

The Foundations of "Positive Freedom" from the Perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei

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Abstract

This article explores the concept of freedom from the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei. It employs content analysis method and utilizes the theory of positive and negative freedom to examine the foundations of freedom from his viewpoint. This study aims to examine the typology of the concept of freedom in the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei. Ayatollah Khamenei critiques the materialistic approach to freedom for its potential to lead to moral decay. He argues that freedom in Islam is inherently linked to divine law and social responsibility, ensuring that individual liberties do not undermine collective moral and ethical standards. He elucidates the connection between freedom, monotheism, and divine obligation, viewing freedom in relation to the intrinsic value of humanity. The article also addresses the limitations of freedom in a religious governance system, where freedom is constrained by the necessity to prevent corruption, self-harm, and oppression.

Keywords

Positive Freedom, Ayatollah Khamenei, Negative Freedom, liberalism.

Introduction

Freedom, as one of the most fundamental concepts in political philosophy and human thought, has consistently been a focal point for philosophers, thinkers, and social reformers. The notion that humans are inherently free is deeply rooted in philosophical and religious thought, and throughout history, it has been interpreted and articulated in various ways. In the Western tradition, particularly from the Enlightenment onward, philosophers such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau have endeavored to elucidate the concept of freedom. For instance, John Locke, a pivotal figure in the Enlightenment, laid the groundwork for the idea that "man is born free" during the modern era. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, published in 1689, Locke expounded on natural rights, including life, freedom, and property, asserting that individuals in the state of nature are equal and free (Locke, 1823: 44-48). Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau used the social contract to explain civil society's origins, but he posited that sovereignty remains with the people, who legislate directly for the common good (Taylor, 2006). These thinkers posited freedom as one of the fundamental pillars of human social and political life, asserting that individual freedom must be safeguarded within the framework of just and ethical laws.

Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has long expounded on the concept of freedom. This article, employing content analysis and utilizing Isaiah Berlin's theoretical framework of negative and positive freedom, examines the concept of freedom from the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei. It seeks to demonstrate how his viewpoint can serve as a guiding light for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of freedom. The findings of this article reveal that the portrayal of Iran's Islamic Republic leaders as anti-freedom by adversarial media is contrary to reality. In Summary, Ayatollah Khamenei's interpretation of freedom, rooted in Islamic teachings and philosophical depth, offers a nuanced understanding that transcends mere political or individualistic conceptions. It positions freedom as a divine endowment intertwined with moral and ethical responsibilities, thereby challenging simplistic or adversarial narratives propagated by certain media outlets. This study underscores the necessity of engaging with such perspectives to foster a more holistic and inclusive discourse on freedom in contemporary political and social thought.

1. Research Background

Given the position of Ayatollah Khamenei as the supreme leader of Iran, his views on socio-political issues have consistently attracted scholarly attention. Accordingly, numerous works have examined his approach to the concept of freedom. A brief review of some of the most relevant studies is presented below:

- The article "Islam and Freedom of Expression from the Perspective of the Supreme Leader" by Zeinab Mouludi, published in issue no. 36 of Shamim-e Narges journal in 2019, addresses the lexical definition of freedom, the philosophy of freedom, freedom of expression, and its limits.
- The article "Political Freedom in the Qur'anic Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei" by Hossein Ajourlu, published in Strategic Studies of the Islamic Revolution, vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 2024, examines the nature of political freedom, its Qur'anic foundations, and its domains of manifestation from Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective.
- The article "An Analysis of Freedom in the Political Thought of the Supreme Leader" by Mahmoud Alipour Gorji, published in 2011 in issue no. 27 of the scholarly journal Islamic Revolution Studies, interprets the realization of political freedom through the role and participation of the people in the political system.
- The article "An Examination of the Relationship between Political Security and Political Freedom in the Thought of the Supreme Leader" by Ali Asghar Nasiri and Najaf Lakzaei, published in Pazhuheshnameh-ye Enqelab-e Eslami (Journal of Islamic Revolution Studies), Year 7, no. 23, Summer 2017, argues that political security and political freedom in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, a relationship rooted in the elevated nature of both security and freedom.

The article "A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Concept of Freedom in the System of Religious Democracy from the Perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei" by Mehdi Besharat, published in issue no. 31 of Islamic Revolution Research in 2019, seeks to understand Ayatollah Khamenei's view

of freedom. Its central question concerns the meaning of freedom in his political thought and the nature of its limitations.

- The book “Freedom from the Perspective of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei”, compiled by Manuchehr Mohammadi and published by the Islamic Culture Publishing Office in 2006, presents a collection of Ayatollah Khamenei’s views and statements on the definition of freedom in Islam and other religions. The work aims to offer a clear and accurate understanding of freedom in Islam based on Islamic teachings and rulings encompassing justice, equality, independence, and respect for fundamental values and human dignity in both individual and social life.

- The book “The Relationship between Justice and Freedom in the Intellectual System of Ayatollah Khamenei” by Meysam Ghahreman, published by the Center for Islamic Revolution Documents in 2023, seeks—through an analytical examination of the concepts of freedom and justice in Ayatollah Khamenei’s thought—to scrutinize the relationship between these two concepts within his intellectual framework.

2. The Necessity of Understanding Freedom

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, freedom is something that must be learned; it entails a set of principles and a cultural framework that must be acquired. Failure to do so, will inevitably result in the loss of freedom (Khamenei, 2001). If individuals and societies lack a proper understanding of the principles governing freedom, it can lead to disorder, social tension, and even violence. In interconnected communities, unrestrained pursuit of personal desires without regard for ethical or legal norms threatens social cohesion. Thus, the comprehension of freedom is not merely an individual endeavor but a societal necessity, ensuring that the exercise of freedom aligns with the broader goals of justice, equity, and communal harmony.

3. Positive and Negative freedom

The positive/negative freedom distinction was made famous by Isaiah Berlin, although he is not the first to develop this dual conceptualization of freedom (Dimova-Cookson, 2020, p.3). Isaiah Berlin¹ was the first to introduce the terms "positive freedom " and "negative freedom " into political discourse. In 1958, in an essay titled “Two Concepts of Liberty”, he elaborated on these two terms. About the negative freedom he writes: “I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no human being interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can do what he wants. If I am prevented by other persons from doing what I want I am to that degree unfree; and if the area within which I can do what I want is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved. ... Coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I wish to act. You lack political

¹ - Isaiah Berlin (6 June 1909 – 5 November 1997) was a distinguished British political philosopher and theorist, renowned for his profound contributions to the field of political thought.

liberty or freedom only if you are prevented from attaining your goal by human beings.” (Berlin, 1958, p.7)

These concepts describe two distinct approaches to freedom and self-determination. Negative freedom refers to the absence of restrictions or external interference. This type of freedom signifies freedom from external obstacles, coercion, or constraints imposed by others (such as the state, society, or individuals). The core idea underlying this form of freedom is that an individual is free to the extent that no one prevents them from fulfilling their desires. This concept emphasizes non-interference and the ability to act without hindrance. In Berlin’s definition, negative freedom can be articulated as freedom from interference, where individuals are able to act according to their will without external constraints. According to him, negative freedom is the absence of human interference, and positive freedom is the absence of any obstacles whatever including institutions (Crocker, Lawrence 1980, p.3).

Isaiah Berlin’s account of positive liberty provides a conceptual framework for understanding freedom as freedom for the realization of rational purposes rather than mere absence of constraint. He defines positive liberty as the individual’s desire to be his own master: “The ‘positive’ sense of the word ‘liberty’ derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master” (Berlin, 1958, p.16); that is, to act as a subject guided by reasons and conscious purposes that man recognizes as his own. On this view, the central question of freedom is not “How far am I governed?” (ibid) but rather “Who governs me?” (ibid)—a shift that allows for the possibility that self-imposed or rationally endorsed limitations may constitute, rather than negate, freedom. Accordingly, when individuals accept certain constraints in order to secure a higher or long-term good—such as observing social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect public health, or adhering to religious obligations out of one’s free will, understood as expressions of one’s rational and moral self—such limitations can be interpreted as manifestations of positive liberty. Insofar as these constraints are adopted voluntarily and in pursuit of goals the agent identifies as his own, they exemplify self-government and are therefore compatible with, and even constitutive of, freedom in Berlin’s positive sense. His positive freedom is experienced when one achieves ‘self-mastery’ by living up to rational ideals and making the best of oneself. It is also known as the ‘freedom to’ Positive freedom is the freedom associated with the ideals of collective self-determination and self-government (Dimova-Cookson, 2020, p.3).

Positive freedom refers to the capacity to act in accordance with one's true will or higher self. That is, an individual may consent to specific constraints in order to ultimately attain a form of freedom. Such a trade-off implies that the recognition and embrace of boundaries can serve as a pathway to achieving a higher or more meaningful state of freedom. This dynamic underscores the paradoxical nature of freedom, where the voluntary acceptance of restrictions can lead to the realization of greater autonomy or liberation in the long term. The core idea behind this type of freedom is that an individual is free to the extent that they can attain their true potential and manage their own life. In contrast, negative freedom ostensibly grants individuals the right to political participation, but in practice, rulers may manipulate elections and use media and

deception to ensure that people vote for or act in favor of those in power without realizing their true interests. In negative freedom, opposition voices are technically allowed to speak, but the media is managed in such a way that these dissenting voices receive minimal amplification, while messages favorable to the ruling powers are widely disseminated. Consequently, this form of freedom represents a modern and subtle form of authoritarianism, albeit without the direct application of violence. In a system of negative freedom, individuals are permitted to express their opinions, but they must be aware that expressing views contrary to those of the rulers may lead to repercussions and difficulties in the future. As a result, individuals often choose to remain silent. The key differences between these two types of freedom can be categorized as follows:

Aspect	Negative Freedom	Positive Freedom
Focus	Freedom from external interference	Freedom for self-actualization
Emphasis	Freedom from external obstacles	Inner capacities and empowerment
Example	Freedom from censorship	Freedom to access education or happiness
Political Context	Often associated with classical liberalism	Frequently linked to social welfare and state intervention

Studying freedom in the numerous speeches of Ayatollah Khamenei one can conclude that according to him, freedom in Islamic thought is regarded as a form of positive freedom. Initially, a certain boundary is established for human freedom, but the ultimate goal is to elevate humanity to a superior state of freedom. According to his interpretation, Islam from its inception defines a framework and limits for freedom, as stated in the Quran: "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written in the Torah and the Gospel. He enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong, and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil, and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them" (Al-A'raf: 157). Ayatollah Khamenei considers this verse to be the clearest expression of freedom in the Quran—a freedom that removes the "Al-Isr" (burdens) from human life. The term "Al-Isr" refers to the ropes that tie a tent to the ground to prevent it from being blown away by the wind. Similarly, the burdens of humanity are those things that tether individuals to the earth, preventing them from ascending. The Prophet came to remove these chains and shackles (Khamenei, 2012). "So many ropes have been tied to the feet of human beings that they cannot move. In tyrannical systems, there are all kinds of impositions, discriminations, restrictions and indoctrinations that are presented in modern forms today, reducing human beings to the level of animals" (Khamenei, 1986). In the same verse, before stating "He relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them," it is said: "He makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil." This concept of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden) represents the establishment of boundaries and prohibitions. Therefore, one should not hesitate at all when discussing freedom in the presence of limitations and prohibitions" (Khamenei, 2012). In this framework, freedom is not an absolute, unbounded concept but is instead structured within a divine and ethical paradigm. The Islamic perspective on freedom, as elucidated by Ayatollah Khamenei, emphasizes the removal of oppressive constraints while simultaneously defining a moral and spiritual framework that guides human conduct. This duality ensures that freedom is not merely the absence of external restrictions but also the presence of enabling

conditions that allow individuals to achieve their highest potential within a divinely ordained moral order.

In liberalism, negative freedom is promoted; this means that liberalism emphasizes the elimination of physical and external coercion in individuals' choices. Ayatollah Khamenei, in this regard, asserts that "in Western culture, freedom is constrained by external barriers—social, political, economic, and the like." That is, freedom is viewed solely through the lens of removing external obstacles. However, from the perspective of Islam, beyond external barriers such as political and economic constraints and obstacles to freedom, there also exists a series of internal barriers that restrict human freedom. These internal barriers are more significant, more perilous, and more challenging to overcome than external ones. Only those individuals who have first managed to remove or partially overcome these internal barriers, liberating their hearts and souls, can effectively dismantle the external obstacles to freedom and bring the oppressors of freedom to their knees" (Khamenei, 1986).

That notion of freedom perceives freedom through the lens of nudity and ultimately reduces it to the mere ability of an individual to participate in elections. However, in reality, those in power, with all their resources, manipulate the understanding and intellect of the individual, steering them to vote for the option that serves their interests. Simultaneously, countless forms of bondage shackle this human being—enslavement to employment, to corrupt systems, to whims and desires, to police oppression, to various forms of subjugation stemming from the pressures of power, and to economic servitude (Khamenei, 1987a).

Liberalism, in its interaction with others, fails to uphold their freedom and dignity, both in the context of classical colonialism—where numerous countries such as India, Algeria, and Tunisia were colonized, resulting in the deaths of thousands and the plundering of their resources—and in the modern era, where it instigates conflicts such as those in Syria and Ukraine, with the aim of selling arms, weakening others, and exploiting their resources (Khamenei, 2023d). These proponents of liberal democracy, under the banners of liberalism and democracy, have devised a blueprint for global domination. In contrast, the Islamic Republic, through its religious democracy, brings forth freedom and, by adhering to the principles of religion, disrupts this very blueprint. This is the fundamental reason for the West's opposition and hostility toward the Islamic Republic (Khamenei, 2023a).

It should be clarified that the present argument does not imply that Ayatollah Khamenei denies or rejects what Isaiah Berlin conceptualizes as negative freedom. On the contrary, freedom from external coercion, political oppression, and arbitrary interference is explicitly acknowledged in his discourse as a necessary dimension of human freedom. However, the central claim of this study is that, from Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, the mere presence of restrictions or limitations should not automatically be interpreted as a negation of freedom. Certain forms of limitation—particularly those grounded in moral, spiritual, or rational considerations—are not viewed as antithetical to freedom, but rather as conditions for its realization at a higher level.

Therefore, the argument is not that Ayatollah Khamenei replaces negative freedom with positive freedom, but rather that he situates negative freedom within a broader framework in which certain limitations are reinterpreted as integral components of positive freedom rather than violations of liberty.

The purpose of invoking Berlin's distinction in this study is therefore not to suggest a direct theoretical affiliation or self-identification, but rather to offer an analytical framework through which Ayatollah Khamenei's views on freedom can be more precisely explained and critically assessed. By employing the positive-negative freedom distinction as a conceptual tool, it becomes possible to demonstrate that not every form of limitation or constraint necessarily stands in opposition to freedom. Berlin's notion of positive freedom provides a useful explanatory lens for understanding how freedom may coexist with, and even require, particular forms of constraint. Accordingly, this framework helps clarify why, in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought, freedom cannot be reduced to the mere absence of external interference, and why some restrictions are interpreted not as violations of freedom but as integral elements of a more substantive and meaningful conception of freedom.

To accurately comprehend the concept of freedom from the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei, it is essential to delineate the meaning and essence of freedom as articulated by him.

4. Human Freedom as a Foundation of Legislation

"One of the pillars of legislation is human freedom" (Khamenei, 2012). Ayatollah Khamenei, in his numerous speeches, has extensively addressed the issue of human freedom, presenting it as one of the fundamental principles within the legislative framework of Islam. A prominent example of freedom in Islamic legislation is the matter of establishing social and governmental laws. In this context, he emphasizes the role of the people in determining their own destiny through participation in social and political processes. The freedom to choose leaders and officials of the society, the freedom of expression, and constructive criticism of the government are among the practical manifestations of freedom in the Islamic system that he highlights. Within the economic system of Islam, individual freedom is also a cornerstone of transactions, as every individual is free to engage in business, trade, and investment, in accordance with the principle of (People have control over their own wealth).

5. Freedom Based on Monotheism

The relationship between duty and freedom is a complex and debated topic in philosophy, with various philosophers offering different perspectives. Some view freedom as the ability to do one's duty, while others see duty as a restriction on freedom. According to Hegel, the duty is "a restriction not on freedom, but only on freedom in the abstract, i.e. on Unfreedom". Right and duty restrict the arbitrariness as abstract, formal freedom. (Vieweg, 2021, p.400) Abstract freedom, in its essence, signifies freedom devoid of any consideration for moral or social responsibilities and constraints. Paradoxically, such a conception of freedom can culminate in a form of "unfreedom," as the individual, unbound by any regard for others or society, may

gravitate toward self-serving or destructive behaviors. From this perspective, duty is not merely a limitation but rather a pathway to achieving "positive freedom" that is freedom within the framework of moral and social responsibilities and obligations, enabling the individual to engage constructively and meaningfully within society. Thus, duty is conceptualized as a facilitative force that assists the individual in transcending abstract and unconditional freedom, thereby attaining genuine and affirmative freedom. Immanuel Kant connected freedom and duty, suggesting acting on desire is being subject to it, thus not free (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2022). Conversely, some argue that duty restricts freedom (Vieweg, 2021, p.400). They suggest rights, the state, or any imposed duty limit freedom.

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, the fundamental basis of human freedom is tawhid (monotheism). Tawhid is defined as the belief in God and the rejection of taghut (false deities); it is the worship of God and the refusal to worship anything other than Him. As stated in the Quran: "Come to a word common between us and you: that we worship none but God and associate nothing with Him" (Quran 3:64). The emphasis here is not merely on "associating none with Him" but rather on "associating nothing with Him"—meaning that nothing should be equated with or elevated to the status of God. Consequently, adherence to baseless traditions or social systems that are not rooted in divine will constitutes shirk (polytheism), and tawhid entails the rejection of such shirk. This is the essence of freedom: liberation from all constraints except servitude to God (Khamenei, 2012). The spirit of tawhid lies in the human being's refusal to submit to anything other than God. Submission to God means acting in accordance with divine commandments, accepting a system that is divinely inspired and rooted in divine thought, and recognizing as a leader or ruler only one who embodies divine values. Such a human being can advance infinitely in the realms of science, knowledge, and the discovery of the secrets and truths of creation. They can ascend endlessly through the spiritual and metaphysical stages of existence. However, if they submit to anything other than God, their wings will be clipped, and they will be prevented from soaring (Khamenei, 1987a). According to this understanding, freedom in Islam does not mean being free from all constraints; rather, it means embracing responsibility and fulfilling the duties that God has ordained for humanity. In other words, freedom in Islam is realized within the framework of fulfilling divine obligations. These obligations help human beings liberate themselves from the bondage of their desires and material inclinations, thereby attaining true freedom—or what may be termed positive freedom. Ayatollah Khamenei asserts that "freedom is the other side of the coin of duty" (Khamenei, 1998). In this context, freedom is not an abstract or unrestrained concept but is deeply intertwined with the notion of taklif (divinely mandated responsibility). It is through the fulfillment of these responsibilities that individuals achieve genuine liberation, transcending the limitations of their ego and materialistic tendencies. Thus, Islamic freedom is not a license for indulgence but a disciplined path toward spiritual and moral elevation, guided by divine principles. This perspective underscores the profound connection between human freedom and divine will, positioning freedom as a means of attaining proximity to God rather than as an end in itself.

6. Freedom Based on the Intrinsic Value of Humanity

John Locke, in explicating the foundation of human freedom, begins with the premise that human beings possess an inherently free nature. According to Locke, natural human freedom entails liberation from any superior power on Earth, ensuring that individuals are not subjected to

the will or legislative authority of others. Instead, they are governed solely by the law of nature as their guiding principle (Pinsker, n.d.). According to Ayatollah Khamenei, the fundamental flaw of the materialistic worldview lies in its confinement of human existence to a limited number of years in this transient world, ultimately condemning all to annihilation. Within this materialistic framework, certain freedoms—such as the freedom to indulge in base desires and anger—are granted. However, the most crucial aspect of the theory of freedom in Islam is liberation from the confines of materialism (Khamenei, 2023b). In this view, the starting point of freedom is not merely a natural right; rather, it is the recognition that human beings are not imprisoned within the bounds of material existence. Human freedom must be understood within an eternal and infinite framework.

From the perspective of thinkers such as Berlin, the positive conception of the term "freedom" arises from an individual's desire to be their own master. "This is what I mean when I say that I am rational, and that it is my reason that distinguishes me as a human being from the rest of the world. I wish above all to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being whose choices are his own, bearing responsibility for his acts, and able to explain them by reference to his own ideas and purposes." (Berlin, 2014, pp.194-195).

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, freedom is not merely a goal, but rather an ideal state of being for a human in pursuit of a higher objective. In Berlin's view, the value of freedom lies in the individual's ability to make decisions for oneself. However, from Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, the foundation of freedom is not solely that a person is rational and thus should be free; rather, freedom is intrinsic to human dignity and character so that one becomes a servant to none but God (Khamenei, 1987a).

7. Limitations on Freedom

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, in a religious government, people possess freedom, but it is a legitimate freedom, not an absolute one (Khamenei, 2023c). Positive freedom, which leads to the growth and perfection of a society, requires certain boundaries and limits to prevent corruption and chaos. In general, all forms of freedom in an Islamic society must be controlled, guided, and supervised by the ruling Islamic authority (Khamenei, 1987c). This perspective underscores the necessity of regulating freedoms within an Islamic framework to ensure that they contribute constructively to societal development. The emphasis is on a balanced approach where freedom is exercised within the confines of Islamic law and principles, thereby fostering a harmonious and morally upright community.

7.1. The Prevention of Corruption

The regulation of freedom is intended to ensure that such freedom does not lead to corruption (Khamenei, 1987c). "The nature of freedom is such that, in the absence of law and boundaries, it will inevitably transgress its limits, leading to excess, licentiousness, and undesirable outcomes" (Khamenei, 2018c). "Some individuals assumed that in the West, where there is freedom between men and women, lustful desires are less prevalent... However, in environments where restrictions exist, "man is covetous of what is forbidden". Now it has become evident that, on the

contrary, in societies where there are no boundaries or limits governing interactions between men and women, sexual desires grow stronger, more active, more violent, and more aggressive over time (Khamenei, 2016). In cultural matters whose effects are immediate, there are certain practices that must be prevented rather than permitted to operate freely, only to later attempt to address their consequences. This is because some actions are inherently irremediable. For instance, if obscene images were to be widely disseminated among the youth in a society, it would be impossible to counteract the damage caused." In this context, the Islamic framework emphasizes the necessity of imposing boundaries to safeguard societal morality and prevent the erosion of ethical values. Thus, the Islamic system advocates for a proactive approach in curbing activities that threaten the moral fabric of society, rather than adopting a reactive stance that seeks to mitigate their consequences after the fact.

7.2. The Prohibition of Self-Harm

Under the pretext of possessing freedom and autonomy, individuals, do not have the right to jeopardize their own personal interests. Inflicting harm upon one's own life or property is also prohibited. This constitutes a fundamental and essential boundary between the concept of freedom and that in other perspectives and human cultures. However, the prohibition of self-harm under the guise of freedom is a personal obligation; that is, no government, state, or legal system has the right to compel an individual to uphold their own rights (Khamenei, 1987b). Thus, two critical points emerge here: first, an individual is not so free as to be permitted to harm themselves. Second, the primary entity responsible for preventing self-harm is the individual themselves, and governments may not intervene in this matter or disrupt an individual's freedom unless the act of self-harm has collective consequences.

7.3. The Prohibition of Inzilat (Submission to Oppression)

Inzilat (submission to oppression) is impermissible (Khamenei, 1987b). Inzilat refers to the act of surrendering to injustice, remaining silent in the face of tyranny, or accepting degradation. An individual cannot, under the pretext of personal freedom, perpetrate injustice or remain passive in the presence of oppression.

7.4. Freedom with the Constraint of Preserving Culture

"Our culture ... guarantees and secures our independence, as well as our freedom. Those who, in the name of freedom, promote licentiousness in society are not free." (Khamenei, 2018b). Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes that cultural officials in the country must be vigilant to ensure that, under the pretext of freedom, some individuals do not harm the nation's culture or promote foreign cultural elements. No rational person would permit such actions. (Khamenei, 2014).

7.5. Freedom within the framework of law

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, in society, freedom means being subject to laws established by consent within a commonwealth, ensuring the protection of individual liberties. Ayatollah Khamenei also points out that freedom does not mean violating the law of society. From Ayatollah Khamenei's viewpoint, the law is derived from Islamic Sharia. Yet, everyone agrees that the law can impose limitations on freedom. He declares: "The framework of freedom in our

nation is delineated by our Constitution and the legal statutes of the country, all of which are profoundly inspired by the sacred principles of Islamic Sharia.” Furthermore, “within our nation, it is inherently irrational for an individual to expect to enjoy freedom while simultaneously acting in contravention of the established laws.” (Khamenei, 2018a).

Conclusion

The examination of Ayatollah Khamenei's perspectives on freedom reveals that he conceptualizes freedom not merely as liberation from external constraints, but within a deeper and more comprehensive framework, intricately linked to divine obligations and social and moral responsibilities. According to his view, true freedom, or what can be termed “positive freedom” is realized when individuals, in addition to being free from external barriers, achieve moral and spiritual growth in alignment with monotheistic teachings. In Islam, freedom is not defined as unconditional liberation but is instead framed within a context that encompasses divine duties, religious and social values, and individual and collective responsibilities. Thus, legitimate freedom can only lead to a dynamic and healthy society when it is accompanied by adherence to divine and legal boundaries. Furthermore, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes that freedom in Islam, in contrast to materialistic Western approaches, fosters spiritual and moral development in humans and, by being bound to Islamic law and culture, prevents corruption and chaos. Ultimately, Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective demonstrates that freedom is not only a natural right of humanity but is also intertwined with responsibility and duty. It is only under these conditions that one can transcend abstract freedom and attain real freedom. According to the author's research, Ayatollah Khamenei has delivered numerous speeches and written extensively on political freedom, economic freedom, women's freedom, freedom of expression, and social freedoms, each of which can be explored in greater detail in separate articles.

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