamics, are *paradoxically trapped* within the patriarchal system *themselves*. However, we should avoid perpetuating the belief that women are inherently weak and need to be 'saved' by men, as they are fully capable of achieving independence and success on their own. Indeed, I am not suggesting that male allyship should replace women's initiatives, but rather that this should operate in parallel.

After all cases provided, I can hold that a feminist neo-republican understanding of freedom is relevant not only to women but also to men. Many of the challenges discussed earlier are experienced by both genders, as men, too, are trapped within the patriarchal system. Indeed, we all exist within the framework of everyday experiences shaped by social and historical factors that are impossible to fully ignore or even escape. They face societal expectations requiring them to be strong, to prioritize full-time jobs, and to refrain from involvement in household and caregiving duties. Consequently, the struggle to develop the capacity for self-realization is not exclusive to women but also pertains to men. They should have the liberty to make choices and access opportunities that allow them to spend time with their children and participate fully in caregiving responsibilities. Thus, freedom includes the ability for both women and men to pursue paths that align with their personal desires and values, regardless of traditional gender roles.

In the business world, particularly for men in top and leadership positions, it can be challenging to develop a sense of authenticity and capacity to be themselves. Organizations play a crucial role in supporting individuals in this journey. For instance, implementing parental leave policies that provide equal opportunities for both men and women to take time off to care for their children is essential. Additionally, offering options for men to reduce their work hours or workload, such as part-time or flexible working arrangements, can facilitate a better balance between work and personal life. It is important that men, like women, have the freedom to choose the life path that aligns best with their preferences.

All these examples have shown the importance of positive liberty that plays in a concept of feminist freedom, which also applies to men. However, it is undeniable that men continue to hold the majority of positions of power and privilege across all aspects of life, from familial to business contexts. As a consequence, this disparity grants them the ability to shape conditions that empower certain individuals while restricting others. Men have resources mostly not available to women, including economic and earning power as men are typically paid more than women, in part due to gender-based wage disparities; legal power

as men make laws and social policy because they hold the vast majority of official decision-making positions; and social power as male privilege is a normalized dimension of most societies throughout the world. However, no specific group - not even wealthy white males - holds *absolute* control over the system of patriarchy and male domination. I acknowledge that patriarchy is a complex network of social norms, expectations, and institutions that shape our lives and interactions with each other. Challenging or dismantling these structures can be complex for individuals alone. Yet, this does not deny the fact that individuals can both benefit from and perpetuate the privilege that larger social forces give them. Especially those in positions of power have the responsibility for their actions and their contribution to existing power structures. For this reason, they also possess the capacity to make substantial change within these systems. This recalls the idea that a feminist neo-republican concept of freedom extends beyond the mere absence of external obstacles to include a collective commitment to non-domination.

Due to the interconnectedness of different societal settings and how they influence each other, it is challenging to show where exactly change should begin - whether through state intervention, familial shifts or in the business environment. What is crucial is that change efforts encompass all aspects of society. As previously discussed, non-domination is a dynamic and relational concept that requires considering the social and political contexts in which individuals operate. Both state interventions and individual actions should lay the groundwork for collaboration, solidarity, collective action, advocacy and allyship. Through these efforts, we cannot only overcome domination but also support others in achieving self-realization.

Feminist neo-republican concept of freedom must be cultivated through suitable political institutions that offer equal opportunities and education for both women and men, ensuring them the development of capacities to self-realization without any internal or external constraints. The importance of internal aspects and positive freedom, including how desires are shaped, and what the society, the state, and each individual must do to overcome and abolish domination, remains an ongoing process. However, responsibility lies with everyone.

My argument to support a truly feminist neo-republican framework, grounded in Pettit's concept of non-domination, aims to make a significant contribution to research, particularly in the fields of political philosophy and feminist studies. By combining Pettit's neo-republicanism with feminist principles, I offer a unique perspective and an additional dimension to ongoing discussions, especially concerning the concept of liberty as self-

realization. Nevertheless, I recognize that there is still significant work to be done, especially regarding the state's role in promoting this form of freedom. What is relevant for this dissertation is to have demonstrated that the notion of liberty necessitates *compounded* the concept of negative liberty with that of positive freedom to fully protect individuals' personal liberty and to combat male and all other forms of domination. By embracing all the two concepts together, I could provide a concept of individual freedom that is more realistic, suitable, and relevant to our present societies. In such a framework, women can achieve emancipation and self-realization both in the public sphere and within the domestic environment.

This articulation makes freedom *apparently* a quite demanding idea. For those who might argue that this concept is too idealistic and overly reliant on human nature and solidarity, I fully disagree. Liberal supporters of negative freedom, like Kramer, have already criticized Pettit by accusing his theory to be a "utopian fantasy" and a "fairy tale", in which the most that can be done is "to render domination highly unlikely, but not to rule out the emergence of domination and all its effects".<sup>596</sup> For this reason, Pettit's republican freedom should not enter political philosophy.<sup>597</sup> In response to this criticism, Pettit acknowledges that his theory is "excessively demanding goal around which to orientate our social and political institutions."<sup>598</sup> However, he claims that the state is "well up to the task of realizing such an ideal".<sup>599</sup> If Pettit had considered this criticism and consequently *simplified* his theory, then the equal and non-dominated status for women might never have emerged in a theory of republican freedom and would have been left *solely* to liberal and feminist scholars.

Since the publication of "On the People's Terms" in 2012, significant changes have occurred in our society, with increased sensitivity and involvement in implementing gender equality by both the state and single individuals. Particularly in Western societies, this progress is evident and thus the ideal I propose is not far-fetched from our reality. For this reason, it is unrealistic for today's theorists of freedom to avoid addressing current concerns that affect not only women but society as a whole.

I admirably acknowledge Pettit's effort to address women's domination within a concept of freedom, which was rarely used to explain their oppression. Nevertheless, some additional elements should be included in a *theory* of feminist neo-republicanism to be defined as such. Alongside striving for more equal opportunities, I strongly advocate for a

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<sup>596</sup> Kramer, *Liberty and Domination*, p.45

<sup>597</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>598</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.47, 77

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48

concept of individual political freedom that provide tools to citizens aiming at fostering the development of capacities and facilitating the attainment of self-realization for both women and men.

We should not accept the idea that things are fixed and unchangeable, with no possibility of improvement, and that we must simply wait for circumstances to evolve. Circumstances are not set in stone; each of us has the capacity to shape them. Just as we influenced them initially, we have the power to alter them. Men and women, working together, can collectively contribute to creating a better society for all. This effort can be taken by all individuals to lead to a better society for everyone. To echo Pettit's statement: "Do not let the proclamation of impossibility inhibit the making of the effort".<sup>600</sup>

As stated in the preface of this dissertation, my advocacy centers on promoting principles that enhance values rooted in the liberty to be one's authentic self and the practice of mutual respect for others in their pursuit of the same freedom. Through this dissertation, I hope I could contribute and raise awareness, albeit partially, to the realization of these goals.

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<sup>600</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*, p.97

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