

## AN EXAMINATION ON FREE, FREEDOM AND LIBERTY AS ROOT USAGES OF NEGATIVE FREEDOM AND POSITIVE FREEDOM

**-What can be said about the conceptual analysis and etymology of free, freedom and liberty?-**

MUHAMMET ENES KALA\*

*Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University*

### ABSTRACT

Freedom is one of the central values for human life. The paper has tried to examine the etymological roots of the words indicating freedom and liberty in a number of Indo-European languages and investigate the influences of etymological roots of these words on the conceptual usages. Furthermore, two appearing concepts, namely, negative freedom and positive freedom shall be traced on the extension of words, namely freedom and liberty. The essay will assert that while the word of liberty, which is used in English, has implied the concept of negative freedom within the framework of etymological root and the scope of usage, the word of freedom has pointed at the concept of positive freedom from the point of view of the etymological root and the scope of usage.

**Keywords:** Freedom as a term, liberty, negative freedom, positive freedom

### NEGATİF VE POZİTİF ÖZGÜRLÜĞÜN KÖK KULLANIMLARI OLARAK HÜR, HÜRRIYET VE ÖZGÜRLÜK ÜZERİNE BİR SORUŞTURMA

**-Hür, Hürriyet ve Özgürlük kelimelerinin etimolojileri ve kavramsal analizleri hakkında ne söylenebilir?-**

### ÖZ

Özgürlük insan hayatının merkezinde olan değerlerdendir. Çalışmamız Hint-Avrupa dil ailesi içerisinde yer alan bazı dillerde özgürlük kavramını karşılayan kelimelerin etimolojik kökenlerini incelemeye, ardından etimolojik kökenlerinin onların kavramsal kullanımlarına olan etkisini araştırmaya çalışmaktadır. Ayrıca etüdümüzde özgürlük kavramını karşılayan kelimelerin etimolojik uzanımlarından hareketle negatif özgürlük ve pozitif özgürlük şeklinde karşımıza çıkan kavramlarının izleri sürülecektir. Makalemiz, İngilizcede kullanılan ve özgürlüğü karşılayan "liberty" sözcüğünün etimolojik kökeni ve kullanım kapsamı çerçevesinde daha sonradan belirecek olan "negatif özgürlük kavramını ima ettiğini, hürriyeti karşılayan "freedom" kelimesinin ise etimolojik kökeni ve kullanım kapsamı itibarıyla "pozitif özgürlük" kavramına işaret ettiğini iddia edecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hürriyet kavramı, özgürlük kavramı, negatif özgürlük, pozitif özgürlük

\* Asst. Prof., Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Department of Philosophy, mekala@ybu.edu.tr

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language is one of the most prosperous sources of humanity. By aid of it, human being conveys what adds to nature, one constructs and improves civilization and people can understand the level of culture with reference to the level and fertility of language. English is a language which has a long history and conveys productive conceptions and fruitful notions which bear abundant thoughts. These concepts and notions could be said to form bricks of the cultures and the intellectual improvements as well. As a further point, it should be mentioned that thinkers and litterateurs are decent and humble workers of it. Just as improving concepts are vital for cultures and intellectual development, so history of words which implies the concepts is crucial for them.

In this article, what would be liked to do is to comment on three concepts and their backgrounds which belong to Indo-European languages. The words will be adjective form, free and its noun form, freedom and also the word which can be used instead of freedom, liberty. What our thesis is that when we think the concepts freedom and liberty, they may be etymologically used instead of positive freedom and negative freedom, while the concept of freedom implies positive freedom, the concept of liberty implies negative freedom.

First of all, it should be mentioned that the piece will not include all usages of these words in all Indo-European language family and also it will not cover all explanations about positive freedom and negative freedom, and all thoughts of the philosophers such as Isaiah Berlin, Benjamin Constant who have ideas on negative freedom and positive freedom. So it has been chosen a number of languages within Indo-European language family, namely, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Gothic, English, French, Italian, and German. The paper shall concentrate on the usages of negative and positive freedoms, and after having given the etymological details, the essay will allege that the roots of freedom and liberty imply etymologically main meanings of negative and positive freedoms. In my piece, firstly on free and freedom will be focused, in the second section on liberty, the third and last section tries to investigate whether the usage of freedom and liberty may be met with the meaning of negative and positive freedoms.

## **FREE AND FREEDOM**

Freedom is something more than a word or an indicator, but is one of the key philosophical concepts. As a philosophical concept, it is a terrain on

which battles are fought and philosophers passionately discuss issues such as determinism and the character of free will, positive and negative freedoms and so forth. A quick reflection on philosophical writings about freedom reveals the enormous variety of approaches to the meaning of liberty and the wide range of competing conceptions of liberty that are set forth by philosophers.

Freedom is the noun form of free, which literally means “not in bondage or subject to control from outside” (Onions, 1966:375). But the background of this word should be operated on to understand from where it stems. As having been mentioned, we can use freedom and liberty in the same sense, despite fact that they have the different background implying their primitive meanings. After reminding this point, it can be moved on to free and freedom to explain their historical and linguistic construction and development. “The earliest known written symbol for them is a Sumerian cuneiform word “ama-gi” (Hruby, 2007). Another earliest form of these words can be coincided with in Greek, “eleutheros” meaning free, but not be a slave. Xenophanes gives an example about the usage of word in his pieces by thinking two communities are *eleutheros ape* (free from) one another (Lewis, 1990:111). *Eleutheros* could be used to imply -belonging to one`s own people as opposed to slaves who were captured from other groups (Mallory-Adams, 1997:416-417). This Greek word was emphasized on socially rather than individually. \**Leutho-* as root, was favoured the transition to the sense of people, “*eleuthero*” could be expressed as its adjective form which designated those who belonged to the same ethnic group (Benveniste, 1973:264). The same form may be found in voice in Hitt by `awara` meaning free but this word is more related to freedom and liberty (Gamkrelidze-Ivanov, 1995:397). Another form of these words emerges in Sanskrit with `svadhina` standing for peculiarity, custom (Buck, 1949:1337) but this Sanskrit word meets free in Indo European language as well.

To remind, up to present, the earliest forms have been attempted to present, but it should not be forgotten that all these points which have been given are valid for liberty too. In other words, *ama-gi*, *eleutheros*, *awa-ra*, *svadhina* fulfil the meaning of liberty as well. Basically and generally both freedom and liberty were used to as not be a slave in the past. Separation emerges with Latin word, *liber*. But these points will be given in the second section.

Now let us have a closer look at the concepts of free and freedom and their background. Free and freedom are Anglo Saxon words which are rooted in Old and New English as *frē* and *free* in Gothic as *frijōn* which means dear or to love and in Old and New German as *friend*, *frei* (Buck, 1949:1336). Also, the word which is in Sanskrit, *priya*, means to beloved, (Picturesque Word origins, 1933:64) as well as Gothic *frijon* (Lehmann, 1986:127-139). As a further point, Winfred Lehmann mentions considerations on *freihals* which means free neck in Gothic. According to him “one who is possessor of his own neck as opposed to slave who is the property of his master.” (Lehmann, 1986:234-235). The meaning implies that slave is not free briefly because his/her neck is not the under of him/herself. However, this consideration also implies that one is free whenever he/she has control of his/herself. But this control can be understood by staying within the limitation, otherwise no one can feel his/herself unfree. So freedom can be lived within a particular determined area. The key point is by whom the determined area is established. If it is put by one’s own, then within the limitation people shall live and feel freedom.

As stated before, German *frei* and English *free* can be described the genesis of a word having become synonymous with Greek *eleutheros* but these terms evolved along quite different lines, by and by, notions became to relate to the society and not isolated individual (Benveniste, 1973:265).

As we have mentioned, freedom is the noun form of free. When looked at the forms in the different languages within Indo-European group, freedom can be seen as being represented with “freiheit” in German, with “frank” in Breton and with “freols” in Old English (Buck, 1949:1336) furthermore freedom seems a sister word with “friend” by implying -to love and to beloved- as we have stated above. In Old English *freond* is the same root as friend as a lover. So, in that way, it can be said that the original meaning of freedom was a sense of affection which belonged to the members of a free family excluding their slaves. (Lewis,1990:114 and Mallory-Adams, 1997:416-417). In a family, all members of family except of slave are friends of each other, all of them are both loved and beloved by one another. Within this context slaves are out of the picture. In these thoughts, as far as we have seen, free and freedom have been used to mean higher social status against slavery. It is also implied that people would be free only if they belonged to a society as a member (Mallory Adams, 1997:416-417). In this case, freedom was used to mean a higher social status than being a slave. The free man

was understood not to be a slave in a society but rather to be a member of a family or a society. By slavery, what we mean may be bodily slavery, spiritual slavery etc. to quote Berlin: "I am my own master... may I not be a slave to nature? Or to my own unbridled passions? Are these not so many species of the identical genus "slave"-some political or legal, others moral or spiritual?" (Berlin, 2002:179).

Since the slaves would not belong to free class, so free and freedom (in order to indicate a social status) would be understood by reference to the slavery. Because actually, the historical meaning of freedom-liberty was evaluated on the ground of a point saying that people were either free or slave (Benveniste, 1973:262). So, this sense may be related to these considerations "The members of the family were the loved ones, as we still call them, the free as distinct from the slaves. So, the word free, "beloved", came to mean not slave, but free in our modern sense." (Picturesque word origins, 1933:64).

This point seems a little hollow notwithstanding clarifying social status. Since slaves inevitably cannot gain freedom although their spirits could still be free. So the meaning does not make sense sufficiently. But we also have coincided with an expression which expands the limited considerations. "Live in slavery with the spirit of freeman (eleutheros) and you will be no slave." (Lewis, 1990:112). By this consideration, the meaning of freedom has been widened in true way. In this case however, slavery still remained by changing its form, their bodily slavery does not mean that they cannot become free as long as they are free with their spirits. This meaning seems much sufficient and sound. The developing of words in the same tradition can be seen through these considerations. We might meet some examples of this thought while reading Hegelian Master-Slave Dialectic especially in the light of Alexandre Kojève`s book, called *Introduction to Reading of Hegel*.

Perhaps it can be explained what we have meant by above paragraph. Freedom and free actually are not like the notions which are fixed and definable exactly, such as physical realities and mathematical values. Because freedom belongs to sentimental area like love, feeling, desire etc. So, it might be said that human being is free as much as he/she feels. They can recognise to be free whenever encountering an obstacle which prevents them from what they want to do (Öner, 2015:75). In that time, they feel not to be free. So as far as being signed, freedom could be understood by referring not to be

a slave and not to be restrained. By slavery what we mean may be discussed, bodily slavery, spiritual slavery etc. The points are not focused on owing to limitations.

It is a need to remind that the social meaning of freedom was crucial to ancient societies: becoming free meant to be a member of the society and to participate in political life, from which slaves were excluded. That is why Benjamin Constant puts forth the distinction between the liberty of the ancients and the liberty of the moderns. While the former is a matter of participation in the collective political life, so it is close to positive freedom I would like to prefer using freedom implying positive freedom, the latter emphasises the peaceful independence and individual freedom, so it is close to negative freedom but I would suggest to use “liberty” implying negative freedom. It will be returned in the next title.

Freedom is considered with its legal and social meaning as well. In this case, freedom is merely meaningful on condition that is located in a society. “Freedom is a sociological concept. It is meaningless to apply it to conditions outside society...” (Mises, 1936:191). Secondly, after having focused on the basic, legal and social meanings of freedom, we can move on cosmological (if we can say ontological) meaning of free-freedom with reference to Aristotle. As he accepted the basic meanings of freedom/liberty which we have mentioned, furthermore he attempted to expand the basic semantic sphere of freedom by thinking that freedom might have implied to the leisure time for intellectual things by playing piano or by using library (Lewis, 1990:126). Because it is known that Aristotle paid attention to the distinct feature of human being, namely reason, so human beings enjoyed exercising their intellects, (Hooft, 2006:54) but by explaining this, he made contact with freedom. Most importantly, Aristotle implied cosmological meaning of freedom by applying to universal order and his “Unmoved Mover” consideration. Lewis cites his own thoughts from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* “In *Metaphysics*, we learn that the organisation of the universe resembles that of a household, in which no one has so little chance to act at random as the free members. For them everything or almost everything proceeds according to a fixed plan, whereas the slaves and domestic animals contribute little to the common end and act mostly at random.” (Lewis, 1990:127-128). As being seen, Aristotle not only protected the actual background which concealed the basic concepts of freedom but also expanded it by referring cosmological theme.

Freedom is also a dynamic and an uncontrolled concept rather than static and controlled one. “Inevitably there are dozens of versions of freedom as a supreme political virtue.” (Robertson, 1985:134). What I mean is that a man, an observer of historical progression, can roughly understand three types of understanding of freedom as political implication. As seen, historically the first one has not been a notion indicating any individual aspects, but a notion revealing rather a collectivist sense going back to Ancient Athens. Secondly, with the rise of the economic bourgeoisie, the demands of bourgeoisies for equal political rights and economic laissez-faire against the feudal aristocracies began to be felt. But this transformation is not sufficient for securing individual freedom, briefly because the transformation of the meaning of freedom is merely an outer transformation; in other words, the domination by one kind of minority (feudal lords) was replaced with domination by another kind of minority, the bourgeoisie. Thirdly, with the modernity, the demands of the bourgeoisies, and especially intellectuals, started to change accounts of freedom into accounts of individual freedom in the sense of civil liberties. Demands for freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of press etc. began to crystallize (Robertson, 1985:134-135). So we can see the change and transformation of the meaning of freedom, it means that the transformations indicate to separation from freedom to liberty, from positive freedom to negative freedom, from freedom which can be understood within a society and within limitation to freedom which is demanded for individual for him/herself. We encounter three main camps by appearing in a historical progression in the political arena, which started from a collectivist sense of freedom and arrived at one generally stressing individual and liberal dimensions. Yet, the importance of both senses of freedom is stressed in contemporary discussions (Kala, 2009:8-10).

## LIBERTY

To recast that liberty implies the same meaning with freedom, despite the fact that it longs slightly different background. Liberty is rooted in *eleutheros*, *svadhina*, *arawa*, *amagi* as well as free-freedom. Liberty is met *liber* in Latin, *libera* in Italian, *libre* in France and Spain. While freedom is Anglo-Saxon word, liberty is basically French word inherited from the Romans (as Latin word) and it also has Latin root meaning to do what you want to do and to do your own thing (Hornback, 2004). We encounter with this word in Eng-

lish as well “That vast theoretical terms like liberty, equality and fraternity should be borrowed by England from France.” (Barfield, 1926:67).

In Latin *liber* base is ultimately connected to the meaning growth (Gamkrelidze-Ivanov, 1995:398), just as free is concerned with dear and to love-to beloved in Greek and Gothic. Furthermore in Latin *liberi* means “children” (those who are growing) as biological meaning rather than social meaning whereas when being talked about freedom, it has been said that children are free as long as they are born in free society and since they are a member of a society. But *liberi* conveys the meanings both as growing of children and also their membership to a household. “Liberi-children, the free members of a household.” (Onions, 1966:376). It can be seen that despite fact that freedom and liberty overlap each other in their basic meaning, they have actually different background. This point should not be overlooked.

Liberty as the synonym of freedom has been used strongly to indicate social ground. It has been commented on the social context. Especially its background has been very appropriate to deduce this type of conclusion. So this frame has been frequently discussed in the political philosophy. For instance Benjamin Constant divided liberty into two categories, namely the liberty of ancients and the liberty of the moderns. While the former has laid stress on social sense of liberty, the latter has emphasised individual meaning (Heywood, 1999:255). But it has been emphasized that the concept of liberty has come into question with the modern times. When human being has started to become individual being, by extracting or removing himself/herself from society, he/she has seemed to use the concept of liberty rather than freedom in order to explain his/her new status in the society. As considered, the concept of freedom is understood within the context of society or the higher and lower selves of person, but the liberty may seem to make sense without any context of society, furthermore the concept of liberty underlines the new individual status of person and the lack of constraint in the modern ages. Also, Isaiah Berlin’s distinction and conceptions on freedom, namely negative and positive freedom, are so historic for political philosophy.

## **NEGATIVE FREEDOM AND POSITIVE FREEDOM**

The distinction between negative and positive freedoms is one of the most important elements in the history of the theory of liberty. This distinction has been emphasised by Berlin who says “I realized that they differed,



that they were answers to two different questions; but although cognate, they did not in my view clash- the answer to one did not necessarily determine the answer to the other. Both freedoms were ultimate human ends, both were necessarily limited, both concepts could be perverted into course of human history.” (Berlin, 2002:326-327). He distinguishes between positive and negative freedom by saying that “negative freedom is involved in the answer to the question: what is the area within which the subject is, or should be, left free to do or be whatever he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?... Positive freedom is involved in the answer to the question; what or who is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do or be this rather than that?” (Berlin,2002:169). “Positive freedom is often associated with overcoming internal as well as external obstacles to freedom.” (Hailwood, 1996:65) whereas negative freedom is generally concerned with an absence of restraints upon freedom of choices and acts.

Stressing what is to become the negative theory of freedom, Constant proclaims the fundamental importance of that part of life which should remain personal and independent, and over which all sovereignty should be limited (Rousseau, 1988:214). The main presupposition of negative liberty is that everyone knows his own life project, that therefore neither the state nor any other body should decide their ends and purposes for them (Barry, 1989:216-217). Berlin declares that “by being free in this (negative) sense I mean not being interfered with by others.” (Berlin, 2002:170). Berlin implies that individuals have no metaphysical basis for their decisions other than what they themselves necessarily need, believe, do or refrain from doing, in the light of their own life projects. Therefore, they should be left alone to get on with their own life projects without being impeded by others on the basis of any supposed reason or common good (Berlin, 2002:174-175).

Negative freedom is a space, even it is small, in which people can do whatever they may wish whether useful or useless, in accordance with their desires and choices (Berlin,2000:182) The idea of freedom must leave a room for acting in ways that may not be rational and desirable as long as they do not pose any threat to others. It may be claimed that an individual has the right to choose the kind of life he prefers. But a question comes to mind whether this may apply to everyone. If the individual is ignorant, immature, uneducated, mentally crippled, it means that he cannot know how to do or choose (Kala, 2009:31).

We can give an example, if parents compel unwilling children to go to school or to work hard or give medicine to a child who is really ill, in the name of what those children must really want, even though they may not know it. These problematic issues indicate us that liberty needs to be limited and should be favour of human being. It is acceptable to suggest that everyone has a right to whatever he/she wants to do as long as they do not pose any threat to others, but liberty should be limited and considered whether the actions which are put forth by human being is really beneficent and good for him/her. So, such a person should be prevented from doing what he may want, because he might harm people around them, or himself, or it is clear that he could greatly benefit from being prevented from doing what he may want. One may criticise the theory of negative freedom by arguing that the merely negative account of liberty as absence of constraint gives no clue as to how man can use his liberty more effectively. Insofar as negative liberty is merely addresses the immediate hand human-made constraints against human freedom, it seems insufficient. It seems to ignore internal constraints such as fear and ignorance, and more general external restraints such as natural disasters and poverty (Kala, 2009:31-32).

Positive freedom suggests that man is positively free to the extent he purifies himself in terms of reason, by eliminating passion and all kinds of irrationality in the light of self-mastery (Berlin, 2002:179-180). It would be claimed that one may observe four different meanings in different frequency in order to point out positive freedom. A. Positive capacity as opposed to lack of external constraints B. Rational self-control or higher self as opposed to impulsion by appetite, desires or lower self C. Collective self-rule as opposed to being ruled by others (Miller, 1991:13) and Andrian Blau adds a fourth: D. "Doing what one should want as opposed to doing what one does want." (Blau, 2004:548). Especially the distinction between higher and lower selves plays a significant role in comprehending the second and third meanings of positive freedom. Rousseau puts forward a theory of what is commonly called moral freedom in book V of *Emile*. According to him, man only is truly free when he is master of himself, not the slave of his own passions, and only then can he freely participate in the political process. In this sense only the virtuous man is free to achieve what his rational-self wants (Hall, 1973:69).

One may argue that human passions and appetitive desires derive from the body, which is a part of the physical world. Hence, when man acts mere-

ly according to appetitive desires or from any force which is a part of the material and deterministic world, the behaviours of that man do not possess any specifically moral quality. It may be accepted as normal for natural man isolated from a society to behave in accordance with pity and passion, for his ability to use reason is not developed effectively. But it is abnormal for the civilised man within a society and who is actualized and functionalized his all ability by interacting with other people, to conduct himself merely in accordance with passion and blind desires, briefly because he possesses the complete ability to use reason along with desire and passion, and thus he has the ability to control his lower self under the auspices of his higher self. So, he has to control the lower self and in order to realize true freedom, it means positive freedom (Kala, 2009:33-34).

Positive freedom can also be considered within the context of a society. As recognized above, person may limit himself/herself by realizing lower and higher selves. Positive freedom would be understood and even lived in the limitation, because the persons are free only if they are within the limitations. From where these limitations can be come? People may limit themselves in favour of their higher selves and they live their freedoms within these limitations. People also may be limited in favour of common good of the society in which they recognize themselves with aid of the social roles. They live their freedom within these constraints of society. This meaning of freedom can be understood by the concept of positive freedom.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, what we have done is to comment on three concepts and their backgrounds which belong to Indo-European languages. The words have been adjective form, free and its noun form, freedom and also the word which can be used instead of freedom, liberty. What our thesis has been that when we think the concepts freedom and liberty, they may be etymologically used instead of positive freedom and negative freedom, while the concept of freedom implies positive freedom, the concept of liberty implies negative freedom. The essay has alleged that the roots of freedom and liberty imply etymologically main meanings of negative and positive freedoms. In the piece, firstly on free and freedom have been focused, in the second section on liberty, the third and last section has tried to investigate whether the usage of freedom and liberty would be met with the meaning of negative and positive freedoms.

In the paper, the etymological roots of the words of freedom and liberty in the languages belonging to Indo-European language family. It has been considered in the examination by the word of freedom that it may be understood in the context of sociality, so the extension of the scope of freedom is weak for individuality and human being can live his/her freedom only within the place which is given to him/her. In the meantime, it has been claimed that freedom presents the classical meaning on the separation of classics and modern, freedom also conveys an implication that the meaning of freedom may not be without the context of society with reference to social roles of individual. Eventually, it has been alleged that the meaning of the word of freedom has been emerged on the dominance of higher self rather than lower self after the separation of higher and lower selves, and that freedom is appeared in the point of when human being does not choose whatever he/she wants to do, rather does choose whatever he/she wants to do. Higher self leads person to choose not to do whatever he/she wants. The word of liberty in return of freedom gets to the centre individual rather than society. Liberty generally has Latin root meaning to do what you want to do and to do your own thing. In this sense, the preference of the usage of liberty can be understood with a meaning which points at the request of person escaping from all bonds of tradition, religious structures and all limitations which restrain him/her with modernization. So it has been emphasized that the concept of liberty has come into question with the modern times. When human being has started to become individual being, by extracting or removing himself/herself from society, he/she has seemed to use the concept of liberty rather than freedom in order to explain his/her new status in the society. As considered, the concept of freedom is understood within the context of society or the higher and lower selves of person, but the liberty may seem to make sense without any context of society, furthermore the concept of liberty underlines the new individual status of person and the lack of constraint in the modern ages.

After all these sayings, it may be thought that positive freedom would actually be an extension of the word of freedom with reference to classical meaning and the view of considering freedom meaningful in this context. In addition to this, it may be said that negative freedom would be an extension of the word of liberty with reference to modern usage and the view of putting forward individuality by explaining that liberty of person can be shaped by aid of his/her own wishes.

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