



LUND UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Graduate School
Department of Political Science

SIMT29, Master's Thesis (Two Years)
in Development Studies
Spring 2011
Supervisor: Martin Hall

Amartya Sen's Notion of Freedom

A Conceptual History of a Universalist Presumption

Maria Eugenia Yupanqui A.

Abstract

Amartya Sen argues that the overarching goal of development is expanding people's choices. Yet, freedom as a goal is ambiguous as the notion is clouded by idioms of freedom dating as far back as Ancient Greece. Thus, since Sen claims to have universalist presumptions, this thesis discusses and analyzes Sen's notion of freedom from a classical philosophical perspective – mainly drawing from Leo Strauss – in order to situate it in this ancient historical debate. For this purpose, the conceptual meaning of freedom is treated as both autonomous and mutable as it allows for a historically and philosophically sounded approach to its study. The method applied to trace the different notions of freedom is the one of conceptual history. The findings indicate that Sen's notion of freedom is formulated under MacCallum's widely accepted meta-theory of one concept of freedom, for Sen seeks universal validation of his democratic values based on individual agency. Indeed, since freedom is the principle of democracy, Sen's thought is rooted in a democratic tradition that advocates universal standards drawn from the classics.

Keywords: Sen, Freedom, Development, MacCullum, Democracy

Characters: 150.842

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1. The Subject of Study	4
1.2. The Purpose of the Study	4
1.3. The Structure of the Study	5
1.4. Delimitations	6
1.5. The Importance of this Thesis	6
2. Theoretical Framework	8
2.1. Classical Philosophy	9
2.2. Controversy	13
2.3. Taking a Stand on Conceptual Meaning	16
3. Methodology	19
3.1. Conceptual History	20
3.2. Weaknesses of the Method	21
4. Tracing the Notion of Freedom	23
4.1. Ancient Greece	23
4.2. The Romans	25
4.3. Medieval Times	27
4.4. Modernity	28
4.4.1. Empiricists and the Utilitarian Tradition	29
4.4.2. The Idealists	31
5. Berlin's Two Concepts of Liberty	33
5.1 Negative Freedom	33
5.2. Positive Freedom	34
6. One Concept of Freedom	36
7. Sen's Notion of Freedom	39
7.1. Individual Freedom	40
7.1.1 Capabilities	40
7.1.2. Individual Agency	41
7.2. What is Development as Freedom Then?	41
7.2.1 The Means of Development: Instrumental Freedoms	42
7.2.2. The End of Development: Substantive Freedoms	44

7.3. Sen’s Ranking of Values	44
7.3.1 Justice and Equality	46
7.3.2. Sen and Critical Debate.....	46
7.3.3. Remark	49
7.4. Ranges of x , y , and z in Sen’s Conceptualization	49
7.4.1. Agent or Agents (x).....	50
7.4.2. Preventing Conditions (y).....	50
7.4.3. Actions or Conditions of Character or Circumstance (z)	52
8. Conclusion	53
9. Executive Summary.....	56
10. Bibliography	58
Appendix 1	61
Appendix 2.....	62
Appendix 3.....	63
Appendix 4.....	64

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to thank those who made the conception of this thesis possible. First of all, I would like to express my special thanks to my advisor, Martin Hall, for his guidance during moments of cross roads, for introducing me to new exciting political ideas, and for going an extra mile by supplying me with key material. This study could have not been possible without his direction. Secondly, I would like to warmly acknowledge Jens Bartelson who kindly went out of his way and invested time in providing me with clarifications and observations on the development of my theoretical framework.

Heartfelt gratitude and appreciation is also extended to Professor Horst Hutter at Concordia University, first, for sharing “in the madness and Bacchic frenzy of philosophy,” and, secondly for his endless e-mailed advice, encouragement, and inspirational insights. Through the intoxicating effects of his teachings, Professor Hutter succeeded in delivering another lover of wisdom.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Murphy for her editing skills and to my friends in the programme – especially forever magical and gracious Maggie – for listening and sharing their ideas. I would also like to acknowledge Petter for finally acknowledging me and calling me to make sure he would appear in the acknowledgements.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family – Rogy, Sebas, and Monkillo – for their support, their love, and enduring endless phone calls that provided me with lots of laughs at much needed moments. My deepest gratitude also goes to Martha Mendoza as I am for life indebted for having me entrusted to God. Her faith somehow always manages to touch me.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Subject of Study

During his inaugural speech in 1949, President Truman made explicit the dream of creating a world of prosperity brought about by technology and economic growth. At the beginning the task seemed simple enough, but over the decades, the level of complexities encountered by the developers has made them rethink their strategies over and over again. It has been more than sixty years since different projects were put in motion. Yet, the gap between the wealthy and the poor has gradually widened. Consequentially, over the past three decades, there has been a critical awakening regarding the idea of development in all its shapes and forms. Criticism has often been directed to mainstream development – the one in line with modernization theory, which usually measures development through levels of industrialization and GNP.

In response to the criticism, the UNDP redirected its approach under the advice of the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and the Indian economist Amartya Sen. In 1990 the UNDP published the first Human Development Report and introduced the Human Development Index. For the first time, development was described as providing choices and freedoms expected to have widespread outcomes. This new approach to development practices was based on Sen's academic work on capabilities and functionings. In recognition of his enormous input, Amartya Sen was awarded the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for reintroducing an ethical dimension to the field of development. A year later, Sen's interest in the problems of society's most deprived members led him to publish *Development as Freedom*, a book in which he summarizes – in a language accessible to all – his studies on welfare economics and social choice theory. There, Sen explains why freedom ought to be the overarching goal of development.

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The concept of freedom is a much disputed subject. What freedom really is, is in actual fact an ancient debate dating as far back as the Ancient Greeks. Hence, although Sen elaborates on his definition of freedom – and hence development –, it seems to me that a historical and philosophical explanation is deemed necessary to make intelligible Sen's notion of freedom. A historical analysis is mainly due because the notion of freedom had evolved along other concepts and there is more than one notion of freedom. Therefore, I see necessary, in order to elucidate Sen's conceptualization, to trace the different concepts of freedom and place Sen in this

debate. Furthermore, I consider as essential a philosophical explanation since it is my assumption and belief that Amartya Sen is, besides being an economist, a philosopher. Through all his studies, Sen makes normative claims by alluding to the value thoughts of classical, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophers. Thus, in the many ways one could analyze his academic works and if one really desires to grasp his ethical stand, Sen ought to be read foremost as a philosopher. As a matter of fact, Sen's concerns are rooted in the intrinsic value of notions such as democracy, freedom, equality, and justice with "a strong universalist presumption" (Sen 1999: 244). In other words, the primary question with which Sen approaches his academic studies is "what is politically, socially, and economically right?" His endeavor is then the concern of the philosopher. For these reasons, it seems to me that both historical and philosophical explanations are rendered indispensable to make intelligible not only Sen's conceptualization, but the concept of freedom itself.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to decrease the confusion produced when the terminology is not correctly understood and subsequently obfuscated by idioms of freedom. This is not to say that there is a "true" notion of freedom, but only to advance an approach in which different notions of freedom can be made intelligible. Following this reasoning, I seek to clarify the conditions in which the concept of freedom is understandable as to avoid rhetorical connotations that not only obscure the means towards the goal – in this case development, but most importantly it obscures the goal in itself.

To operationalize the research aim, a main guiding question was formulated: *How is Sen's notion of freedom associated with the historical debate on the concept of freedom?* To give structure to the answer, two main sub-questions will serve as guides: How should the concept of freedom be historically and philosophically studied? And on what ground does Sen base his universal claims about his notion of freedom?

1.3. The Structure of the Study

Following the research questions, Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical aspects of the study of concepts. The theoretical framework will address the debate on the history of ideas between historians and philosophers as to provide a historically and philosophically sound framework of analysis from which the study of freedom and Sen's notion of freedom will be approached. Chapter 3 will clarify the methods employed in tracing the notion of freedom as well as how the concept of freedom will be studied. Chapter 4 is a historical account of the different notions of freedom starting from Ancient Greece and culminating in the Enlightenment. Chapter 5 will explore the work of Isaiah Berlin as his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty" is one of the most influential works of the twentieth century. Chapter 6 will discuss MacCallum's meta-theory of freedom, which was a response to Berlin's work. This chapter contains a critical analysis on the conditions in which the notion of freedom is made intelligible. Chapter 7 will finally discuss Sen's notion on freedom based on the previous findings. Likewise,

by elucidating Sen's concept of freedom – and hence development –, this chapter will focus on exposing Sen's philosophical and ethical stand. Finally, Chapter 8 will make a brief recount of the study as well as providing some concluding remarks.

1.4. Delimitations

As I seek to elucidate and explain a concept, it is inevitable to touch upon the nature of concepts, namely what they are, how they came into existence, how they are formed, and how they are acquired. However, such an endeavor is beyond my reach. To explain, the debate on the nature of concepts in the European tradition can be argued to date back as far as Plato. Secondly, the nature of concepts is still a greatly debated issue among contemporary scholars of philosophy, history, and linguistics, in which no clear consensus has been drawn. Nevertheless, I am aware that it is impossible to go around this debate without stating my position, since the position I take in regards of the nature of concepts will determine my methods. Therefore, I will not come up with my own view of concepts, but I will ally with one interpretation that I see fruitful for this thesis.

Finally, this thesis makes use of several articles written by Sen to provide a clearer explanation of what he means by capabilities and functioning; however, this study mainly draws from *Development as Freedom* as it is the most extensive explanation Sen provides to justify why freedom should be the goal of political and socio-economic practices. Hence, this investigation could benefit through the comparison of his earliest and latest works as to observe the evolution of Sen's thought, which for reasons of time and space could not be done here. Yet, the reason why this thesis draws mainly from this book is because I believe this particular work to be enough to expose Sen's philosophical stand. First, this book was written with the intention to justify a framework of universal values; and second, the fact that the audience Sen wishes to reach is beyond the academic world provides specific indicators of his position.

1.5. The Importance of this Thesis

This thesis does not seek to solve immediate problems concerning issues of development. Its humble aim is to create awareness of the terminology and concepts we employ, in particular freedom. At most, this thesis can aspire to elucidate what we mean by development and the means to be used to achieve "development as freedom." On the other hand, there is an old saying that states that "awareness is half the battle." Hence, the most important aspect of this thesis is its philosophical stand, which calls for a critical and historically sound assessment of our ideas, ideals, and values. To convert opinions into knowledge and to overcome false opinions is a philosophical endeavor. For this reason, this study draws attention to how we critically approach notions, emphasizing that

paying attention to language and history is not sufficient to understand social reality. We need to be aware of the different perspectives, as well as how they interact, overlap, and depend on one another. In essence, my intention is not to advance an overarching approach to the study of political thought, but I seek validation of different perspectives as I see they are constitutive views of reality. In particular, I call for a reawakening of classical philosophy in the study of social reality. In this sense, I want to warn the reader that this thesis might use some controversial terminology. My intention is not to deny the controversy, since I believe the controversy to be ancient, justifiable and desirable. My goal is to dare the reader. I believe we need not to be afraid of some terms. Nowadays, when someone encounters words like “human essence,” “truth,” “reason,” and so forth, we tend to frown our faces and our predisposition for absorbing the ideas that the philosophers intended to convey is lost. I believe this is one of the greatest malaises of modernity in academia – the incapacity to look beyond language. First, I am aware we express ourselves through language, but I am doubtful that all human experience is language-laden. Language should not frame or imprison human experience. Although language is an important component in cognition, language cannot be assumed to be the object of cognition – namely that what is being cognitively processed. It is merely the tool that we have at our disposal to learn, absorb, and produce knowledge.

2. Theoretical Framework

How to study concepts is still a current controversial debate. Different approaches to the study of conceptual meaning will differ according to the views of the relationship between language and the world (Bartelson 2007: 102). Nonetheless, I wanted to approach the issue from a historically sound philosophical stand. However, from this point on, I was not only dealing with a linguistic debate about the nature of concepts, but I also had to confront a heated debate that took place a few decades ago between historians of political thought and political philosophers regarding methodology in the study of the history of ideas. Since the mid-twentieth century, many scholars studying the history of political thought took a “linguistic turn,” which was primarily a response against the semantic interpretation of texts. The traditional semantic approach, roughly described, regards words and concepts as signifiers referring to an object of thought. Hence, concepts do not exist independently of that object. The objectivity of concepts is placed in the fact that concepts “put us in touch with things, and this referential capacity is in turn a condition of their possible meaning”(Bartelson 2007: 104). Due to these properties, conceptual meaning is universal and timeless (Bartelson 2007: 104). This further implies that the study of the history of ideas is essentially the study of “superficial variations in semantic content of no fundamental importance to the study of political thought” (Bartelson 2007: 105). This approach gave thinkers and philosophers strong foundations to theorize and philosophize while undermining the historical change in contextual meaning. This approach also made possible definitive ideas about “essence,” “nature,” “truth,” “reason” and other such concepts that have served to promote ideological thinking and dogmatic beliefs.

The traditional semantic approach did not only have implications in the interpretation of texts, but it went much further concerning more generally epistemological and methodological approaches. Thus, academics from a variety of different disciplines stood up against this approach and came up with methodological alternatives to the study of history and the history of ideas. Among the most prominent historians and philosophers are Michel Foucault, Reinhart Koselleck, Gilles Deleuze, Richard Rorty, Hayden White, and Dominick La Capra. Concerning specifically the interpretation of texts, we can distinguish Isaiah Berlin, GERALD COHEN, John Pocock, Quentin Skinner, Leo Strauss, and Charles Taylor. All these scholars developed different methods of interpretation based on assumptions of conceptual meaning and language. Some scholars like Skinner regard conceptual meaning as deriving from their actual usage in a given context. Other academics such as Taylor regard conceptual meaning as deriving from an expression of human experience. Scholars such as Koselleck and Foucault will argue “against the view that conceptual meaning derives from the

consciousness of the subjects,” which basically challenges the possibility to trace conceptual meanings altogether (Bartelson 2007: 117).

In the light of all this and following my preliminary assumptions, I will follow Bartelson’s steps and attempt to overcome the debate of conceptual meaning and language in the study of the history of political thought for the sake of political philosophy. Currently, political philosophy is in decadence mainly because of

a successful revolution against the tendency of classical semantics and hermeneutics to locate meaning in objects and subjects respectively, a revolution which was propelled by the notion that meaning resides inside language and nowhere else. Yet this was a revolution in favour of history which left us with few resources with which to philosophize, lest we wanted to backslide (Bartelson 2007: 123).

For this reason, my aim is to recover a view of political philosophy that will elucidate Sen’s philosophical stand as well as call attention to the importance this discipline deserves. Since Sen claims to have universalist presumptions, I decided to introduce Leo Strauss’ views of classical philosophy as it is the most influential approach (Ward 2009: 236).

2.1. Classical Philosophy

Leo Strauss is probably the most influential scholar that takes the classical philosophical stand in this debate. By the 1950s, Strauss had built a reputation among American political theorists as being at odds with traditional methods employed in the United States (Major 2005: 478). Strauss was basically confronting the influence of positivism in the field of political science (Strauss 1959: 17-18). The “value-free” approach of positivism, namely the rejection of value judgments and the belief that the highest form of human knowledge is scientific, leads to the study of society from a historical perspective, which is based on subjectivity (Strauss 1959: 21-25). Strauss (1959: 25) argued that “positivism necessarily transforms itself into historicism.” Indeed, Strauss is attacking the new tendency of doing history:

If we inquiry into the reasons for this great change, we receive these answers: political philosophy is unscientific, or it is unhistorical, or it is both. Science and History, those two great powers of the modern world, have finally succeeding in destroying the very possibility of political philosophy (Strauss 1959: 17-18)

What Strauss is pointing at is that – given the primordial role subjectivity is attributed within the study of political thought – philosophical questions of political character are transformed into historical ones, and hence, this means the death of political philosophy (Strauss 1959: 59). Strauss’ criticism derives from his view of philosophy. Strauss is in actual fact a classical philosopher in the sense that he understands philosophy as the Ancient Greeks did: philosophy is striving for wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge of the whole – the whole being the totality of the parts (Strauss 1959: 39). This approach was, we are told, originated

in the European tradition by Socrates who sought to understand human affairs in the context of the whole, that is, everything that *is*.¹

For ‘to be’ means ‘to be of something’ and hence to be different from things which are ‘something else;’ ‘to be’ means therefore ‘to be a part.’ Hence the whole cannot ‘be’ in the same sense in which everything that is ‘something’ ‘is;’ the whole must be ‘*beyond being*.’ And yet the whole is the totality of the parts. To understand the whole then means to understand all the parts of the whole or *the articulation of the whole* [my italics] (Strauss 1953: 122).

In this sense, the whole consists of distinct groups of things, namely the whole consists of highly diversified beings. Socrates sought to understand the unity – say the connections or the dynamics of all things – which manifests itself in the natural articulation of everything that is. Socrates sought to have the total view, the view from beyond. Thus, when he posed the question “What is?”, Socrates meant “what is the natural articulation of that being in the light of the whole?” Or “what is the nature of that being?” Socrates was very much aware that to understand this we need to assess the phenomena – the manifestation of nature since the articulation of the whole is hidden; it is not there just to understand.² What comes first to sight is opinion – what is said about them. We acquire these opinions through socialization. Now, these opinions can carry an accurate grasp of the natural articulation of a thing or not. Accordingly, Socrates had to address opinions about the nature of things. “For every opinion is based on some awareness, on some perception with the mind’s eye, of something” (Strauss 1953:124). Then philosophy consists and derives from opinions. Since philosophy is preceded by opinions and misconceptions of the whole, by the simple fact that men have thoughts about it, the aim of the philosopher is to convert opinion (*doxa*) into knowledge of the whole. As Strauss highlights, this is not about an antiquated or ancient cosmology. “It was originated by Socrates. And Socrates was so far from being committed to a specific cosmology that his knowledge was knowledge of ignorance” (Strauss 1959: 38).³ In this regard, many thinkers have argued whether or not this pursuit for wisdom is viable or not since it implies a view from beyond – the view of the gods. Many of them have dropped this striving altogether by accepting the impossibility. But, for Strauss, philosophy is the plain striving and therefore once one stops striving, one ceases to be a philosopher. “He would cease to be a philosopher by evading the questions concerning these things or by disregarding them because they cannot be answered” (Strauss 1959: 11). The philosopher cannot give in to *doxa* or to the “knowledge” of impossibilities. Philosophy is not possession of the “truth,” but merely the striving for *fundamental principles of all things*, namely the natural

¹ Socrates is described in this study in accordance with Strauss’ interpretation. However, it is important to highlight that there is a lot of debate regarding who the real historical Socrates was. Since mostly what we know about Socrates comes mainly from Platonic dialogues, it is hard to distinguish between historical Socrates and Platonic Socrates.

² If nature was just there for us to understand fully, there would be no need for science or any other pursue for knowledge of it.

³ “In Strauss’s judgment Socratic knowledge of ignorance is more authentically open to the aporetic character of the human relation to Being” (Velkley 2008: 245)

articulation in the light of the whole.⁴ In this sense, “philosophy will never go beyond the stage of discussion or disputation and will never reach the stage of decision” (Strauss 1959: 11). Therefore, philosophy is *not* definitive. It is imperative to keep in mind philosophy as not definitive to understand Strauss’ argument and the philosophical point I wish to make. This position is different from that of making ultimate claims about universal truths. In fact, making a universal claim is the end of philosophical inquiry and this is a point that Strauss highlights constantly.

The wise man – the philosopher – seeks to understand the place of human beings in the totality of the whole. In this sense, he asks what his place in nature is. For Socrates, the role of men was to live a virtuous life, meaning to live up to its full potential. This is so, because what is good is “in order” with the articulation of the whole – the divine or that which is beyond being (Strauss 1953: 127). For Strauss, men have a natural inclination for the beyond and thus “[t]he life according to nature is the life of human excellence or virtue [...]” (Strauss 1953: 127). Virtue is the expression of knowledge – knowledge of the whole.⁵ From this follows that the values a virtuous man holds are “admirable, or noble, by nature, intrinsically” (Strauss 1953: 128). These values are characterized by containing “no reference to one’s selfish interests” and thus “they imply a freedom from calculation” (Strauss 1953: 128). Accordingly, it is the visions of the articulation of the whole which set the standards of good, right, and justice.⁶

In the light of this, according to Strauss, political philosophy is a branch of philosophy that seeks to “replace opinion about the nature of political things by knowledge of the nature of political things” (Strauss 1959: 11-12). Thus, the first question a political philosopher asks is “what are political things?” or “what is political?”⁷ Political things are not neutral affairs. As they involve the individual and the collective, political matters are always judgment calls. “One does not understand them as what they are, as political things, if one does not take seriously their explicit or implicit claim, i.e., if one does not measure them by some standard of goodness and justice” (Strauss 1959: 12). Political philosophy strives for knowledge about these standards, which aim to what is right and just for individuals or groups of people living in a society. “Because man is by nature social, the perfection of his nature [the life of virtue] includes the social virtue par excellence, justice; just and right are natural” (Strauss 1953: 129). Hence, the concern of the political philosopher is the good political order, namely to observe, to judge, and to criticize following “true standards” of rightness and justice. It is

⁴ It must be noted that scientists strive for knowledge of nature – fundamental principles. In ancient times, philosophers also endeavored in this task as they were devoted to study “all things.” It can be argued that scientific pursuit is based on the same principle, namely scientists know that the question “is the universe infinite?” will never be able to be answered, but it does not stop them to strive for knowledge of the universe.

⁵ Life lived in accordance to fundamental principles.

⁶ It is important to keep in mind this is a hypothesis of truth, and hence, there is nothing definitive about the whole as we only have access to ideas. Ideas which set these standards of good, right, and justice need and must be submitted to constant criticism since there are opinions. This is the aim of philosophy: the constant or never-ending striving for the right opinion.

⁷ We will see that this question is at the core of the debate about freedom.

for his views of philosophy that Strauss claims that studying political thought purely historically undermines philosophical inquiry since intrinsic values are rendered as metaphysical nonsense. In other words, the question “what is the best possible political order?” becomes irrelevant since it is covered by a veil of subjective as all political philosophical inquiry becomes “historically conditioned” (Strauss 1959: 60). Strauss (1959: 61) suggests that “historism” calls for a historical understanding in order to legitimize political action a ‘distinguished from, and opposed to, the ‘abstract principles’ [...]’ Yet, “historism” fails to acknowledge that political philosophy *cannot* be equated to political action. Philosophic questions serve as *guides* to political action as they help to elucidate desirable goals based on justice or virtue from the perspective of the beyond. In this sense, political activity is good when it is properly directed towards a life of virtue, whose ultimately end is the individual. But,

all political action, as distinguished from political philosophy, is concerned with individual situations, and must therefore be based on a clear grasp of the situation concerned, and therefore often on an understanding of the antecedents of that situation (Strauss 1959: 61)

From Straus’ perspective, the question raised by “historism,” that is, that all political action must be approached foremost historically, is irrelevant since history does not presuppose a guide for the best possible political order in a given situation. Put differently,

[t]he question of the best political order, *e.g.*, cannot be replaced by a discussion ‘of the operative ideals which maintain a particular type of state,’ modern democracy, *e.g.*, for ‘any thorough discussion’ of those ideals ‘is bound to give some consideration to the absolute worth of such ideals’ (A. D. Lindsay cited in Strauss 1959: 69).

Strauss (1959: 56) argues that “political philosophy is not a historical discipline.” However, he admits that “this does not mean that political philosophy is absolutely independent of history” since without the experience of the variety of political affairs across time and space, the question of the nature of political things and the just political order could have never been raised (Strauss 1959: 56). Strauss (1953: 124) argues that it is in fact because of the contradiction among different visions or ideas of, for example, freedom that the philosopher is forced to go beyond opinions toward the “consistent view of the nature of the thing concerned [freedom].” In this sense, for Strauss, history as the accumulation of human experience, shows that human thought is concerned with perennial questions or “the same fundamental problems, and therefore that there exists an unchanging framework which persists in all changes of human knowledge of both facts and principles” (Strauss 1953: 23-24).⁸ Put simply, because every political situation embodies “elements which are essential to all political situations: how else could one intelligibly call all these different political situations ‘political

⁸ This understanding entails that philosophy is not limited to the European tradition. As pointed out by Ben-Ami Scharfstein (1998), there are other two philosophical traditions that search for fundamental principles.

situations’?” (Strauss 1959: 64). In this sense, if we speak about freedom, Strauss points that it is necessary to address all the conceptualizations of freedom as to clarify the perennial elements. In other words, he calls for the highest level of abstraction, which enables the possibility of universal principles.⁹

2.2. Controversy

In 1969, at the age of twenty-nine, Quentin Skinner shook the world of academia with his controversial essay “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas.” The young Skinner attacked the way in which historians of political thought had been reading, interpreting, and analyzing classical texts. He called their methods “orthodox” and accused them of not doing history, but of producing “anachronistic mythologies” (Skinner 1969: 40). But the young Skinner did not stop there. He did not only advance an approach that in his view “must necessarily be adopted” if historians of ideas are to avoid producing anachronistic mythologies, but he also stated that this approach “would serve to invest the history of ideas with its own *philosophical point* [my italics]” (Skinner 1969: 4). Skinner singled out Leo Strauss as the “leading proponent” of “a demonological (but highly influential)” version of “anachronistic mythologies” that dogged the historical study of the ethical and political ideas by claiming that political theory should “be concerned with the eternal or at least traditional ‘true standards’” (Skinner 1969: 12-13).

I have nothing to object to concerning Skinner’s methodology of the study of history, since over the past four decades they have survived tiring testing. Even some of his critics admit that their foundations are actually sound (Wootton 1992: 379). However, the most serious criticism towards Skinner is not really directed to his methodology. The dissatisfaction of many scholars, in particular philosophers, is directed to his philosophical stand and the implications of this stand regarding political philosophy. The past decades have to be taken as clear indicators that his methodology and some of his premises do have significant implications, especially when not clarified in the light of philosophy.

The task of the historian of ideas is to study and interpret a canon of classic texts. The value of writing this kind of history stems from the fact that the classic texts in moral, political, religious and other as such modes of thought contain a ‘dateless wisdom’ in the form of ‘universal ideas.’ As a result, we can hope to learn and benefit directly from investigating these ‘timeless elements,’ since they possess a perennial relevance [...]. *These are the assumptions I wish to question, criticise and if possible discredit [...]* [my italics] (Skinner 2002b: 57).

As noted earlier, the disagreement can be singled out when we regard it as a disagreement on their views of language (Bartelson 2007: 102). However, Skinner’s views of language are rather ambiguous since he claims not to support a

⁹ As pointed out by Bartelson (2007: 106), even Skinner admits that perennial questions exist if they are “sufficiently abstractly framed.”

theory of language¹⁰. Nonetheless, his methods imply that language needs to “be regarded as autonomous from, and in some instances also actively involved in the constitution of, sociopolitical reality” (Bartelson 2007: 105). In this sense, the meaning of concepts draws from their actual usage in a particular given context, which also entails that “conceptual meaning will vary between different contexts, with little or no continuity across time and space” (Bartelson 2007: 106). The result is this view of conceptual meaning implies the rejection of the existence of real timeless inquiries in the study of political philosophy. In other words, the mere existence of philosophical inquiry is questioned, let alone political philosophy, since this approach converts philosophical questions into historical ones.

Strauss and Skinner represent the most influential battle between historians and philosophers. On the one hand, Strauss argues that political philosophy should be concerned with the awareness of fundamental political problems. On the other hand, Skinner advocates for awareness of historically conditioned political problems. To illustrate, the disagreement comes down to: should Hobbes and Kant, for example, be read “as propagandists or seekers of the political Good and Right”? (Ward 2009: 250).

Several decades have passed since Quentin Skinner accused Leo Strauss of being the leader of the “anachronistic mythologies” overtaking the field of the history of ideas. Skinner’s reply to his critics is, one might say, even convincing. There, he addresses the criticism directed to his denial of the existence of perennial questions or fundamental problems in political thought by admitting to have gone too far in denying the continuities of philosophical thinking, especially reflected in the usage of several key concepts and styles of argument (Skinner 1988: 283). However, Skinner (1988: 283) argues that “emphasizing such continuities is hardly the same as establishing their perennial status.” The reason for his nominalism is, Skinner argues, that it is an obvious confusion to suppose “that there is any one question to which these various thinkers are all addressing themselves” (Skinner 1988: 283). There is only continuity in argumentation that is still conditioned to a historical context, which only acquires meaning by looking at the intentions of the author in uttering the argument itself. As such, Skinner sustains that “concepts are tools,” and hence to understand a concept we need to appeal to its “illocutory force.”

This is why, in spite of the long continuities that have undoubtedly marked our inherited patterns of thought, I remain unrepentant in my belief that there can be no histories of concepts as such; *there can only be histories of their uses in arguments* [my italics] (Skinner 1988: 283).

In contrast, Strauss argues that Socrates understood ideas as visions of the natural articulation of the whole (Strauss 1953: 125). Ideas pointed to answer to the

¹⁰ Skinner designed his methods based on “the theory of speech-acts” of John L. Austin. Skinner (1988: 262) argues that this is not a hypothesis about language, but rather a description of “a dimension and hence a resource of language.” However, this theory is formulated based on an assumption of conceptual meaning.

question “what is the nature of a thing?” In this sense, ideas refer to the “shape” or “form” or “character” of the thing in relation to the whole. Now, these visions can be accurate and cannot be accurate. Strauss, arguing along the lines of Hume,¹¹ holds that “our ideas derive from ‘impressions’ – from what we may call first-hand experience” (Strauss 1959: 74). First-hand experiences provide, one might say, the first vision of the natural articulation of a part of the whole. These ideas need to be clarified according to their source, namely they need to be traced in order to tell apart what elements are true to the first-hand experience (Strauss 1959: 74). But there are ideas that are not so true to the articulation of the whole, and hence they are not comprehensive ideas of a part of the whole. Then, all ideas are not related in the same way to the first-hand experience:

Ideas which are derived directly from impressions can be clarified without any resource to history; but ideas which have emerged owing to a specific transformation of more elementary ideas cannot be clarified but by means of the history of ideas (Strauss 1959: 74).

More explicitly, Strauss discriminates between types of concepts, arguing that not all concepts are the same and hence cannot be traced in the same way. Strauss sustains that modern political philosophy emerges especially from the modification and transformation of, “and even in opposition to, an earlier political philosophy” (Strauss 1959: 75). For this reason, modern political philosophy and its fundamental concepts need to be elucidated by an accurate understanding of this earlier philosophy, particularly classical philosophy, in order to fully understand the evolution of this transformation and the reasons behind it. This is the first task of the political philosopher: to replace opinions about concepts by knowledge about them.

Its first task [of political philosophy] consists therefore in making fully explicit our political ideas, so they can be subject to critical analysis [...] This means that the clarification of our political ideas insensibly changes into and becomes indistinguishable from the history of political ideas. To this extent the philosophic effort and the historical effort have become completely fused (Strauss 1959: 73).

In the light of this, Skinner and Strauss may fundamentally differ in their take on the existence of problems that are coeval with human thought, but they also constitute a common front against scholars who fail to acknowledge “the philosophic importance of acquiring an accurate understanding of history” (Major 2005: 481). Most significantly, the key element in this agreement I wish to highlight is that a historical understanding concerns self-understanding (Major 2005: 485). Whether Skinner is against “fundamental truths” or not, his philosophical point suggests that the study of the history of ideas yields a “general truth” about ourselves (Major 2005: 482). Human thought is limited in its capacity to distinguish between contingencies and what is necessary as we are governed by opinions and misconceptions (Skinner 1969: 53; Strauss 1952: 22).

¹¹ Strauss calls attention to Hume as he sees his terminology convenient to advance his ideas of conceptual meaning. This does not entail that what Hume argued is exactly the same as what Strauss is advancing.

With respect to Skinner's allegation that Strauss was the leader proponent of "anachronistic mythologies," it remains highly suspicious to me why a scholar of the caliber of Skinner would not pick up on Strauss' philosophical stand, especially when it is highly debatable whether or not Strauss "points to timeless elements, universal ideas, dateless truths, fundamental truths, or even a morality that can be universally applied to political life willy-nilly" (Major 2005: 483).¹² Furthermore, this also would imply that Skinner does not understand the philosophical implications, that is the trans-historical implications, of his own philosophical point. In other words, when he assumes "the insolubility of history's recurring questions, Skinner closes access for himself and his readers to 'the key to self-awareness' he claims to hold – 'not merely a methodological fallacy, but something like a moral error'" (Q. Skinner cited in Major 2005: 484). This is a point that Strauss is very aware of: a philosophical stand should never close itself to insolubilities.

2.3. Taking a Stand on Conceptual Meaning

I must confess I have not yet clearly defined my position on this matter, but I do know that Skinner's understanding of conceptual meaning limits the possibilities of philosophical dialogue, which is exactly what I am trying to engage the reader with. I tend to agree with Strauss that ideas are acquired in different ways, and I will also assume that the nature of concepts is multiple. Strauss did not concretely elaborate about the nature of concepts since his views are not ontologically subjective. In addition, I believe Strauss did not hold a "platonic" understanding of concepts such as Platonism. It seems to me that it is not that Strauss believes in a parallel universe where concepts are essentially perfect and that we need to strive towards their discovery. But he is in actual fact appealing to a standard that it is necessary in order to judge ideas and opinions. Judgment cannot happen without a reference point. And from his view, which standard can be the best if not that of the view of the whole? The whole in Strauss remains as a hypothesis, as an idea in itself that can be disputed, but is still a necessary idea since without it, how do we make sense of all things without understanding them in a whole? "For the meaning of a part depends on the meaning of the whole" (Strauss 1953: 126). This is what he calls philosophy: striving from the total view.

What I want to rescue from Strauss is his view of political philosophy as the means to replace opinions by knowledge of the good political order through

¹² It is well-known that Strauss holds a classical approach to philosophy along the lines of Socrates and Plato; however, this approach must not be mistaken for Platonism. Indeed, Platonism might acknowledge a "theory of ideas" or a "theory of forms," arguably derive from the influence of Christianity. But this does not entail that Plato held one. I will not engage in a debate about what Plato really thought. But I want to emphasize that I would be really careful to just assume that Plato had a "theory of ideas" or "theory of forms." Strauss sustains that this is not the case at all. It is probably for this reason that Strauss could have been misunderstood as a proponent of universal concepts.

dialectics. As a matter of fact, I intend to rescue this view since Amartya Sen highlights in the preface of *Development as Freedom* that this work is not intended to guide people working for international organizations, policy makers, planners of national governments, but rather “it is a general work on development and the practical reasons underlying it, aimed *particularly at public discussion* [my italics]” (Sen 1999: xiii). Sen presents this book for “open deliberation and critical scrutiny” (Sen 1999: xiii-xiv). I believe that Sen has a similar approach to dialectics as Stauss does, particularly concerning the search for the best political order. As Sen, Strauss is appealing to a friendly dispute about the nature of those concepts that have arisen across time and space. Of course, this discussion needs to take a transcendental reference point in order for it to be sufficiently abstract as to grasp the “fundamental principles.” For this reason and for the sake of political philosophy, I have found it fruitful to ally with Jens Bartelson’s views. In his essay “Philosophy and History in the Study of Political Thought,” Bartelson advances in particular G. E. Moore’s reflections upon the nature of concepts. For Moore, concepts exist outside agents, that is, they are autonomous entities, which are only related to themselves (Bartelson 2007: 118).¹³ “In this case, conceptual meaning would derive from the relations between concepts, rather than from their relations to other entities” (Bartelson 2007: 118). The linguistic character of this understanding of conceptual meaning is that propositions themselves are formed by concepts (Bartelson 2007: 119). Everything is conceptually meditated and hence “there is nothing to be known but by means of concepts” (Bartelson 2007: 119). Thus, Moore (1899: 182) argues that it is necessary to regard the world as formed by concepts. Thus, concepts are “universal meanings” (Bartelson 2007: 120). In this sense, when we judge the falsehood or truth of a proposition, we refer to the “universal meaning” outside our subjectivity. A proposition is true depending on the existence of the connection among other concepts (Moore 1899: 179). If such connection does not exist, then the proposition is false. Hence, a judgment is false when the conjunction of concepts does not correspond to reality (Moore 1899: 180). As a result, concepts seen as “universal meanings” are incapable of change regardless of their capability of being internalized by subjects (Moore 1899: 179). Bartelson (2007: 120) explains that change in conceptual meaning across time and space occurs within a larger system of concepts: a *language*. In this sense, following Saussure, Bartelson argues that concepts remain autonomous, but their meaning is mutable.

From this dual emphasis on conceptual autonomy and the mutability of conceptual meaning would follow that indeed is possible to have it both ways [...] We would then be free to raise philosophical questions about the proper meaning of a given concept in a given context, while readily admitting that his meaning is nothing but the outcome of prior changes in the relation between this concept and others within different contexts (Bartelson 2007: 120)

¹³ This idea is not at odds with Strauss understanding of a thing, since a thing only makes sense in relation to other things. But maybe Strauss goes much further as to state that a thing not only makes sense in relation to other things, but in relation to the totality of things.

This understanding of conceptual meaning not only allows the following of Strauss' suggestion that modern political philosophy derives from the transformation and modification of concepts, but it also leaves sufficient room for transcendental abstraction based on passed human experience, that allows the judgment of concepts from the "highest perspective" in order to assess and criticize old and current practices, especially in political affairs. Furthermore, this understanding of conceptual meaning also opens the possibility for dialogue between historians and philosophers, including those scholars such as Koselleck and Foucault who doubt the likelihood of hermeneutics, arguing against the idea that conceptual meaning derives from the consciousness of agents. Regarding concepts as autonomous and as capable of being internalized and transformed allows us to apply a multiplicity of methods. Put simply, this approach permits for different levels of analysis such as contextual history, Skinner's historiography, etymology as well as going beyond language to higher degrees of abstraction where it is possible to speak of perennial questions or fundamental principles. In this sense, philosophers such as Amartya Sen will not necessarily be regarded as idealists, but they can be regarded as people who speak of "truth," namely people that seek to provide a comprehensive view of the issue concerned – in this case freedom, since their normative statements are based on fundamental principles capable of transcending history and language.

3. Methodology

Bartelson's views of concepts, that is regarding concepts as autonomous entities as well as having mutable meanings, permits for different levels of analysis that allows us to apply a multiplicity of methods. The method I will employ the most is conceptual history. I will trace the notion of freedom drawing from the theoretical framework, namely I will try to draw from Strauss' hermeneutics. Following Strauss' hermeneutics, every notion of freedom is an idea. Hence, as ideas, none of them can be the one true view of freedom. Following this reasoning, we need to remain highly suspicious of thinkers and scholars who absolutely define their own understanding of freedom as to be the "only" or the "real" idea. However, Strauss also suggests that these ideas, even though are not the one idea, they are nonetheless visions of it containing elements of "truth." By analyzing these ideas, it is possible to elucidate the "perennial elements" and develop an idea closer to the one idea – one of higher abstraction. Again, it must be stressed that the development of this idea can only bring us closer to the understanding of other ideas in the light of the whole, but this idea cannot be definitive and should be disputed and criticized since it is not the total view. The total view implies all notions of freedoms across time and space and for obvious reasons this is an impossible task for this thesis. What is possible is to synthesize a "discourse" in the philosophical European tradition. According to Scharfstein (1998: 1), a tradition is "[a] chain of persons who relate their thought to that of their predecessors and in this way form a continuous transmission from one generation to the next [...] A tradition is by nature cumulative [...]" In accordance with Strauss, Scharfstein (1998: 1) argues that a tradition is philosophical *only* "to the extent that its members articulate it in the form of principles." In this sense, Scharfstein maintains that there are only three philosophical traditions in the world: the Indian, the Chinese, and the European. Though Sen might be influenced by the other two philosophical traditions, I believe that by summarizing the notions of freedom in the philosophical European tradition is enough to expose his philosophical stand as he claims universal validity within this tradition.¹⁴ Hence, I saw as inevitable to start the historical account by analyzing the Greeks since their influence in the European tradition has been greatly substantial.

¹⁴ Amartya Sen is an Indian scholar, but his education took place both in India and in Europe. Furthermore, we must be aware that the type of education he received in India was, one might say, mostly Westernized as he belonged to a privileged social stratus. In addition, as he claims universal validity and advances his claims within the European tradition, namely as a professor of Cambridge University, it is a safe assumption that drawing from this tradition is enough to expose his ethical stand.

3.1. Conceptual History

Conceptual history is an interdisciplinary methodology that deals with the historical meaning of concepts and terms (Koselleck 2002: 21-23). This field seeks to trace the evolution of paradigmatic notions and value systems across time and space. Conceptual history states that all history, including social history and political history, must be sensitive to historically contingent notions, concepts, ideas, values, and practices in their specific context over time and space. However, as pointed out by Koselleck (2002: 23), “[i]t does not follow from this [...] that [its] theoretical claim to generality could be posited as absolute or total.” Thus, conceptual history as a method is not opposed to Strauss’ hermeneutics. The main representatives in this field are the historians Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner. Nonetheless, conceptual history is practiced by historians and philosophers alike. There is not one way to apply conceptual history and hence practitioners borrow ideas from main representatives. I will borrow two generally accepted ideas and use another method that I see necessary for this study.

Given the interdisciplinary character of conceptual history, conceptual historians do not often concur on methodology. Nevertheless, it is a general agreement that concepts get their meaning from their usages in their corresponding historical context. A historical context has different dimensions. Methodologically, this entails that a given concept also has different dimensions to it. One has to look beyond the literal meaning of a concept and ponder into its relation and connection with other concepts, ideas, values, and practices. Hence, to understand a concept the researcher has to look at the different dimensions and their dynamics. This idea fits well with the notion of conceptual autonomy, in which it is possible to speak of the “real meaning” of a concept by grasping its interconnections in relation to other concepts over time and space. Thus, I will use this mode of contextualizing.

Another general agreement is that when analyzing value-laden concepts such as freedom, the researcher must pay attention to intentionality. This idea has been mainly advanced by Skinner, who argues that there is meaning in the action of the actual utterance (illocutory force), namely what a particular agent is doing in using such a term or concept (Tully 1988: 8; Wootton 1992: 377). Skinner’s method fits very well with the view of the mutability of conceptual meaning. Since the world is formed by concepts, then the use of concepts correspondingly changes the world. This reasoning not only explains conceptual change, but it shows its relation to changes in society. Thus, when studying the concept of freedom and the terms associated with it, I will also be looking at how different agents use the notion of freedom – the intentionality behind it – as to analyze how these usages impact social change or how they were a respond to or of it.

Finally, contextual history can also serve itself to etymological studies to map out the evolution of the semantics of a term. I will treat semantic changes as to be constitutive and the basis of current conceptual and linguistic understanding since I see it as a characteristic of the mutability of conceptual meaning. I find etymology useful as it enables me to measure the ranges of meaning of a given term in a given context with in a larger system of concepts: a language. Since I

have to deal with different periods in time, I will inevitably touch upon concepts not only across time and space, but as well across languages.¹⁵ Etymology is not only extremely helpful if one seeks to trace the evolution of the meaning of a term, but it also helps to trace the values attached to the term, and hence the values attached to a concept in a historical context. In this way, I will compare the range of values and meanings attached to terms as to be able to provide the grounds for higher levels of abstraction in which it is possible to find the “perennial elements” regarding the concept of freedom.

In summary, I am going to look at the context, the intentions, and the etymology of the different notions of freedom from Ancient Greece to the Western contemporary thought, specifically the Greeks, the Romans, the Medieval times, the Enlightenment, and recent influential thinkers such as Isaiah Berlin and Gerald MacCallum Jr. Given the length of this thesis, I will have to synthesize the findings as much as possible and be very selective as to what notions deserve to be described as well as what aspects of these notions. This selection is based on my interpretation of Sen as well as based on those notions that I believe need clarification.

3.2. Weaknesses of the Method

The first difficulty when studying history is gathering data. For obvious reasons, I will not work with primary sources as historians take years to study historical periods. Thus, I will use secondary sources – books and articles written by specialist historians – as evidence of past conditions. Nonetheless, these sources must be used with caution for they have limitations (Neuman 2006: 433). For one thing, there could be problems of inaccuracy regarding historical accounts. Another problem is that historians have already interpreted the data, hence one needs to be aware of how they have proceeded – which is not often specified in historical accounts. Methodologically, this entails that historians’ implicit theories and beliefs restrain the evidence (Neuman 2006: 434). In addition, as I need to recreate events and contexts into an intelligible picture, putting together the different sources can represent a problem since not all historians are consistent on the same grounds. Historians differ on how they approach the data and how they interpret it. Thus, reading the works of historians represent a problem since they do not present theory-free facts (Neuman 2006: 434). Therefore, it is challenging to put together a picture from secondary sources showing consistency.

One more weakness is that when analyzing secondary sources, historians are rarely transparent with their selection of data. In this sense, there is no option but to rely on the historian’s judgment, which needless to say, might be biased (Neuman 2006: 434). Moreover, as highlighted by Koselleck (2002: 23), conceptual history seeks to provide the total view, but this does not entail that it is

¹⁵ Note that a language is not static, which entails that, for example, twenty-first century English is different from that of the Medieval times. In this sense, etymology helps to appreciate the difference and how the values have evolved.

possible to write a “total history” or even to conceive it. Thus, historians often make conjectures. In addition, contingency is also a key element (Neuman 2006: 434). Historians rely on conjectures and contingency as they often seek to provide one single “story,” namely narrative history. The problem is that the organizing tool – time order or position in a sequence of events – does not alone denote theoretical or historical causality.¹⁶

Furthermore, since there is not one overarching procedure to apply the method, practitioners must rely on their judgment, depending on the term or concept. From my perspective, however, having to make judgment calls does not presuppose a weakness of the method, but a given condition of any type of study. While this method might not clearly set the path to follow, it certainly provides enough flexibility to provide a coherent picture for the reader since it is possible to interpret historians by keeping in mind who they are and to which school of thought they belong. I have mostly drawn from recognized personalities in the study of the notion of freedom as their studies are widely recognized to be reliable. In this respect, this study reduces the limitations of the method by relying on trustworthy sources that can be easily exposed.

Finally, as mentioned above, the way I chose to proceed was based on my theoretical framework. Hence, I do not intent to explore all notions of freedoms or go into every single detail of the accumulation of meaning and concepts that go around the notions of freedom. I merely intent to give an over view of the values associated with the notion of freedom. Historians tend to agree with respect to general values and practices of particular periods. In this sense, this thesis also diminishes constraints of the method by focusing on general agreements among reliable sources.

¹⁶ Temporal order is just one out of three criteria for establishing causality. A researcher needs to also find association and the elimination of plausible alternatives. See Neuman, Chapter 3.

4. Tracing the Notion of Freedom

4.1. Ancient Greece

If we search for a word that can elucidate ideas of freedom in relation to politics and society, the Greeks only had *eleutheria* (ἐλευθερία). The word derives from *eleutheros* (ελεύθερος), which can be contemporarily translated to “freeborn” or simply “free.” Even though to be born free carries political and socioeconomic implications for obvious reasons related to bondage and slavery, the term did not have a political connotation *per se*. *Eleutheros* bore rather a moralized meaning since it most probably found its origins in the Athenian oligarchy (Pitkin 1988: 533). The term was served to designate social status as well as the values and behavior attached to that status.

Eleutheria was explicitly used politically for the first time during the Greco-Persian Wars while the Greeks strived to express how the Persian ways threatened the distinctiveness of the Greek way of life. “This would include, by contrast with the Persian ways, lawful and impersonal rather than arbitrary and despotic rule, open and collegial public life (even if still restricted to a narrow elite) rather than sacred, inaccessible priest-king” (Pekin 1988: 533). Athens was by no means a modern democracy, but rather a polyarchy (*poly arkhe*: rule of many). Politics was an exclusive male venture. Full citizenship was restricted to Athenian male adults who had completed their military training as ephebes. In this sense, if we ignore the fact the women, slaves, freed slaves, foreigners and their children born in the city-state were not citizens, it can be argued that Athens was a direct democracy since the whole citizenry was involved in the decision-making process.

Eleutheria was later employed in the subsequent class struggles between the *hoi oligoi* (οἱ ὀλίγοι) and the *hoi polloi* (οἱ πολλοί), between the oligarchy and the rest of the citizenry (Petkin 1988: 533). *Eleutheria* was only used by the *hoi polloi* with the intention to extend their political demands, which included “direct and active participation in political life by all male adult citizens so the ‘the whole people’ governs itself” (Pekin 1988: 533). The *hoi polloi* sought to further the values already mentioned in contrast with the Persian ways. But, in addition, they called for “legal and political equality, including entitlement to vote on public decisions, to make proposals, to speak in assemblies. It implied rotation in office, short terms, accountability, equal access to office, and even selection by lot” (Pekin 1988: 533). Simply put, *eleutheria* meant direct rule by the citizenry.

Though it is easy to see the resemblance of the Greek ways of life with contemporary liberal democracies, these ideas differ from the current notions of democracy, justice, and equality. First, Athenian politics excluded more than half of the population. This is why it is sometimes relevant to make the distinction

between polyarchy and democracy. Second, citizens represented themselves. The Athenian polyarchy was not a representative democracy, but rather each citizen represented his own interests (Held 1987: 18). Finally, equality was advocated as a constitutional system and ethos among adult male citizens in political affairs.

Of course the evolution of *eleuderia* as a political notion does not stop there. Perhaps put in contrast with the Spartan ways, the term also articulated ideas of private and social freedom (Pitkin 1988: 533). Ancient Athenians repeatedly referred to Spartans as a militaristic state, in which citizens did not enjoy the same privileges as they did. For example, as noted in Thucydides' account of Pericles' funeral oration (2009, 2.37.1-2.37.2), Pericles stated that "the freedom we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes." Likewise, a few decades later, Plato called attention in the *Republic* to the spread of vices through tyrannical rule, namely that the vicious rule of the tyrant extends to his subjects making them little versions of him. It is important to observe that *eleutheria*, in the Greek sense of the world, had foremost a collective connotation used in relation to the city rather than the individual. It is the city that is free because its citizens are engaged in a shared way of life, namely the active practice of politics (Held 1987: 17).

However, the Greeks also had another word that came down to the individual: *autonomia* (αὐτονομία). *Autonomia* derives from *autonomos* (αὐτόνομος), which means "self" and "laws," to give yourself your own laws. This idea did not fully develop or spread in Ancient Greece until the arrival of the Macedonians, namely the Hellenistic age (Berlin 2002: 186). Before they were conquered, during the Hellenic age, the Greek citizens devoted immense amounts of their time to politics and other public affairs. The incorporation of Athens into the Macedonian Empire led to an end of the Athenian political life as they knew it. In essence what took place was the privatizing of a highly politicized life. The Athenian citizens lost control over their public affairs and became subjects of the empire. In other words, *eleuderia* ceased to be.

Moreover, the annexation of the Greek cities to the Macedonian empire meant that foreigners, who were subjects of the empire, were allowed to enter the city-states and settle if they wish to do so. For the first time, the Greeks had to cohabit with Medes, Persians, Egyptians, Hitites, and all of the outcasts of the empire (Poirier 2008). As a result, Athenians started to live more private lives and a tendency to live within one's home spread. This change of attitude can be observed in the change of the architecture (Poirier 2008). Whereas before households were small places to rest and eat, during the Macedonian Empire, houses were built bigger and more comfortable, often with inner courtyards to allow gatherings. Homes were seen as refuges, which were usually closed off to the street and with few or no windows opening onto public areas (Poirier 2008). All these political and social changes brought a high degree of anxiety among the Greeks. This is when the "philosophies of conduct," which ranked *autonomia* as the highest value of all, spread. I refer to "philosophies of conduct" to the way of life many Greeks followed after the Macedonian conquest. Philosophy, in ancient times, was not only about theorizing, but it rather referred to the practice of virtue.

Among these philosophers, we have the cynics, the stoics and the epicureans. These philosophies differed in many aspects, but all sought to “cure the soul” from anxiety and other “diseases” (Berlin 2002: 185). It is well known that these ideas found their origin in East-Asia and were around before the Greeks; however, they only found a place among the Greeks when their highly politicized society ceased to exist.

This is not to say that the Greeks did not conceive individual autonomy before the Hellenistic era; in fact, it can be argued that Socrates and other philosophers were deeply concerned with such matters. The point is that individuals were not seen in isolation of the city-state since the procedures in which the city-state’s laws were formulated were above all what made them free (*eleuderos*). Even Socrates, who was known to be a philosopher in the ancient understanding of the word, died respecting the laws of his city. Socrates clearly highlighted the tensions between civic virtue and virtue as self-realization and autonomy. But nonetheless, virtue was a value attached to both *eleuderia* and *autonomia*.

4.2. The Romans

In relation to notions of freedom, the word liberty derives from the Latin *liber*, meaning free. There were also other words such as *liberos* (free man) and its masculine plural, *liberi*, which meant offspring or children. This meaning might be more related to *eleutheros*, which served to designate people not born under slavery. In fact, most etymologists consider “the origins of Latin *liber* as closely paralleling those of Greek *eleutheria*, and they derive the latter, too, from Venetic **leudheros*” (Petkin 1988: 529). This is reasonable in part because the wholly developed ranges of meaning of the Latin and Greek word families are closely parallel (Petkin 1988: 529).¹⁷

Unlike *eleutheria*, much less is known about the early meaning of the word *libertas* (freedom or liberty). It obviously derives from *liber*, but as far as the earliest political connotation of the word goes, it is not possible to know due to the lack of early works (Petkin 1988: 534). However, if we look at the Roman society in contrast with the Athenian, the Roman nobility was by far more powerful. The constant threat of war or warfare itself made the Roman Empire more disciplined and respectful of social strata. In other words, the Roman aristocracy was more ready to compromise in contrast with the Athenian. Moreover, the expansion of the Roman Empire provided the aristocracy with enough wealth to facilitate cooperation. In this sense, political struggles in Rome were not about “power distribution” or direct rule by the citizenry, but rather it was about preventing abuse of power. In light of this, *libertas* “had more to do with the protection against abuse of power than with access to power itself” (Petkin 1988: 534). Put differently, in contrast with the Athenians, the Romans were subjects (not citizens) of an empire, in which the emperor was even in occasions considered

¹⁷ Note that the same applies for the range of meanings of the Anglo-Saxon ancestor of the “free-” family, *frēo*. See below section 4.3.

divine. They were more concerned with lawful rule instead of having access to power. Thus, *libertas* meant lawful government and perhaps institutionalized private security for the plebs. Hence, *libertas* was passive and defensive since the aristocrats, let alone the plebs, were not concerned with direct democracy. Therefore, *libertas* had a negative connotation of freedom in comparison with *eleutheria*.¹⁸

Interesting events developed during the Roman Empire. First, the Roman aristocracy was, just like the Greek after the Macedonian conquest, concerned with the practice of Stoicism and Epicureanism. Cicero and Marcus Aurelius were, for example, highly influenced by these philosophies. During this time, the idea of individual freedom continued to move around notions of *autonomia* and *arete* – ἀρετή (virtue). It is worthy to note here that the ancients, Greeks and Romans, believed human nature was imperfect and prone to vice (the opposite of virtue). Human nature was incomplete, always yearning for wholeness and immortality (Dihle 1982: 52). In that intense human yearning, the flawed nature of man could make him a slave of pleasures, vices, and anxiety. Thus, *autonomia* and virtue were regarded as the cure for those illnesses. A very important note here is that the ancients had no notion of will, let alone “free will,” since whatever was desired was by nature not rational (Dihle 1982: 68). Desires were part of the “lower self,” the punishment of the gods, out of human control. In other words, *eros* is, for example, not rational nor it could be made rational. They thought whatever the heart desires is not for us to decide. If we put some thought into this idea, it is only sensible to accept that sometimes what we want is not rationally intelligible, but we cannot help to want it. The ancients would not have accepted the idea of “free will,” but perhaps, the ancients understood “free choice” – the ability to make a rational decision. Since they regarded human beings not as mere animals for they have higher callings – part of the “higher self,” the rational self –, they just needed to practice, to train their desires towards virtue or to learn not to desire (Dihle 1982: 55). “Philosophies of conduct” would put priority on this last point. Dominating your desires and actions was mastering the “lower self” – that is having a degree of control over the will through intellectual cognition, but never full control. They viewed knowledge as a way of liberating themselves from vices and a way of empowerment. “Know thyself” meant to be aware of your individual inclinations to vice. But nonetheless, they did not think knowledge alone could do the trick. It was a question of awareness, practice, and predisposition (Dihle 1982: 60). As Dihle points out, during ancient times there was much debate concerning human nature and human action. This debate later succumbed with the advancement of Christian philosophy, exactly when the notion of “free will” filled the gap. Put simply, the conception of will as “free will” developed later in medieval and modern ethical thought, in which for the first time, the will was associated with the “rational self.”

¹⁸ The distinction of negative and positive freedom is mainly drawn from Isaiah Berlin’s work. Positive freedom is supposed to entail agency whereas negative freedom is supposed to entail absence of interference. See Chapter 5.

4.3. Medieval Times

The notion of free will opens a different view on human freedom. Man had no longer the need to make sense of human nature in dualistic terms – higher and lower selves. But rather man must comply with the will of the creator in terms of good and evil (Dihle 1982: 73). Since God was omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, there was no order cosmic that He could not change. This idea challenges human intellect and their capacity to reason. Reason was no longer being in harmony with the cosmos. Reason was the will of God and man is capable of shaping it and directing it towards God (Dihle 1982: 72). Freedom became a question of obedience and disobedience. And thus, the will became independent of awareness, practice, and predisposition. This notion of freedom was inherited from a Judeo-Christian tradition that spread with the conversion of first St. Paul and later the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, who made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. However, St. Paul's teachings, and those of his followers, never addressed directly the notion of "free will." It is widely accepted that the idea of "free will" was developed by St. Augustine (Dihle 1982: 123). "From St. Augustine reflections emerged the concept of a human will, prior to and independent of the act of intellectual cognition, yet fundamentally different from sensual and irrational emotion, by which man can give his reply to the inexplicable utterance of the divine will" (Dihle 1982: 127). Thus, St. Augustine superseded the conceptual system of Greco-Roman thought. St. Augustine even introduced an idea of collective will, much like in Rousseau's terms,¹⁹ but he made reference to the capacity of every human being to distinguish between good and evil, which preceded human reason (Dihle 1982: 129). St. Augustine's notion of freedom revolves around his conception of "free will," which was that of divine revelation.

Little is known about the origins of the word freedom, but most etymologists believe that when the word *frēo* met the Latin *liber*, their semantic range was extremely alike.

Both meant the opposite of slavery and, therefore, of various more abstract constraints; both carried some moralized status meanings, designating conduct or character appropriate to the masters; both referred to special privileges and exemptions granted to corporate bodies by a higher authority; and both were used in religious contexts for the capacity of choosing between good and evil (Petkin 1988: 536-7).

The word freedom derives from the Anglo-Saxon ancestor of the "free-" family – *frēo*, yet the word's origins, along with the Latin word *liber* (etymological ancestor of liberty) and its Greek counterpart *eleutheria*, is a controversial issue. Hanna Pitkin (1988: 529-30) points out that all these terms developed meaning that range from nobility, movement, the opposite of constraint, the opposite of tyrannical rule, and lawful self-government. But, there is not an agreement on which there was the first meaning. However, in the middle ages, the *liber-* family

¹⁹ See below section 4.4.2

was much more related to the Christian notion of “free will” and the capacity to choose sin over virtue. Indeed, the word “libertine” is an example. The *frē-* family did not carry this meaning, but its religious connotation was more related to grace rather than divine revelation. Moreover, the *frē-* family also became to mean without cost and it also developed a more concrete meaning of movement, including inanimate objects. The *liber-* family never developed meaning as such (Petkin 1988: 537).

After the collapse of the Roman Empire, there was an expected change in the sociopolitical economic system. Politically, the empire broke down into “kingdoms,” which opened the way to the feudal system. Thus, concerning politics, the medieval ancestors of the “free-” family did not make reference to ideas of access to power as *eleutheria* did or did not refer to lawful rule or institutionalized private security as *libertas* did. In a feudal political order, it meant immunities from interference by the jurisdictional overlords. In this sense, it is possible to deduce that the earliest meanings of freedom also have a negative connotation in comparison with *eleutheria*. Nevertheless, both family words (*liber-* and free-) eventually acquired such meanings more in line with *eleutheria* and *libertas* in the fifteenth century.

4.4. Modernity

We are often told that the Modern age represents an abrupt change in political thought. To a great extent, this is true. Approximately, since Machiavelli, political writings have been stained by ideas of control and manipulation. This is not to say that these notions were not there before, but the belief of bringing about ideal societies is strictly modern. Before modernity, most thinkers understood the human condition as limited in essence. One could have only limited control and was only able to manipulate nature, society, and people to a certain degree.²⁰ In other words, any notion of freedom in absolute terms was a condition that could only be achieved by a god.²¹ What took place at the eve of modernity in the West was the “demythologization” of the world. The planning and rationalization of nature and society became the norm. Gradually, most political philosophers started to believe that the world was conceivable through reason alone. Reason, science, and technology would enable man to achieve what before seemed impossible. This is what was on the air at time political philosophers wrote about freedom. Of course, some of them did not see reason at odds with God, but one should rely on science and empirical observation rather than the Bible or the Ancient thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle (Bay 1958: 27).

²⁰ St. Augustine’s writings such as the *City of God* clearly express the imperfection of human affairs.

²¹ I refer as absolute freedom to the idea that that who enjoys absolute freedom lacks any type of constrain and is self-realized. That would be the total antithesis of MacCallum’s notion of freedom. See below Chapter 6.

Among the earliest empiricists, we find, most notably, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and David Hume. Their most distinguished successors are, William Godwin, Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and his son, John Stuart Mill. They are also known as thinkers of the utilitarian tradition.

4.4.1. Empiricists and the Utilitarian Tradition

The concept of freedom as purely non-interference was first advanced by Hobbes. “Liberty, or Freedom signifieth (properly) the absence of Opposition” (Hobbes 1914: 110). For this reason, Hobbes is often regarded as the father of “negative freedom.” This conceptualization of freedom as the absence of external constraints is shared by all thinkers of the empiricist and utilitarian tradition.

It is important to note that Hobbes’ views on human nature were pessimistic as he regarded man in the state of nature as in the state of “war.” For Hobbes, the state of nature is one in which men are free to fight each other without restriction. In the state of nature, people do not have any sort of restraint – they are totally free to act as they wish. Hobbes sensed this state as absolutely undesirable because, given that everyone is “equally free” to act as one pleases, it entailed living in a constant state of fear of harm by others. This is why a Leviathan is needed to maintain social order. Following this reasoning, man is freer under an authoritarian rule than in the state of nature. He dreaded anarchy and so he “pictured every political criticism as the first step towards sedition and civil war, and he advocated stern suppression of any such tendencies” (Bay 1958: 28). Hobbes sought to maintain the status-quo in order to maintain social security; for he upheld security as the highest value of all: “all the duties of rulers are contained in this one sentence, *the safety of the people is the supreme law*” (Hobbes 1914: 166). One might be inclined to think that Hobbes was merely referring to physical security, namely security from war and physical harm. However, he had a much wider understanding of security: “But by safety here, is not meant a bare Preservation but also all other contentments of life, which every man by Lawful Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Commonwealth, shall acquire to himself” (Hobbes 1914: 178). Hobbes does not elaborate further in this understanding, and thus it is left for interpretation. As Bay (1958: 29) points out, it seems that Hobbes uses the term “security” as an umbrella term for all things he holds most dear – just as many people do when using the word “freedom.”

Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* was a reply to Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, which basically posted the following question: “why would people want to harm one another?” Locke had a much more optimistic view on human nature. He envisioned man in the state of nature as good as long as they are provided with the maximum amount of civil liberty. Locke argued that human beings had natural rights provided by God in the state of nature. For this reason, he is known as the forerunner of the human rights idea and his work has been highly influential in the West, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world (Bay 1958: 29). In contrast with Hobbes, Locke did not conceive the state of nature as lawless, but rather man had “only the law of Nature for his rule” (Locke 1924: 127). Nonetheless, Locke

acknowledged that man was presented with the following difficulties: “the lack of written and generally accepted law; the lack of generally recognized and impartial judge to apply the law; and the absence of an authorized police power to force it” (Bay 1958: 29). Consequently, man created social contracts, which was limited to address the latter difficulties and nothing else. Thus, man gave up their natural liberty for the utmost amount of civil liberty they could enjoy. Through social contract, man bestowed their natural liberty onto the hands of society in order to protect his property (Locke 1924: 205-206). Property was a central concept for Locke and he also used it in a broad sense – it referred, too, to “lives, liberties, and states” (Locke 1924: 180). In this sense, the purpose of legislation was to protect property, which is the security Locke perceived as primordial. Security and freedom, therefore, were closely tied together.

The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the states of created beings, capable of laws, where there is no law there is no freedom. For liberty is to be free from restraint and violence from others, which cannot be where there is no law (Locke 1924: 143).

Furthermore, unlike Hobbes, Locke was greatly afraid of tyranny since this type of rule is arbitrary. The absence of law in a government jeopardizes both security and freedom. Thus, when the situation is intolerable, he recognized the right to revolution (Locke 1924: 195-196). Of course, this was limited for Protestants since Catholics and atheists did not recognize loyalty to their countries.

Hume had a more moderate position regarding human nature. He did not believe, like Locke, that man was intrinsically good. But he did not either believe the state of nature to be that of war. Hume regarded morality and justice as “the outcome of the practical experience of mankind,” and he thought the success of any moral convention was due to its capacity of maximum social utility (Bay 1958: 33). Moreover, Hume, just like Hobbes, perceived security and freedom to be opposites, but he also understood both to be basic political values. He believed that a balance needed to be achieved since neither of them could prevail (Hume 1951: 156). In his early writings, Hume was much in line with Locke regarding tyranny and the right to revolt. He upheld freedom higher than security. Nonetheless, later in the *Essays*, his perception on this issue changed similar with that of Hobbes’. Instead of fearing tyranny, he regarded anarchy as the worst situation. “In reality, there is not a more terrible event than a total dissolution of government” (Hume 1951: 200).

In terms of enlarging freedom, Godwin was the most radical of the utilitarian tradition. In *Political Justice*, he argues that human nature can change and it can be perfected through the search for truth (Godwin 1926: I 248-249; II 27). In this venture, the gradual reduction of government will make individuals freer and socially responsible. Godwin conceived human beings as primordially rational beings and, like Locke before him and John Stuart Mill after him, he argued that tyrannies or paternalistic societies created more harm since they prevented human beings from freely developing towards perfection.

Jeremy Bentham and James Mill reduced the issue of freedom to an instrumental status, namely they subordinated the value of freedom, and security,

to the ultimate goal: the greatest happiness for the greatest number. In this sense, both Bentham and Mill were “orthodox utilitarians” (Bay 1958: 36). For both of them, happiness was the only fundamental and intrinsic value, which also serve as the only criterion to assess the utility of institutions and laws in promoting general happiness. Thus, man’s only duty to society is to endorse general happiness. Concerning human nature, they conceived it as essentially rational, fundamentally individualistic, and primarily selfish. In their thinking, there is a strict separation between the private and the public. The orthodox utilitarian ideology firmly believed that it was possible to bring about a “Kingdom of Happiness” on Earth through the implementation of comprehensible principles (Bay 1958: 38). Regarding freedom, they understood freedom of the press as essential for good government and, much like Locke, people have the right to revolt. Though they advocated democracy, they did not perceive political power, namely access to power, as an essential component towards the promotion of general happiness.

While John Stuart Mill also understood happiness to be the main value of all, he deviated from Bentham and his father by conceding to the critics of utilitarianism that there were other intrinsic values, especially individual freedom (Bay 1958: 39). In his writings on liberty, he advocates for democracy, but he also seeks to warn about the tyranny of the majority, particular when threatening individual freedom. He saw a real danger on democratic tyranny. He advocated for the value of individuality, diversity, and tolerance. In other words, he identified security also in individual terms (Bay 1958: 47). Moreover, he was not consistent in his view of human nature. He would state sometimes that men were not predominantly selfish and individualistic, but he was not very clear on how the social state was natural to men. Nonetheless, John Stuart Mill was probably the first in the Modern era to speak of social freedom and bring back ideas of psychological freedom (Bay 1958: 47).

4.4.2. The Idealists

Most thinkers that wrote in response to the utilitarian tradition are known as the idealists. These thinkers were, in contrast with the utilitarians, not concerned so much with the opportunity-concept and restrains, but rather they were troubled with the capacity of realizing goals. Among the most significant thinkers, we find Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emmanuel Kant, and Friedrich Hegel. I will confine this section to discuss only Rousseau for two reasons. First, it would be too much of an adventure to develop into the thought of the German thinkers, as they represent two extremely abstract and intricate pillars of thought. Second, Sen’s thought is – as we will see – concerned with individual freedom often outside the spectrum of the state whereas the idealists perceive a powerful state to be the lead authority to realize man’s potentiality. For example, for Hegel, “law, morality, the State, and they alone, are the positive reality and satisfaction of freedom. The caprice of the individual is not freedom” (Hegel 1953: 50). For these reasons, I believe that addressing solely Rouseasu is ample for understanding these thinkers.

Rousseau is known for being the ideological father of the French Revolution as much as Locke is known to be the one of the American Revolution. Regarding human nature, Rousseau conceived man in his natural state as companionate. Men were compassionate because compassion “is a disposition suitable to creatures so weak and subject to many evils” (Rousseau 1950: 224). In his idealized view of pre-civilized men, Rousseau identifies the invention of property as the origin of inequality among men and the starting point of government so as to regulate what natural law could not. In *The Social Contract*, just like Hobbes, he states the need for government in order to avoid “free-for-all fighting among men” (Bay 1958: 51). However, unlike Hobbes and his fellow followers, he regarded the invention of government – this social contract – as an instrument towards the realization of man’s complete “civil liberty.” Civil liberty is, in Rousseau’s view, a liberty qualitatively superior to any other that could exist, including that of his idealized state of nature. “We might, over and above all this, add, to what man acquires in the civil state, moral liberty, which alone makes him truly master of himself; for the mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty” (Rousseau 1950: 19). Thus, the laws and the social contract enlarge man’s freedom, and for this reason, Rousseau believes that “whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free” (Rousseau 1950: 18). The government, therefore, represents the general will, which he describes as not as the “will of all,” but rather the common interest. It can be argued that Rousseau was the first to advance ideas of authoritarian democracies. Many dictatorships have risen arguing to represent the “general will” in Rousseau’s terms.

5. Berlin's Two Concepts of Liberty

Regarding current theoretical insights on the history of the notion of freedom, it is probably Isaiah Berlin's work that is most influential. His most celebrated work "Two Concepts of Liberty" delivers the most famous disambiguation of negative and positive freedom. Berlin goes back and forth between different times in history pointing out the values held by two incommensurable concepts of freedom – negative and positive freedom. Berlin does not coin the terms positive and negative freedom, but he is probably the first to make a clear cut division between them throughout the European tradition. In exploring the notion of freedom, this distinction between negative and positive freedom can be traced back to Kant in the Enlightenment, but it is certainly Berlin who brings about the most popular distinction in the present academia. In fact, he is often charged with perpetuating the idea that only two types of freedom exist – positive and negative freedom. Any work regarding freedom published after Berlin's essay seems to refer to Berlin's main ideas, which has made him the most debated source in this area.

Berlin's main argument is that the two notions of freedom – negative and positive – are two different things with two different ends. In fact, he stresses that "both are ends in themselves" and that "these ends may clash irreconcilably" (Berlin 2002: 42). By making a distinction of both notions, he seeks to show that multiple and differing concepts show the plurality and incommensurability of human values. As such, Berlin calls for nuanced understanding of political terminology.²²

5.1 Negative Freedom

Berlin distinguishes the notion of negative freedom in particular association with Hobbes' idea of being free from constraints by others. If other people keep me from doing what otherwise I would do, then I can say I am unfree or I am being coerced. In this sense, being unfree or coerced does not involve every form of incapacity or inability. "If I say that I am unable to jump more than ten feet in the air, or I cannot read because I am blind, or cannot understand the darker pages of Hegel, it would be eccentric to say that I am to that degree enslaved or coerced" (Berlin : 169). Hence, coercion entails human interference. My freedom can only be obstructed by other human beings (Berlin 2002: 169). Correspondingly, we can only account for individual freedom and freedom can only be hindered by external forces. Berlin argues that it is from this notion that the idea of human rights and

²² For the values highlighted and singled out by Berlin, see Table 5.1 in Appendix 1.

economic freedom derives. For instance, regarding economic freedom, I think myself a victim of coercion because I believe that my incapability to be better off is due to the fact that other people have made arrangements that prevent me from enjoying a better life (Berlin 2002: 170). In light of this, “the wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom” (Berlin 2002: 170).

According to Berlin, this is the notion of freedom the classical English political philosophers spoke of and their disagreement rests upon how wide the area should be. In this tradition, law is seen as limiting individual freedom, but still regarded as necessary for the overall well-being of society. As such, the different views would differ depending on views of human nature. Furthermore, in this tradition, there is a sacred private sphere of human life in which the state or any other institution, community, or person cannot obstruct. This entails a strict separation between the private and the public.

What has been outlined is what Berlin identifies as “freedom *from*” (Berlin 2002: 174). Since freedom is to do what one wishes without human made restrictions, the central political question is “how far does government interfere with me?” Phrased differently, “what am I free to do or be?” As Berlin (2002: 177) highlights, “[f]reedom in this sense is not, at any rate logically, connected with democracy or self-government.” In other words, authoritarian regimes can provide a variety of things without actually providing them with access to political power. From this perspective, one can enjoy a wide area of individual liberty without necessarily living in a democratic state.

5.2. Positive Freedom

At the other side of the spectrum, positive freedom has to do with the desire of self-determination or being your own master (Berlin 2002: 178). In contrast with negative freedom, the positive freedom refers to having control over one’s own life. That is “freedom *to*.” Thus, the central political question is “who shall govern me?” (Berlin 2002: 177). This type of freedom is about being an agent or a doer – “deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon” (Berlin 2002: 178). Positive liberty is, Berlin argues, associated with notions of self-realization, self-perfection, self-government, sovereignty, recognition, equality, and justice in a harmonious whole. According to Berlin, this idea developed from the idea of a “higher” self identified with reason. This self is the “real” or “ideal” me elevated in the collective. It is the social “whole” – in which the individual is just an aspect – like a tribe, a race, a Church, a State which is identified as being the “true” self and by imposing its collective achieves its own, and therefore, their “higher” freedom (Berlin 2002: 179). In essence, Berlin argues that this type of liberty conceives individuals as an aspect of a collective humanity that can only attain freedom by responding to the “higher” calls of our human nature. Berlin points out that this kind of freedom has been the mother of ideologies such as communism and fascism, in which individual freedom is undermined over the freedom of the “whole.” The origins of this thinking might be found at the traditional self-emancipation of ascetics and quietists of stoics and Buddhists. The

evolution of this way of thinking, according to Berlin, led to identify the “higher” self with the critical and rational moments. “The only true method of attaining freedom, we are told, is by the use of critical reason, the understanding of what is necessary and what is contingent” (Berlin 2002: 187). In this sense, reason must govern us and we need to free ourselves of myths. Knowledge liberates. Laws must be formulated under the light of reason and knowledge. “A rational (or free) State would be a State governed by such laws as rational men would freely accept” (Berlin 2002: 191). The problem is that most people are not rational since they are slaves of myths and fears. Thus, some measures of coercion need to be taken to “liberate” these people. Freedom is not to do with what is irrational or wrong. To be free is to do what is right and rational even if this means to be coerced into it. Following this reasoning, just like children, irrational or ignorant people need to be “educated.” They need to be shown the path. This should be done by following what reason dictates. A truly rational plan “will allow for the full development of their ‘true’ nature, the realization of their capacities for rational decisions, for ‘making the best of themselves’ – as part of the realization of my own ‘true’ self” (Berlin 2002: 193). In a similar way, all values must be compatible – “more than this, they must fit into a single whole; for this is what is meant by calling them all rational and the universe harmonious” (Berlin 2002: 193).

Berlin disagrees fundamentally with the positive idea that all human values are commensurable. “To admit that the fulfillment of some of our ideals may in principle make the fulfillment of others impossible is to say that the notion of total human fulfillment is a formal contradiction, a metaphysical chimera” (Berlin 2002: 213). Indeed, Berlin argues that the idea that all goods should be compatible is an ancient holistic understanding of well-being that regards human essence as one, ignoring the plurality of human goals. Hence, he believes that individual freedom is a human goal among many other human goals – such as security, fraternity, happiness, virtue, and power – that does not necessarily rank higher than others (Berlin 2002: 207). He holds the idea that the act of choosing is usually held more dearly by people because it shows that there is no perfect plan that can bring about the harmony of human goals (Berlin 2002: 214). Nonetheless, Berlin goes further to state that individual freedom is, in fact, not a primary need because without adequate conditions for the use of freedom, it loses its value (Berlin 2002: 171). In other words, people who are too poor to enjoy freedom, have no use for it. In light of this, he upholds a more “negative” view of freedom.

6. One Concept of Freedom

As a response to Berlin's essay, Gerald C. MacCallum calls attention to the notion of freedom as a single triadic relation.²³ He argues that the distinction of positive and negative freedom on the basis of "freedom from" and "freedom to" does not "distinguish two genuinely different kinds of freedom; it can serve only to emphasize one or the other of two features of *every* case of the freedom of agents" (MacCallum 1967: 318). Thus, from this perspective, freedom is

always *of* something (an agent or agents), *from* something, *to* do, not do, become, or not become something; it is a triadic relation. Taking the format 'x is (is not) free from y to do (not do, become, not become) z,' x ranges over agents, y ranges over such 'preventing conditions' as constraints, restrictions, interferences, and barriers, and z ranges over actions or conditions of character or circumstance (MacCallum 1967: 314).

In other words, every case of freedom is both being free *from* something *to* be or do something. According to MacCallum, not regarding freedom as a single triadic relation is the root of the confusion between positive and negative freedom. He argues that the misunderstanding results from failure to comprehend fully the conditions under which the use of the concept of freedom is intelligible (MacCallum 1967: 314). In this sense, any discussion about freedom has to be framed by acknowledging freedom as a triadic relation. MacCallum points out that any controversy or disagreement about the notion of freedom is not concerned with the idea of freedom itself, but rather with the ranges of the variables *x*, *y*, and *z*. Making a distinction between "freedom from" and "freedom to" at most can only serve to emphasize one or more aspects of the triadic relation. From this angle, any person who attempts to make a division between negative and positive freedom on those basis "cannot be taken as having said anything both straightforward and sensible about two distinct kinds of freedom" (MacCallum 1967: 318). Furthermore, MacCallum argues, the bewilderment increases through idioms of freedom, which have the potential to portray the notion of freedom as dyadic since they usually overlook the triadic character of freedom by ignoring or making unclear either the agent(s), *x*, the preventing conditions, *y*, or the actions, *z*. In this sense, freedom needs to be understood as an umbrella term that incorporates three different interconnected aspects.

MacCallum's theory has been extremely influential in current discussions about the theory of freedom. In actual fact, it has become a widely accepted overarching formula "under which all intelligible locutions about freedom can be subsumed" (Skinner 2002a: 237). This is because MacCallum's theory is a meta-

²³ See Table 6.1. in Appendix 2.

theory, namely a theory about the theories of freedom. Several renowned scholars including Skinner and Charles Taylor agree that we need this formula as the highest level of abstraction to elucidate any notion of freedom. To illustrate, Charles Taylor in his essay “What’s Wrong with Negative Freedom,” outlines that as much as negative theories cannot be solely grounded on opportunities or freedom from restraints, positive theories cannot be solely grounded on the exercise of freedom (Taylor 1985: 360). Thus, Taylor also argues that both conditions apply to any concept of freedom.

I take this to be surprising since, if we can agree for reasons of logic and rationality, consistency and coherence, that freedom cannot but be a triadic relation, we are implicitly or explicitly recognizing that in higher levels of abstraction, it is possible to speak of “perennial conditions.” Then we can assume that through the ages, the discussion has been regarding the ranges of variables x , y , and z . This meta-theory is also in line with Bartelson’s view of concepts since it allows to philosophize about the proper conditions of freedom, while “readily admitting that his meaning is nothing but the outcome of prior changes in the relation between this concept and others within different contexts” (Bartelson 2007: 120). Then, this theory is very useful as it helps us to understand the different ranges the notion of freedom has accumulated and to acknowledge that there are several notions of freedom. In this sense, for example, Hannah Arendt who claimed that true freedom was participation in political affairs can be seen as advancing her normative take on freedom, but by no means, can she claim that her view is the “true” view of freedom.

It is worth mentioning is that given this overarching formula, a distinction between the terms liberty and freedom is not necessary. As we understand there can be several notions of freedom, the same applies for the notion of liberty. In other words, the reason why there is no clear distinction between liberty and freedom is because some of the ranges of the variables x , y , and z of liberty and freedom overlap to the point where we use them indistinctively, just as Berlin did. In this sense, criticizing Berlin or any other author for not making a distinction between terms and using them as synonyms is futile. Criticism should be directed to a coherent notion of freedom in which the values associated to the variables are made explicit.

In light of this theory, a crucial aspect of Berlin’s work that is important to keep in mind is that he highlights the extreme version of positive freedom as the state of achieved self-realization. Put simply, he highlights the antithesis of MacCallum’s meta-theory. “It is to speak of a condition in which someone has succeeded in becoming something. Freedom is not being viewed as absence of constraint of action; it is viewed as a pattern of action of a certain kind” (Skinner 2002a: 241-242). Freedom is then equated to the variable z while the variable y is rendered not to be part of the condition of freedom. In this sense, Berlin is able to pinpoint that any utopia such as communism breaks with the logic of the one notion of freedom as a triadic relation, which entails that it can be hardly regarded as liberating. From this also follows that the extreme version of negative freedom also breaks with the logic of MacCallum’s theory. In this antithesis, it is the variable y that is regarded as freedom and the variable z is left out as not being

constitutive of freedom. Total anarchy is possibly the best example of this antithesis. I assume this is the kind of extreme liberty that Hobbes so much dreaded and from this perspective it is understandable why a Leviathan will be preferable to total lawlessness. In this respect, although it might seem redundant, I want to emphasize that variable *y* needs to be regarded as a constitutive condition of any notion of freedom. MacCallum (1967: 328) argues that it is easy to assume that variable *x* could be “free *simpliciter* only if there were no interference;” however, such settings are absurd to consider. A person or a group of people cannot be free just like that as they do not exist in a vacuum and hence, any notion of freedom implicitly or explicitly entails some sort of preventing conditions. Furthermore, preventing conditions cannot be simplistically regarded as limiting freedom. In fact, MacCallum (1967: 331) states that there are preventing conditions which can be regarded as liberating as they open the door to other actions. “But, quite obviously, there is also something that he [variable *x*] is *prima facie* not free to do; otherwise there would be no point in declaring that he [variable *x*] was being made free *by means of* restraint” (MacCallum 1967: 332).

Furthermore, it is quite common to put the ranges of variable *y* together in a monolithic package in opposition to the desirable outcome (variable *z*). For example, the idiom “freedom from unemployment” entails that the desirable outcome is employment opportunities. As such, we tend to see a dichotomy such as employment vs. unemployment since variable *y* directly affects variable *z*, as it is the determinant factor of whether the desirable outcome is possible or not. Creating a dichotomy is only a problem when unemployment is regarded as the preventing condition, which is not the case. The barriers here are in actual fact the political, social, and economic conditions of the given context. Preventing conditions may also include non-human made restrictions such as natural catastrophes. In this sense, “[t]he only question is whether the difficulties can be removed by human arrangements, and at what cost” (MacCallum 1967: 326).

Finally, one of the most important things to distinguish from this meta-theory is that the triadic relation is value-neutral. It does not follow from this that the exercise of freedom is also value-neutral. In fact, the exercise of freedom is value-driven. But the values do not derive from the condition of freedom. Therefore, we cannot speak of freedom being good or bad if we do not single out the motivations and values that decide the exercise of freedom. Moreover, we can appreciate here how complex human action is because, for example, the values driving the exercise of freedom can be wrongly motivated, but the outcomes can be desirable. This condition of freedom – the evaluation of its worth – highlights the tensions between the means and ends and the wide grey area in which these two interact.

7. Sen's Notion of Freedom

In order to discuss freedom, Amartya Sen argues that “it is very important to see freedom in a sufficiently broad way” (Sen 1999: 17). This is because freedom is an innately diverse notion (Sen 1999: 298). Without hesitation, we can state that Sen regards freedom as a multi-layered notion or notions that has or have acquired meaning over time. However, Sen does not perceive this as an impediment to philosophize about the concept of freedom. In actual fact, Sen has universalist presumptions, in which he calls for a coherent framework for reasoned social assessment regardless of high degrees of diversity (Sen 1999: 253). This way of reasoning is parallel to MacCallum's call for one concept of freedom as it is necessary to have set conditions for intelligibly establishing a dialogue about the concept of freedom. Moreover, Sen's thought is particularly aligned with Ancient thought – that highlighted by Strauss – as he sees how parts relate to a larger whole, which illustrates the principle of unity underlying diversity.

The organizing principle that places all different bits and pieces into an integrated whole is the overarching concern with the process of enhancing individual freedoms and the social commitment to help to bring that about. That unity is important, but at the same time we cannot lose sight of the fact that freedom is an inherently diverse concept [...] This diversity is not, however, a matter of regret (Sen 1999: 297-298)

Development as Freedom is not a philosophical work as such. The audience Amartya Sen sought to reach was not a philosophical one. Rather, Sen sought to reach the common person, and hence the language and ideas are made accessible to all (Sen 1999: xiii). For that reason, we can only speculate about Sen's hermeneutics when drawing from this book. I would argue that Sen believes in a unifying principle as a given, but it can also be that he sees it as a necessary condition to elucidate social affairs, especially considering value-laden notions.²⁴ It would seem, particularly bearing in mind our historical context, that values are predominantly vulnerable when not advocating in a “universalist” framework. This assumption would explain why, for Sen, enhancing individual freedom as a social commitment is rooted in the unity of the whole.

²⁴ In other words, it could be also that Sen, just as Strauss, sees the necessity of the idea of the whole. However, this necessity does not need to overthrow the belief in a unifying principle. If anything, it can provide more concrete bases for such beliefs.

7.1. Individual Freedom

For Amartya Sen, freedom comes to rest on the individual. Thus, Sen states that “[t]he analysis of development presented in this book [*Development as Freedom*] treats the freedoms of individuals as the basic building blocks” (Sen 1999: 18). In Sen’s eyes, freedom is an ambiguous term that can only be fully grasped in terms of individual freedom, specifically looking at the real person, the material reality of it (Sen 1993: 33-35). According to Sen, freedom can be reflected in the person’s capability, which is provided by both processes and opportunities.²⁵

7.1.1 Capabilities

Capabilities are a central idea of Sen’s notion of freedom. Sen views capabilities as types of freedoms. In this sense, Sen’s language – the way in which he introduces his ideas – is the language of freedom (Sen 1999: 231). Sen argues that capabilities refer to what a person can do, that is “the ability to do this or that” such as being able to nourish yourself or finding a job (Sen 1983: 755). Likewise, capabilities also refer to the ability to be, namely “the various ‘functionings’ he or she can achieve”(Sen 1993: 30). Therefore, functionings embody elements of a state of a person, especially what she can manage to be or do (Sen 1993: 31). When we speak of capabilities, we refer to “the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve” and the choice the person desires to make (Sen 1993: 31). Then quality of life is evaluated according to the capability to accomplish a valuable function (Sen 1993: 31). “[O]r, less formally put, [capability is] the freedom to achieve various lifestyles” (Sen 1999: 75).

In the light of this, expanding capabilities is expanding freedom. However, this task is not a simple one. There are problems when observing functionings achievement of any kind, but, as noted by Sen, “some of the more basic and elementary ones are more amenable to direct observation, and frequently enough provide useful informational bases for antideprivation policies” (Sen 1999: 132). Thus, those functionings that are easier to pinpoint should serve as crucial normative information to address poverty. Sen recognizes that this view of capabilities has obvious connections with Aristotle’s emphasis on “flourishing and capacity” regarding quality of life (Sen 1999: 24). Likewise, Sen is also influenced by Adam Smith’s analysis of “necessities” and conditions of living (Sen 1999: 24). This influence can be best noted when analyzing another aspect of Sen’s take on freedom that is crucial for understanding his ethical stand.

²⁵ Sen makes emphasis on both processes and opportunities in an attempt to address a debate regarding what should come first on development practices: democratic processes or economic opportunities. Sen wants to overcome this dichotomy and seeks to see both – processes and opportunities – as constitutive parts of development.

7.1.2. Individual Agency

Sen understands individual freedom as a capability in which the person decides and takes responsibility of his or her own life. He calls this view of individual freedom, *individual agency*. An agent is “someone that acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well” (Sen 1999: 19). Then, taking in account agency is regarding individuals as reasonable beings capable of evaluating choices. However, this valuation process, according to Sen, goes beyond rational choice since individuals make decisions based not solely on preferences, but based on intrinsic values. From this perspective, agents are seen as responsible adults with the right to decision-making and action to impact their own lives. For Sen, fostering responsibility encourages individuals not only to watch their own behavior, but it also makes people relate to “the miseries that we see around us and that lie within our power to help remedy” (Sen 1999: 283). In this sense, responsibility

is not, of course, the only consideration that can claim our attention, but to deny the relevance of that general claim would be *to miss something central about our social existence*. It is not so much a matter of having exact rules about how precisely we ought to behave, as of *recognizing the relevance of our shared humanity* in making the choices we face [my italics] (Sen1999: 283).

Thus, individual agency becomes central to address deprivations (Sen 1999: xi). And since individual freedom – seen as individual agency – is strongly influenced by social forces, this means that the freedom of agency is limited and qualified by social, political, and economic arrangements (Sen 1999: xii). It is this limitation and qualification that Sen takes as to be the issue of development practices. In other words, freedom – individual reasoned agency – becomes the overarching objective of “development as freedom.”

7.2. What is Development as Freedom Then?

From what is described above, we now can be sure that “development as freedom” is not mainly concerned with economic growth, but with individual agency. As Sen quotes from the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else” (Aristotle cited in Sen 1999: 14). What we seek with the use of wealth is, according to Sen, to live the lives we have reason to value and this is where the importance of wealth rests. Therefore, when measuring development, we do not do it in terms of GNP or levels of industrialization; we do it in terms of individual agency. Poverty is accordingly a deprivation of basic capabilities, rather than merely low income (Sen 1999: 20). From this perspective, measuring development becomes an extremely complex task since not all individuals enjoy the same freedom within a society. Put differently, some

individuals are better off than others in all societies as they are all hierarchical. GNP or levels of industrialization tell us nothing about the relative character of individual agency, namely how these people in different stratus lack or do not lack freedom. In this sense, measuring individual agency is relative to the society in which each individual lives, namely we need to refer to poverty as absolute and relative deprivation respectively (Sen 1999: 22).

Furthermore, this understanding of freedom has two major implications. First, the difference between developed and developing countries based on levels of industrialization or GNP – as useful as it may be for other purposes or levels of analysis – does not reflect the degree of individual agency in any society. It can of course reflect economic circumstances such as a strong middle class in terms of purchasing power, but it tells us nothing about the absolute purchasing power of the poorest in a given society, let alone individual agency. Poverty then cannot be intelligibly identified in terms of GNP. As such, Sen argues that poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of capability deprivation and highlights that this “approach concentrates on deprivations that are *intrinsically* important (unlike low income, which is only *instrumentally* significant)” (Sen 1999: 87). Sen has sought to demonstrate this by alluding to the terrible conditions in which many African-Americans live in the U.S., supposedly the most developed country in the world (Sen 1999: 21-24). Then, the second implication is that “development as freedom” is not a goal limited for developing countries as it becomes disputable that developed countries have actually achieved to enforce substantial individual agency in all social stratus. As put by Bay (1958: 7), “[a] society is as free as its underdogs are.”

Following this reasoning then, it would be a mistake to take economic growth as the end of development (Sen 1999: 14). For wealth is only a means to an end – the end being the things we have reason to value, which Sen calls them substantive freedoms. Consequently, as Sen speaks the language of freedom, wealth is regarded an instrumental freedom. From this follows that the ends of development are substantive freedoms by the means of instrumental freedoms. “In this approach, expansion of freedom is viewed as both (1) the *primary end* and (2) the *principal means* of development” (Sen 1999: 36). Thus individual freedom becomes the means and the ends of development (Sen 1999: xii). Accordingly, “[t]he success of a society is to be evaluated, in this view, primarily by the substantive freedoms that members of a society enjoy” (Sen 1999: 18).

7.2.1 The Means of Development: Instrumental Freedoms

For obvious reasons, wealth is not the only instrumental freedom, for common wisdom tells us that a person can have all the wealth in the world and still lack fulfillment. Therefore, the identification of instrumental freedoms is crucial for achieving individual agency. It is this identification process that we can appreciate more the principle of unity that underlines Sen’s thought as he identifies instrumental freedoms “based on the recognition of their respective roles as well as their complementarities” (Sen 1999: 127). But as mentioned earlier, this unity

is a principle underlying diversity since “[d]epending on the country considered, the focus of a critique may vary, in the light of a particular experience in that country” (Sen 1999: 127). Nonetheless, regardless of diversity, Sen identifies five fundamental instrumental freedoms: Political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security.²⁶

While development analysis must, on the one hand, be concerned with objective and aims that make these instrumental freedoms consequentially important, it must also take note of the empirical linkages that tie the distinct types of freedom *together*, strengthening their joint importance (Sen 1999: 10).

It would be an easy mistake to presume that Sen does not draw a line in what instrumental freedoms are. Sen perceives instrumental freedoms as instrumental in the sense that they have a consequential effect of bringing about other freedoms. Sen’s emphasis on the “togetherness” of instrumental freedoms reflects that he is drawing from a specific view. The reason why his instrumental freedoms do not collide, if they actually do not as he argues, it is because they belong to a single notion of freedom, which entails the exclusion of other ideas associated with freedom understood more broadly. What the argument of “togetherness” entails is the existence of a common ground – a framework of analysis or a framework of reasoned assessment, as he puts it – in which these values interact and relate to one another.²⁷ I believe that Sen has a rather clear ranking of values, which some can be put to negotiation, whereas others are non-negotiable in essence. This further implies that if indeed there is a common ground and it is possible to view values incorporating each other – as to say coming from different perspectives to join a single one – then, some values that go against these fundamental instrumental freedoms might be erroneously held.²⁸

In addition, a quick look at the instrumental freedoms Sen’s singles out points directly to a specific way of government – that has variants, but still commonly known in practice as liberal democracy. Liberal democratic regimes are characterized by the rule of the people within a framework of individual rights. These rights might vary greatly from state to state, but they usually incorporate an interpretation of universal human rights. For the lack of agreement regarding the role of liberal democracies in the protection of these rights, Sen is careful enough to highlight that we should not limit ourselves to think of development as fostering universal human rights, but indeed “[t]he language of rights can supplement that of freedom” (Sen 1999: 231). Thus, Sen is trying to go beyond the notions of rights and this makes Sen’s perspective on democracy both empirical and normative. It is important to have this in mind since having a liberal democratic regime does not guarantee that all individuals within a society enjoy

²⁶ Of course, this is not to say that Sen does not conceive of these instrumental freedoms to be applied according to the context. As noted earlier, Sen is greatly aware of diversity. See Table 7.2.1 in Appendix 3 for a more detailed table on Sen’s instrumental freedoms.

²⁷ I would suggest that Sen would relate this to what he calls “our common humanity.”

²⁸ In this sense, values that disrupt the harmony of the unity or the “togetherness” of this notion of freedom can be regarded as misconceptions and not necessarily belonging to a different belief system.

substantial individual agency, as Sen has endlessly tried to show. Since individual agency is restricted by social, political, and economic arrangements, it is thus the implementation of the fundamental instrumental freedoms what guarantees individual agency. In these sense, for example, having a welfare state that provides universal health care and unemployment benefits promotes not only individual agency, but also individual responsibility (Sen 1999: 284). This is because “[t]here is a difference between ‘nannying’ an individual’s choices and creating more opportunity of choice and for substantive decisions for individuals who can then act responsibly on that basis” (Sen 1999: 284). Thus, the instrumental freedoms that Sen is invoking have not necessarily been already implemented in existing liberal democracies. For Sen, democracies provide the best regime for the implementation of instrumental freedom, but democratic regimes in themselves do not guarantee their implementation (Sen 1999: 155). I will develop on what democracies require to establish instrumental freedoms below.²⁹

7.2.2. The End of Development: Substantive Freedoms

From Sen’s perspective, instrumental freedoms contribute to the general capability of an individual. Thus, emphasis is made on the capability of individuals, and hence capabilities are substantive freedoms. Sen does not mention concretely what substantive freedoms are because that is for each individual in a specific society to decide. Substantive freedom can be enjoyed individually or collectively. In this way, Sen leaves open for each society the desirable combination of functionings they wish to pursue. Furthermore, there is not a clear cut destination between some instrumental freedoms and substantive freedoms. I would argue that substantive freedoms from Sen’s perspective are what the instrumental freedoms are supposed to bring about, in particularly justice and equality. I will elaborate below on Sen’s idea of a just and equal society.

7.3. Sen’s Ranking of Values

Through the synthesized review of the notion of freedom and the other values associated with it, we notice immediately that there is always a hierarchy or ranking of values involved. The notion of “development as freedom” is not an exception. We might be tempted to take for granted that for Sen freedom is the highest value of all. In following Skinner’s steps, I would be skeptical of such presumption. Sen might use the language of freedom, but we need to be aware of the reason behind it. As Sen is trying to reach common people, he might have been tempted to use the “language of the time.” Another reason can be that the language of freedom can incorporate other values or notions. I would be inclined

²⁹ See section 7.3.

to argue for the latter assumption. In line with MacCallum's meta-theory, Sen's notion of freedom does not hold a value *per se*. Freedom is a condition which is guided by values. Freedom is good when the values guiding freedom are good – and of course the opposite also applies. In other words, the opportunities that freedom can provide have to be positively grabbed since much depends on how freedom is exercised (Sen 1999: 155).

We must not fall for the 'high-minded sentimentality' of presuming that everyone is intensely moral and value-laden. Nor must we replace that unreal assumption by the equally unreal opposite assumption – what we can call 'low-minded sentimentality' (Sen 1999: 280).

Thus, Sen is totally aware that freedom gives the opportunity to act virtuously as much as it opens the opportunity to do the opposite. In fact, Sen highlights that this is a distinct feature of freedom (Sen 1999: 155). Following this reasoning, freedom has to be seen as a set of opportunities and the same applies to democracy.

Democracy has to be seen as creating a set of opportunities, and the use of these opportunities calls for analysis of a different kind, dealing with the practice of democratic and political rights [...] Democracy does not serve as an automatic remedy of ailments as quinine works to remedy malaria. The opportunity it opens up has to be positively grabbed in order to achieve the desired effect. This is, of course, a basic feature of freedoms in general – much depends on how freedoms are actually exercised (Sen 1999: 155).

This take on positive and negative action must not be taken to be a metaphysical hog-wash. But rather it is for this reason that development practices deal in essence with normative concerns. There is much debate around evaluation approaches, namely what should be the core of normative concern and what should be prioritized (Sen 1999: 85). As Charles Taylor pinpoints, "what the judgment turns on is some sense of what is significant for human life" (Taylor 1985: 363) This significance – what Sen calls "what people have reason to value" – is not metaphysical nonsense, but rather a concrete assumption that there are things more important than others. Taylor (1985: 363) argues that what is significant for human life or "what people have reason to value" is associated with the notion of self-realization and the contemporary world values freedom especially because it is expected to bring self-realization – a notion of the good.³⁰ The conception of the good has an extensive role in human behavior and Sen maintains that "to deny this would be amount not only to a departure from tradition of democratic thought, but also limiting our rationality" (Sen 1999: 272). Thus, discrimination of motives seems essential to freedom.

We experience our desires and purposes as qualitatively discriminated, as higher or lower, noble or base, integrated or fragmented, significant or trivial, good and bad. This means that we experience some of our desires and goals as intrinsically more significant than other (Taylor 1985: 365)

³⁰ It must be noted here that self-realization must be broadly understood as happiness, self-fulfillment, and self-determination. Nonetheless, this is usually a positive value.

Likewise, a central feature of Sen's work is that he considers *when* and *how* – one may say the conditions in which – freedom is desirable. For this reason, when Sen argues in favor of freedom, he speaks of justice, equality, rule of law, responsibility, prudence, and sympathy. Sen might argue that freedom is desirable in itself, but only when these other notions of justice, equality, rule of law, responsibility, prudence, and sympathy are seen in the perspective of freedom or seen as constitutive of freedom. Thus, Sen is well aware that freedom has to be guided by other values. And since freedom is a characteristic of democratic rule, democracy cannot properly function without virtue; for the goal is to make democracy work for the ordinary person.

7.3.1 Justice and Equality

If Sen uses the language of freedom to convey his message, we can assume that Sen understands freedom as the umbrella term for all the values he holds dear. As he departs from a specific view of freedom in which values are arranged harmonically, he states that justice and equality must be seen from the perspective of freedom (Sen 1999: 286). A freedom-centered perspective is, Sen argues, basically similar to the notion of “quality of life,” which also focuses on the way human life goes (Sen 1999: 24). Justice is to be seen in terms of individual freedom and its social correlates (Sen 1999: 18). This is basically an Aristotelian understanding of the human good in which justice is regarded as providing the means for the “flourishing capacity” of a person. Thus, “life in the sense of activity” is the basic block of normative analysis (Sen 1999: 73). Justice is being made free – free to flourish your individual capacity. As such, equality is being as free as the most privileged, namely having the same opportunities and means to flourish your capacity. And hence, equality should be measured in the distribution of substantive freedoms and capabilities (Sen 1999: 119). Put simply, equality is about equality of capabilities, which entails more than income distribution alone, such as unemployment benefits, education, health care, and so on. This is how Sen argues that justice and equality are central to the notion of freedom.

7.3.2. Sen and Critical Debate

Justice and equality are central values for directing the expansion of freedoms, but the judgment of what is just and what is equal, Sen argues, much depends on its informational basis since “conceptions of justice and property, which influence the specific uses that individuals make of their freedoms, depend on social associations” (Sen 1999: 31). Thus,

[e]ach evaluative approach can, to a great extent, be characterized by its informational basis: the information that is needed for making judgments using that approach and – no less important – the information that is ‘excluded’ from the direct evaluative role in that approach (Sen 1999: 56).

Sen is calling for a critical evaluative approach to social issues since they require judgment calls. In fact, he argues that “one of the main merits of this approach is the need to address these judgmental questions in an explicit way, rather than hiding them in some implicit framework” (Sen 1999: 75). In other words, Sen is calling for critical public debate as a constitutive part of “development as freedom.” Nonetheless, we should not miss the fact that Sen is trying to advance a “coherent framework of analysis for social assessment.” In this sense, Sen is making the argument that it is possible to produce such framework of analysis if we all were more informed – as having access to the same information and critical analysis of the same. “Indeed, through informational *broadening*, it is possible to have coherent and consistent criteria for social and economic assessment” (Sen 1999: 252). It must be noted though, that from Sen’s point of view, this common ground does not translate into “a unique social ordering.” In effect, it is diversity that forces individuals to find common ground. Sen disagrees with the argument that “given the heterogeneity of preferences and values that different people have, even in a given society, it is not possible to have a coherent framework for reasoned social assessment” (Sen 1999: 249). Sen underlines that “[p]artial agreements still separate out acceptable options (and weed out unacceptable ones), and a workable solution can be based on the contingent accepted of particular provisions, without demanding complete social unanimity” (Sen 1999: 253). More explicitly, Sen recognizes that there is no grand general formula that will solve social problems, in particular the problem of deprivations. From this perspective, all policies must be scrutinized, even economic policies and as such the market must submit itself to regulations. Hence, for Sen, “[t]here is no escape from the necessity of critical scrutiny” (Sen 1999: 126).

Since Sen is aware that well-being is a diverse notion and heterogenic, he acknowledges that well-being is crucially dependent “on a number of contingent circumstances, both personal and social” (Sen 1999: 70). Sen sees well-being or “quality of life” as diverse, heterogenic, multi-layered, dynamic, and socially dependent, thus he perceives it to be contextual. In this sense, evaluation processes ought to take place at different levels. When it is at the individual level, judgment requires individual reflection. However, when this judgment requires going beyond this level, namely when it is a social evaluation, there are different agents and values to be weighted and this is what has to be brought to discussion. Therefore,

in arriving at an ‘agreed’ range for *social evaluation* (for example, in social studies of poverty), there has to be some kind of a reasoned ‘consensus’ on weights, or at least on a range of weights. This is a ‘social choice’ exercise, and it requires public discussion and a democratic understanding and acceptance (Sen 1999: 78-79).

To further understand Sen’s thought, we must see critical public debate as a type of freedom. As a freedom, critical public debate is mediated in turn by values – on the way it is exercised. Nonetheless, this type of freedom is a peculiar one, as Sen claims, because while “[t]he exercise of freedom is mediated by values, [...] the values in turn are influenced by public discussions and social interactions, which are themselves influenced by participatory freedoms” (Sen 1999: 9). In this sense,

though freedom alone cannot do the trick – as it needs to be guided by other values –, without freedom there is no trick either. From this follows that, “[g]iven the role that public debates and discussions must have in the formation and utilization of our social values [...] basic civil rights and political freedoms are indispensable for the emergence of social values” (Sen 1999: 287). Thus, critical public discussion is an undeniably important requirement of good public policy (Sen 1999: 123). In essence, this understanding pinpoints again that it is only democratic regimes that can bring about “development as freedom.”

Furthermore, Sen is quite aware that we are not *tabula rasa* (blank slates) and given the diversity of our backgrounds, critical public discussion has the tendency to be extremely chaotic. Sen recognizes that,

[a] choice procedure that relies on a democratic search for agreement or a consensus can be extremely messy, and many technocrats [as opposed to democrats] are sufficiently disgusted by its messiness to pine for some wonderful formula that would simply give unready-made weights that are ‘just right.’ However, no such magic formula does, of course, exist, since the issue of weighting is one of valuation and judgment, and not one of some impersonal technology’ (Sen 1999: 79).

Magic formulas only underestimate the diversity of capabilities in question. It is for this reason that public discussion has also to be seen as an asset that forces people to make clear what the value judgments are and question them in order to reach consensus – and this is nothing but a democratic exercise (Sen 1999: 110). One can appreciate this exercise of discussion as a means against dogmatic thinking as it is supposed to elucidate judgments. This way of thinking has clear resemblances to that of Strauss, in which the point is to single out through dialectics where these values are coming from so as to make a decision about which values need to be preserved and which values need to be let go in order to achieve “development as freedom.” Again I want to emphasize that this evaluation of values is made in a given framework of analysis. This framework of analysis – the one that Sen seeks to introduce – presupposes that some beliefs, values, and judgment are erroneously held and the point of discussion is to excavate them so as to shed some light on them. It is my assumption that Sen’s thought regarding the way values interact and relate to one another is rooted to certain degree in an ancient understanding of well-being, which entails that all truly good things are linked to one another and cannot be incompatible with one another (Berlin 2002: 4, 193). Accordingly, intrinsic values interact and relate to one another complementary. I do not believe Sen would agree that they come together in a “perfect whole,” because the “togetherness” of these values is of a normative concern, which would not be there if social issues were not messy. Unlike Berlin, Sen does not see the tension arising from the incommensurability of human values. For Sen, it is a question of the human condition – in essence, the multiplicity and complexity of human existence.

7.3.3. Remark

“Development as freedom” can be best understood as an umbrella concept that encompasses other values in terms of freedom. But this encompassing entails that freedom is not ranked as the best value of all, but rather it highlights the interdependence and “togetherness” of other values, which in their conjunction aim to “flourish the capacity” of a person.

7.4. Ranges of x , y , and z in Sen’s Conceptualization

I have tried to argue so far that Sen’s view of freedom is in accordance with MacCallum’s theory of one concept of freedom since immediately after developing on Sen’s notion of freedom, we are able to appreciate how his notion is a triadic relation.³¹ First, Sen regards freedom as an exercise-concept in which the individual exerts freedom, but this exercise of freedom is acknowledged to be limited by social constraints. Thus, Sen does not differentiate between *freedom from* and *freedom to*. Freedom is a triadic relation. Likewise, when Sen expresses his ideas, variables y and z are seen as a dichotomy – freedoms vs. unfreedoms such as economic security vs. economic insecurity. There are freedoms because there are unfreedoms. In this sense, Sen follows the coherence of MacCallum’s argument. But unlike most notions of freedom, especially those discussed in this thesis, Sen’s notion seems to be drawn with particular awareness of MacCallum’s meta-theory. For this reason, in order to fully appreciate Sen’s notion of freedom, I saw as imperative to analyze it as a triadic relation.

To start with, Sen calls for a broad understanding of freedom, sufficiently enough to be universal (Sen 1999: 244). In other words, Sen advocates for a broader understanding in support of one overarching notion of freedom. Yet, at the same time, Sen states that “we cannot lose sight of the fact that freedom is an inherently diverse concept” (Sen 1999: 298). Hence, the disagreement he perceives takes place around the ranges of the variables.

While it may be nice to think that considering the relevant variables will automatically take different people to exactly the same conclusions on how to rank scenarios, the approach requires no such unanimity (Sen 1999: 34).

This is because,

[g]iven the heterogeneity of distinct components of freedom as well as the need to take note of different persons’ diverse freedoms, there will often be arguments that go in contrary directions (Sen 1999: 33).

While we need to balance out the weight of the variables according to the context (ideally done through critical discussion), this does not entail that Sen does not

³¹ See Figure 7.4.1. in Appendix 4

have a normative idea of where the variables should lie concerning social evaluations. Sen is very explicit often enough about his concept of freedom.

7.4.1. Agent or Agents (*x*)

At this point, it might be needless to say that Sen's emphasis on this variable is made on the individual. After all, "development as freedom" is concerned with individual agency. However, regarding freedom as individual agency does not mean overlooking social freedom or collective freedom, after all, individuals live in societies. In Sen's eyes, freedom is an ambiguous term that encompasses notions of public and personal goals, which at the same time can only be fully grasped in terms of individual freedom, specifically looking at the real person, the material reality of it (Sen 1993: 33-35).

As individuals live in societies, ideally in democratic societies, it is imperative for them to have political freedoms so as they can be considered agents that govern themselves. Thus, agents need to be citizens in the later *eleutheria* sense, which implies political participation, political equality, public discussions, and voting rights. While this understanding of agency implies that *all* individuals should be citizens, unlike *eleutheria*, I doubt Sen is advocating for direct ruling by the citizenry. Given our current demographics, this is implausible to take place. Rather I would suggest that Sen will argue for the highest degree of proportional representation and an actively engaged civil society. This is because, as it was for John Stuart Mill, individual freedom is a great concern for Sen, even in democratic societies. Furthermore, I doubt that Sen would regard – as Rousseau – forcing people to participate in politics as "setting them free." The same applies for the *eleuthera* notion, in which citizens were forced to participate through fear of penalty such as being fined. Thus, Sen remains much more individualistic than the Ancient Greek ideas of freedom and the idealist tradition since Sen's understanding of freedom goes beyond processes and opportunities since it takes into account other aspects of freedom that are not "public," meaning that it goes beyond the political sphere to look at a particular person with his or her personal objectives. I would maintain that his conceptualization of freedom also relates to the notion of *autonomia* in which a person can be his or her own prison, meaning freedom can be also restricted by the same person. One reason for my belief is that, for Sen, a full understanding of individual freedom requires going beyond capabilities and should address the person's goals (Sen 1993: 31). Though an agent cannot be seen in isolation of the society, it is an agent's individual freedom which is ranked higher. I believe that this ranking is based on the assumption that a society cannot be called free if the individuals in it are not agents.

7.4.2. Preventing Conditions (*y*)

When it comes to constraints, I believe Sen regards lawful rule as a type of freedom. Due to the fact that Sen acknowledges that not all individuals are

ethically driven, preventing abuse is regarded as an instrumental freedom. This can be especially appreciated through his idea of protective security as an instrumental freedom. Just like the Romans – and the Greeks –, Sen perceives that human beings can be prone to vice (regardless of the reason). Thus, Sen’s notion of freedom incorporates values of *liberetas*, in which the emphasis is made on preventing abuse of power. Hence, much in the lines of Locke, I would argue that Sen perceives some laws to enhance freedom instead of restraining it. Moreover, just like Ancient times, Sen regards the formulation, implementation, and enforcement of laws not to be a straightforward task (Sen 1999: 277). In addition, according to Sen, “there is also room for addressing the climate of norms and behavioral modes, in which imitation and a sense of ‘relative justice’ can play an important part” (Sen 1999: 278). In other words, fostering values such as responsibility, honesty, prudence, sympathy and trust can serve as stronger weapons against abuse. Along the lines of the Ancients, Sen notes that “Plato suggested in the *Laws* that a strong sense of duty would help to prevent corruption” (Sen 1999: 277). In this sense, individual responsibility translates (or should translate) into civic virtue or social virtue. This idea is primordial to the notion of good democratic governance, as the state of a democratic regime depends on civic virtue. But responsibility cannot happen without freedom, and therefore “[r]esponsibility *requires* freedom” (Sen 1999: 284). Following this reasoning then, Sen’s thought differs from the notion of *liberetas* in terms of the importance allotted to the access to power (political freedoms) – for Sen this is primordially important for the implementation of “development as freedom.” Thus, protective security cannot be implemented through authoritarian rule, and Sen – unlike Hobbes – would not regard authoritarian rule to be desirable in any circumstances, as this type of “security” would abolish something central about our social existence.

Economic freedoms – as economic facilities – are certainly rooted in a notion of freedom that developed in medieval times during the feudal system. The importance of property and immunities from interference by the jurisdictional overloads developed further into the Enlightenment Age, especially in the writings of Locke and Adam Smith. Nonetheless, Sen’s thought – although it incorporates notion from the empiricist and utilitarian tradition – implies the implementation of a welfare state that, for example, redistributes wealth and regulates the market. Economic freedoms can be – in many occasions from Sen’s perspective – guaranteed by the state as to maximize individual freedom. As such, Sen is similar to Godwin in the sense that he wanted to provide as much freedom as possible to individuals. However, Sen’s approach was radically different from Godwin’s. Godwin advocated for a gradual reduction of state intervention. Sen sees necessary that the state provides basic instrumental freedoms, including economic freedoms. Certainly, this responsibility does not limit only to the state.

The social commitment to individual freedom need not, of course, operate only through the state, but must also involve other institutions: political and social organizations, community-based arrangements, non-governmental agencies of various kinds, the media and other means of public understanding and communication, and the institutions that allow the functioning of markets and contractual relations (Sen 1999: 284).

Hence, “development as freedom” or Sen’s notion of freedom is a commitment that brings together all aspects and sectors of society. In other words, the public and private sector as well as the civil society should be involved in enhancing individual freedom.

7.4.3. Actions or Conditions of Character or Circumstance (z)

It is my belief that the supreme substantive freedom for Sen is an inclusive democratic society that provides the grounds and the atmosphere for individuals to be free. Thus, an inclusive democratic society is one that is just and equal in terms of individual freedom. Needless to say by now that for Sen justice and ethics are not – as Hume argues – an outcome of practical experience in maximizing social utility. As Sen notes, democratic processes are chaotic and messy. But the reason why we pursue this path is because this is the ethical thing to do as it provides each individual with the capacity to pursue a life he or she has reasoned to value. It is a choice. It is a way of life, that regardless of its difficulties, individuals hold dear and rank it as their priority. This way of life is, hence, “justified by the ethical importance of acknowledging that certain rights are appropriate entitlements of all human beings” (Sen 1999: 229).

Is Sen fostering liberal democracy? To a certain degree, he is. But he is not fostering just any kind of liberal democracy; in fact, it can be argued that the type of democracy he is advocating for does not exist in practice. Moreover, regardless of its innumerable faults, modern liberal democratic states have challenged, if not dismissed, the ancient idea that democratic rule is undesirable. Furthermore, as Sen constantly highlights, democratic rule does not entail ordering all societies equally since “[w]ays of life can be preserved if the society decides to do just that [...]” (Sen 1999: 241). After all, a truly inclusive democratic government should provide the individuals, communities, and groups with the means to pursue the lives they have reason to value. In this sense, if “pursuing the lives people have reason to value” sounds vague, this is only because functionings should reflect the diversity of individuals and societies.

8. Conclusion

By treating the conceptual meaning of the notion of freedom as both autonomous and mutual, I was able to apply conceptual history. This method was used by drawing from Strauss' hermeneutics since Amartya Sen claims to have universalist presumptions. In Strauss' definition, Amartya Sen is a political philosopher as he sees to reveal the best political order.³² As highlighted by Strauss and Scharfstein, philosophers search for "fundamental principles" underlying the diversity of the world, namely they look at the "permanence and changes it undergoes" (Scharfstein 1998: 56). The pursuit of this knowledge is not only about understanding or fulfilling a curiosity, but it is also, of course, for practical reasons – in a sense acquiring power. Whether the goal is to have power over nature, ourselves, or others, the aim is to influence – negatively or positively – the *status quo*. Sen's reasons are without a doubt unselfish. As a philosopher, he seeks to positively impact society towards a better life based on classical standards of justice, equality, and freedom. For Sen, the enhancement of freedoms is in essence the pursuit for the best social, political, and economic order. Thus, in this respect, "development as freedom" is not just the eradication of poverty, but the pursuit of the best order.

As the fundamental principle of a democracy is freedom, Sen's thought is "strictly" democratic or, put differently, Sen belongs to a democratic tradition. Thus, how can I compare Sen with the classics as it is well-known that they were no good democrats? Democracy – as advocated by Sen – presupposes the cultivation of certain specific values, especially social values. The classics perceived the cultivation of values – individual and social – to be the aim of human life. Hence, for the Ancients, virtue was the goal of the individual and social life. Even so, the classics berate democracy. In effect, Plato's *Republic* is the indictment of democracy par excellence. Yet,

[e]ven there [in the *Republic*], and precisely there, Plato makes it clear – by coordinating his arrangement of regimes with Hesiod's arrangement of the ages of the world – that democracy is, in a very important respect, equal to the best regime, which corresponds to Hesiod's golden age: since the principle of democracy is freedom, all human types can develop freely in a democracy, and hence in particular the best human type (Strauss 1959: 36).

The reason why the Ancients rejected democracy as the best way of government is not because they did not see its benefits, but because freedom as a goal is ambiguous. As highlighted by the classics, the Romans, Hobbes, Berlin, and

³² Note the Ancient understanding of politics is much broader than the current one. The classics saw all public affairs, including economic and social, to be political. The best political order encompasses a just political, social, and economic order.

MacCallum, freedom is freedom for wrong-doing as well as for good. Virtue – well-doing – appears usually solely through education, namely the formation of character. Education requires a predisposition not only from the parents, society, and the individual, but it requires a degree of wealth. Thus, the classics observed that education for all was not possible.³³ And hence, for the classics, democracy meant the ruling of the uneducated, which no sensible person would wish to live under. In this respect, it is not that the classics did not value freedom; they did and for that reason the aristocratic republic was perceived not only the most free – as pinpointed by Pericles –, but as the most conducive to virtue (Strauss 1959: 40). Now, the classics could have never been able to foresee the advancement of technology and the emergence of the modern democratic state. In this sense, as noted by Strauss, it is not that classical standards were wrong, but modern democracies have elicited that there are intrinsic reasons to reinterpret the ranking of the best types of regimes (Strauss 1959: 65-66). Following this reasoning, I believe that Sen's standards or values are not in essence different from the classics, and to a large degree he draws from their standards. Furthermore, it must be noted that this does not entail the triumph of democracy, as it has not been victorious everywhere and many countries still struggle to consolidate it. Democratic rule has many faults and, as observed by Sen, it all depends on how democracy is practiced. In most countries, if not all, democracies have not found the solution to the problem of education or the increasing indifference to public affairs. These problems hinder the very core of democratic practice: public discussion – the instrumental freedom Sen so highly ranks as one of the primary means to bring about a just and equal society. Democracy struggles to provide the grounds, especially in its initial stages, for democratic debate. Demagoguery, ideological thinking, and manipulation are – in a society that fosters freedom – extremely problematic. As explained before, Sen is not unaware of the downsides of democracy. If anything, it is for this reason that he strives to provide a framework of analysis in which the ongoing changes and the permanent principles can be discussed. In fact, it seems to me that his emphasis on public discussion also indicates his commitment to dialects as means to replace opinions by knowledge of the good political order. Hence, Sen's commitment to the power of dialogue is another marker of his philosophical endeavor.

Dialogue is only possible if the interlocutor has a real desire to the depths of his soul, and agrees to submit to the rational demands of the Logos. His act of faith must correspond to that of Socrates: 'It is because I am convinced of its truth that I am ready, with your help, to inquire into the nature of virtue' (Plato, *Meno*, 81e cited in Hadot 1995: 93).

³³ What constitutes education is a controversial issue now and it was also in Ancient times. The type of education I speak of is that viewed from the classical philosophical perspective, which entails critical thinking. Acquiring critical thinking implies having leisure time out of the worries of survival in order to shape your character. In this sense, the Greek philosophers were very aware that their regime was one of destitution, which meant that not everybody could enjoy of leisure time. The reason why citizens in Ancient Greece, particularly in Athens, enjoyed such a high degree of freedoms is because they did it at the expenses of an economic system based on bondage.

Indeed, the belief on dialogue is an act of faith in which good democrats engage. And as Sen rightly pinpoints, there is no escape from public discussion primarily because democracy is – as a way of life – based on *practice*. As a practice, we can only get better at it by doing it. And this is why public discussion – as messy as it is – can only be improved by being put into practice.

Furthermore, this study aimed to trace the historical debate about the concept of freedom through contextual history in the European tradition. But, I must highlight that Sen’s universalist presumptions expand beyond the Western world. According to Sen, the value of freedom – specifically his notion of freedom – is not solely confined to the European tradition. In other words, the European tradition is not the only one that prepares us for a freedom-based approach in order to understand social reality (Sen 1999: 240).

What we do find in the writings by particular Western classical authors (for example, Aristotle) is support for selected *components* of the comprehensive notion that makes up the contemporary idea of political liberty. But support for such components can be found in many writings in Asian traditions as well (Sen 1999: 233).

Along the lines of Strauss, Sen bases human experience to be cross-cultural by appealing to a common humanity. It for this reason that I am inclined to believe that Sen developed his notion of freedom with particular awareness and under MacCallum’s formula since this meta-theory provides coherent grounds to argue that all notions of freedom relate to a larger whole. It is the assumption of this principle of unity underlying diversity that allows Sen to argue that it is possible to read passed authors not only from the European tradition, but also from the Indian and Chinese traditions.

Finally, in the light of this, this study recommends further comparative research in the field of political philosophy. As noted by Scharfstein (1998: 7), a comparative historical study of the world’s philosophical traditions makes it easier to explore the possibility of arguments that are truly universal. Such a research is not as easy as it presupposes the comparison of concepts that might have experienced little or no exchange of ideas at all. It is my belief that a right hermeneutic approach – that is, one that is greatly attentive of the historical context and analyzes the findings in the right level of abstraction – can provide us with a more holistic view of universal values. In an increasingly globalized world, such studies become significantly important since they can serve to formulate global goals, which is exactly what Sen attempted to do in *Development as Freedom*.³⁴ For this reason, I believe that Sen’s work on freedom can highly benefit from further research on the concept of freedom across philosophical world traditions.

³⁴ Sen quotes different philosophers from both Indian and Chinese traditions in an attempt to refute the belief that “Asian values” oppose “Western values.” Sen argues that the presence of components that oppose freedom exist even within European tradition, and thus he claims that the argument that “Asian values” are fundamentally different is just looking at one side of the coin and being very selective as to what to highlight in each tradition (Sen 1999: 234).

9. Executive Summary

This thesis explores Amartya Sen's concept of freedom as it is presented as the overarching goal of all development practices. However, freedom as a goal is ambiguous and clouded by idioms of freedom that date back to the Ancient world. The purpose of this study then is to elucidate this concept by locating it in the historical debate about freedom. The debate addressed in this thesis belongs to the European tradition as Sen presents and develops his academic work within this tradition.

The research started with two preliminary assumptions. First, since Sen has universalist presumptions, Sen is taken to be – besides being an economist – a philosopher. The second assumption is that it is possible to study Sen's notion of freedom from a historically sound approach. For this reason, this thesis draws from Leo Strauss' hermeneutics since he is the most recent influential scholar taking the classical philosophical stand in the study of the history of political ideas. Leo Strauss was particularly chosen for this study because Sen mostly derives his work on capabilities and functionings from Aristotle's notion of "flourishing capacity." In this respect, it is assumed that Sen draws from classical standards of justice.

Following Strauss' hermeneutics, the notion of freedom is treated as a concept that can be clarified through the study of the history of ideas. In this sense, this thesis regards as imperative to locate the conceptual meaning of the concept of freedom. According to Strauss, there are different types of concepts and hence conceptual meaning derives from the type of concept. Value concepts such as freedom are the most contentious ones to study since they evolve together with other value concepts. Thus, value concepts usually carry different layers of meaning as well as different ranges of meaning. These difficulties have led to heated debates on the nature of concepts among philosophers, historians, and linguists. In the light of this, and for the sake of political philosophy, this thesis is aligned with Jens Bartelson stand of conceptual meaning as he seeks to reach a consensus in which different perspectives – and methods of study – can fruitfully complement each other. This approach is in agreement with Strauss' hermeneutics since Strauss argues that all perspectives carry a vision of the "true meaning." Then, the conceptual meaning of freedom is treated as both autonomous and mutable as it allows for a historically and philosophically sounded approach to its study. Regarding concepts as autonomous provides grounds to philosophize. And since conceptual meaning is also mutable, history becomes a central part of the study of political ideas.

In accordance with Bartelson's conceptual meaning, the method applied to trace the different notions of freedom is the one of conceptual history. This thesis uses three different tools – contextuality, elocutory force, and etymology – to

outline the different notions of freedom from Ancient Greece to the contemporary world. The notions outlined were limited to those that had influenced Sen's notion of freedom since it would have been too much of an adventure to ponder on all notions of freedom.

The findings indicate that Sen's notion of freedom is formulated under MacCallum's widely accepted meta-theory of one concept of freedom. MacCallum states that the notion of freedom is a triadic relation in which an agent (x) is free from barriers (y) to do or be something (z). MacCallum argues that all locutions of freedom must fit this formula in order to be intelligible. This thesis finds that while Sen advocates for a broader understanding in support of one overarching notion of freedom, at the same time, he states that "we cannot lose sight of the fact that freedom is an inherently diverse concept" (Sen 1999: 298). Hence, the disagreement he perceives takes place around the ranges of the variables. In this sense, this thesis argues that Sen formulates his notion of freedom in particular awareness of MacCallum's meta-theory as Sen seeks universal validation of his democratic values based on individual agency. Is Sen fostering liberal democracy? To a certain degree, he is. But he is not fostering just any kind of liberal democracy; in fact, it can be argued that the type of democracy he is advocating for does not exist in practice. This is because in all societies of the world, the less privileged are not as free as the most privileged to flourish their individual capacity. After all, a truly inclusive democratic government should allow individuals to pursue the lives they have reason to value. In this respect, if "pursuing the lives people have reason to value" sounds vague, this is only because functionings should reflect the diversity of individuals and societies.

Since freedom is the principle of democracy, Sen's thought is rooted in a democratic tradition. However, this thesis argues that Sen advocates universal standards drawn from the classics because, even though the classics berate democracy, democracy – as advocated by Sen – presupposes the cultivation of certain specific values, especially social values. The classics perceived the cultivation of values – individual and social – to be the aim of human life. The reason why the Ancients rejected democracy as the best way of government is not because they did not see its benefits, but because freedom as a goal is ambiguous. As highlighted by the classics, the Romans, Hobbes, Berlin, and MacCallum, freedom is freedom for wrong-doing as well as for good. In this respect, the "goodness" of democracy depends on how it is practiced. And in this sense, the values guiding democracy are the same as those the classics ranked as the best political order: justice and equality.

Finally, this study aimed to trace the historical debate about the concept of freedom through contextual history in the European tradition. But, I must highlight that Sen's universalist presumptions expand beyond the Western world. For this reason, this thesis recommends further comparative research in the field of political philosophy since a comparative historical study of the world's philosophical traditions would make it easier to explore the possibility of arguments that are truly universal.

10. Bibliography

- Bartelson, Jens. 2007. "Philosophy and History in the Study of Political Thought." *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 1: 101-124
- Bay, Christian. 1958. *The Structure of Freedom*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Berlin, Isaiah. 2002. *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*. H. Hardy, ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Dihle, Albrecht. 198. *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*. California: University of California Press.
- Godwin, William. 1926. *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*. Vol. 1-2. New York: Knopf
- Hadot, Pierre. 1995. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Edited and with an introduction by Arnold I. Davidson. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1953. *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, translated by R. S. Hartman. New York: Liberal Arts Press.
- Held, David. 1987. *Models of Democracy*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 1914. *Leviathan, or The Matter Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*. London: Everyman's Library.
- Hume, David. 1951. *Theory of Politics*. F. Watkins, ed., London: Nelson.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2002. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, translated by T. S. Presner and Others. California: Stanford University Press.
- Locke, John. 1924. *Two Treatises of Civil Government*. London: Everyman's Library
- Major, Rafael. 2005. "The Cambridge School and Leo Strauss: Texts and Context of American Political Science." *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (3): 447-485
- MacCullum, Gerald C. Jr. 1967. "Negative and Positive Freedom." *The Philosophical Review* 76 (3): 312-334

- Moore, George Edward. 1899. "The Nature of Judgment." *Mind*, New Series 8 (30): 176-193
- Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2006. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 6th edition. Boston: Pearson - Allyn and Bacon.
- Petkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1988. "Are Freedom and Liberty Twins?" *Political Theory* 16 (4): 523-552.
- Poirier, Maben Walter. 2008. *Hellenistic, Roman and Mediaeval Political Thought: A course outline and study guide*. Version 3 (September 20, 2008), course code poli-364. Unpublished manuscript, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1950. *The Social Contract and Discourses*, translated by G. D. H. Cole. New York: Everyman's Library.
- Velkley, Richard. 2008. "On the Roots of Rationalism: Strauss's Natural Right and History as Response to Heidegger." *The Review of Politics* 70: 245-259
- Scharfstein, Ben-Ami. 1998. *A Comparative History of the World Philosophy: From the Upanishads to Kant*. New York: State University of New York Press
- Sen, Amartya. 1983. "Development: Which Way Now?" *The Economic Journal* 93 (372): 745-762
- _____. 1992. *Inequality Reexamined*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- _____. 1993. "Capability and Well-Being." In M. C. Nussbaum and A. Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- _____. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.
- _____. 2009. *The idea of Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Skinner, Quentin. 1969. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." *History and Theory* 8 (1): 3-53
- _____. 1988. "A Reply to My Critics." In J. Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Skinner and his critics*. Cambridge: Polity
- _____. 2002a. "A Third Concept of Liberty." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 117: 237-268
- _____. 2002b. *Visions of Politic. Volume I: Regarding Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, Leo. 1952. *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

- _____. 1953. *Natural Right and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 1959. *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies*. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.
- Taylor, Charles. 1985. "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty." In D. Dyzenhaus, S. Reibetanz, and A. Ripstein, eds., *Law and Morality: Readings in Legal Philosophy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Thucydides. 2009. *The Peloponnesian War*, translated by M. Hammond. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tully, James. 1988. "The Pen is a Might Sword: Quentin Skinner's Analysis of Politics." In J. Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Skinner and his critics*. Cambridge: Polity
- Ward, Ian. 2009. "Helping the Dead Speak: Leo Strauss Quentin Skinner and the Arts of Interpretation in Political Thought." *Polity* 41 (2): 235-255
- Wootton, David. 1992. "Book Review on Meaning and Context." *Nous* 26 (3): 377-379

Appendix 1

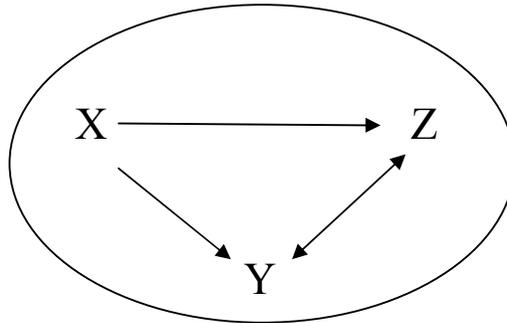
Table 5.1. Isaiah Berlin’s distinction between positive and negative freedom based on values, means, and ends.

	Positive Freedom	Negative Freedom
Type	<i>Freedom to</i> Exercise-concept It’s a doing or being (Taylor 1985)	<i>Freedom from</i> Opportunity-concept It’s having the door open (Taylor 1985)
Liberate from	Internal forces – the lower self	External forces – human made
Unit of analysis	The people – the higher collective self	The individual
Human nature	Essentialist / human nature is one	Different types
How	Some restraints enhance freedom	Laws do not liberate, but are necessary
Boundaries	The private is public	Strict separation: sacred private sphere
Political Question	Who shall govern me?	What am I free to be or do?
Governance	Self-governance: higher self (Democracy, communism, fascism)	Not self-governance. Not necessarily democratic, but liberal
The good	Whole: goods are commensurable	Not all goods are commensurable
Rights	Justice and equality	Human rights : a wall against oppressors
To be free is	To choose realization by controlling the lower self. Control over one’s life, self-determinism Being your own master or mastering yourself (they are not same)	To do what ones wishes without human made restrictions

Appendix 2

Figure 6.1. Freedom as a triadic relation according to MacCallum’s meta-theory.

“X is (is not) free from Y to do (not to do) or become (not become) Z”



X = Agent or agents

Y = Preventing conditions: constraints, restrictions, interferences, and barriers

Z = Actions or conditions of character of circumstances

The arrows in Figure 5.1. show the relation in which variables x , y , and z are defined. But as explained by MacCallum (1967: 329), they all affect each other in an elliptical manner. Hence, MacCallum (1967: 327) points out that close agreement between two notions of freedoms “in the understanding of the range of one of the variables does not make *inevitable* like agreement on the ranges of the others.” For example, the fact that both fascism and communism identify the collective as the variable x does not mean that their notion of collective is the same. One might argue that in theory we can speak of the same notion of variable x ; nonetheless, even if this was the case, when it comes to concrete applicability, the uniqueness of the context in which variable x finds itself makes impossible that variables y and z be the same. Since social, political, and economic conditions are different from context to context, who variable x is and in what context it finds itself defines variables y and z . In other words, since freedom is always *of* something, the variable x is independent. Depending on how variable x is defined and where it is placed, the outcome – variable z – and the preventing conditions – variable y – will take different forms. Thus, in practice, it is primordial to explicitly state who is (is not) free in order to make out the means and ends of the given notion of freedom.

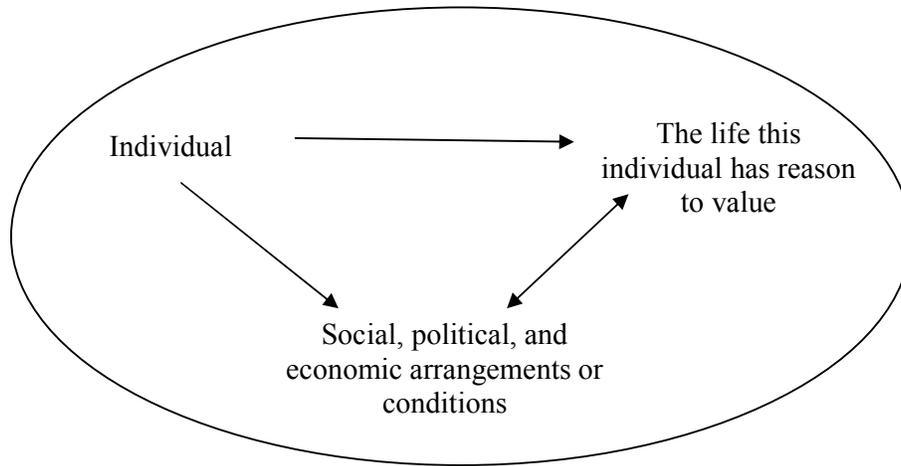
Appendix 3

Table 7.2.1. Amartya Sen's Fundamental Instrumental Freedoms

Political Freedoms	Economic facilities	Social opportunities	Transparency guarantees	Protective security
Political participation	Economic security: business ethics	Basic health care	Independent judicial body	Law and order
Basic civil rights	Gainful employment	Functional education	Free press	Social security: police
Political expression	Economic entitlements: property	Social services: access to water and electricity	Trust, disclosure and lucidity	Social safety nets: social insurance
Free elections	Market economy	Gender equality: Childcare	Tolerance	Emergency Facilities
Voting rights	Redistribution	Transportation	Accountability	Protection from bondage
Political entitlements	Access to finance	Addressing individual disabilities	Absence of corruption	Civic culture

Appendix 4

Figure 7.4.1. Sen's notion of freedom as a triadic relation.



In the light of freedom as a triadic relation, we are able to disambiguate idioms of freedom such as “freedom from hunger.” What this idiom means when used by Sen is that a specific individual is free from barriers to get food. In this sense, variable x in Sen’s triadic relation will always be the individual or will always come to rest on the individual.