Individual Freedom in the economic global market: a defense of a liberty to realize choices

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Human life in contemporary society is extremely complex and there are various external factors that directly affect the realization in the individual ends. In this work I analyze the effects of the global market economy, manifested by a mode of production and distribution of goods and services in the form of a global network of economic[[1]](#footnote-1) relations, which involve people, transnational corporations and political and social institutions in moral sphere of people, affecting their choices and the realization of these choices.  
 This global market offers goods and services necessary to accomplish the purposes of individual goods and services ranging from the most basic, such as food, water, electricity, housing, leisure, for those who have become fundamental under development of technology, as for example, computers and cell phones, but all indispensable to carry out any project of life or purpose by individuals.

The idea of freedom in the sphere of economic activities - market freedom - as freedom to buy and sell things in the market without the intervention of the State, held the promise of increasing individual freedom, but the neoliberal turn, seated in capitalist mode of production does not seem to have done, in the name of the development of the market economy, which has established itself as the sole mechanism for this "freedom" of choice of goods that make up the individual ends.

This economic freedom that presupposes the idea of ​​motivational interest, intrinsic to a system of exchange - a freedom interested - not to be confused with the ideal of human freedom to realize the chosen purposes, these purposes that depend on the context of a market economy, this freedom in the market.

The market economy - capitalist production - which was theoretically designed by neoclassical economic theories (usually associated with neoliberalism politicians) who take individuals as selfish and self-interested and preferably standardized preferences that guide the choices that will be made ​​available by the market, rather to ensure individual freedom, restricts individual freedom of choice and realization of non-standard individuals.   
 In these neoclassical models, the individuals - called consumers - as agents in the global economic market bring with preferences in search for the most satisfaction and these individual agents confront companies that are supposed to be ready to provide the products and services desired by the market. In these models, economic agent should provide each individual the maximum opportunity to make rational choices that lead to personal satisfaction of these agents.[[2]](#footnote-2).

These models certainly do not consider freedom as the choice and implementation of choices. First, because in this globalized economy, individuals are not ultimate authorities in determining what is produced and distributed, and second, the fact that the models need to conceive of the economy to provide the maximum opportunity for choice - rational[[3]](#footnote-3) - does not imply the choice of contents of which will be given, as these contents are determined by standard preferences.

This lack of freedom of choice of the actual contents of the options that should be open and factually offered by this market - means for the improvement of the human condition - and more than freedom of choice, freedom to make these choices, which depends on a control over this market economy, a resumption of control through the endorsement of economic practices by those who participate, directly or indirectly.

The problem that takes place to reflect on what would be the perspective of freedom that is more comprehensive, including the freedom to choose, to go beyond it and also contemplate the realization of choices of the material content that compose the individual purposes and that must be available in environment of a global economic market witch keeps the control over these choices.

The debate about social freedom[[4]](#footnote-4), the freedom to exercise effectively the choices presupposes the conceptual dichotomy about political freedom advocated by Isaiah Berlin[[5]](#footnote-5). Berlin argues for a notion of freedom as the absence of obstacles to action opposing the notion of positive freedom, freedom to do what you want. Berlin criticizes idealist’s conceptions of liberty according to which, in general, there is only freedom when it follows the authority, which can lead to the problem of the legitimacy of this authority.

For Berlin, the positive conception of freedom enables the transcendence of the self in the search for a spirit of the nation, in which the individual becomes part of a policy to conceive and accomplish the common interest, without considering the need for endorsement of this authority by individuals.

In negative freedom, the endorsement is a bridge that saved freedom between action and coercion. If this bridge isn’t there then, regrets Waldron[[6]](#footnote-6), the capacity of human beings to self determine have been cast aside in the name of social and economic order, as if this order has no effects on the moral spheres of people and this is an opposition to what I want to recognize here: lack of consent means no autonomy and thus domination.

The republican liberty tries to deal with this problem of domination. Pettit[[7]](#footnote-7) goes beyond in the debate about the economic domination of markets, pointing the contradiction in this idea: on the one hand the market would be a space in which people would enjoy freedom, especially freedom of non-intervention but on the other restricts the individual liberty. Before reflecting on Pettit's freedom as non-economic domination, I will present his defense of a republican liberty[[8]](#footnote-8).

Pettit (2007) take the liberty as a political ideal, as a goal of the state - collective subject that includes broadly all citizens - and rejects positive liberty arguing that this concept of freedom is not susceptible to a policy approach, because this freedom of the self depends on rationality and psychological considerations and so Petit begins his defense of political freedom as ideal: a freedom as non-domination.

Petit Phillip agrees somehow with Berlin regarding to the fact that the positive freedom is problematic, but the problem of Pettit positive freedom is that it relies on certain capabilities of the agent, such as self-determination. However, freedom as a political ideal goes beyond Berlin’s notion of freedom as the absence of obstacles, or non-interference, to be defined as an ideal of non-domination, or the freedom of not being subject to the arbitrary power of another person, the state or the economy.

In this discussion with Berlin, Pettit argues that negative freedom is not the only alternative to positive freedom nor the negative concept identify itself with an ideal non-interference, since for Pettit the non-interference is not the only way to threat the freedom.  
 To defend his ideal of freedom as non-domination Pettit presents the three common perspectives of freedom: freedom as absence of limit, as non-interference and non-domination, arguing about the problems of the first two notions. An ideal of freedom as non-limitation assumes that all restrictions on freedom, including intentional and unintentional, must be removed and the extend of the restrictions could lead to more possibility of coercion or use of force by state, limited only by extreme circumstances to justify the interference, which would give more scope to state action.

In the concept of freedom as non-interference we take, generally, as a restraint to the liberty the intentional interpersonal interference in the space of individual freedom. For Pettit, the interference can be formal, in the sense of not being subject to interference, and effective, when you can actually enjoy this absence of restriction of freedom, which includes the environment of choices and the ability of the agent to act. Pettit believes that interference is effective when intentionally or almost intentionally one person make worse other person choosing, removing or denying knowledge of the options offered by the environment, increasing the costs of choices.

Freedom of non-interference in Pettit is not a satisfactory ideal for not taking into account the distinction between arbitrary and non-arbitrary interference and thus does not give us enough reasons to judge the different forms of organization and action of the state. In the arbitrary interference there is no considerations about the interests assumed by those who suffer interference, no endorsement and this restrict and compromises their freedom. In the case of non arbitrary interference, those who suffer the restriction or intervention could control, passively or actively, the limits of the interference. If the concept of freedom does not take into account the distinction between arbitrary or non-arbitrary interference, even rules can be regarded as interference in freedom.

The discussion of freedom in the market is paradoxical in that this market would be the system created to provide people a substantial increase in freedom, through the minimum of interference by the State. Today, the global economic market is far from the space of state interference, nonetheless this does not guarantee such expected freedom, since the arbitrary transfer of power to the global market domination left individuals under this new form of power. In this sense, Pettit republican concept of liberty is satisfactory however, still insufficient by setting aside the endorsement of the individual witch can ensure the legitimacy of authority as expression of personal autonomy of individuals.

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1. According to DeMARTINO (2008, p. 2) economic globalization is a recent trend - the reference is to the XX and XXI century - the economy towards increased international flows of goods. Still according with DeMartino this globalization qualitatively changed the nature of economic integration that marks this phenomenon of contemporary, becoming market-based, this consists of actions agents economically disconnected, such as investors, businesses and consumers, moving rapidly beyond the commands of states and determining the flow of goods and services within and across national borders [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (DeMARTINO, 2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This model assumes rational economic agents. From this point, several criticisms have been made ​​and do not intend to discuss them at this time. (BELL,1981) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. (DD RAPHAEL, 1994) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. (BERLIN, 1969) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. (WALDRON, 1987) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. (PETTIT, 2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. (PETTIT, 2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)