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Freedom or Arbitrariness: A Social and Philosophic Analysis

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Abstract: The freedom theme has always been in the centre of life and philosophical and political discourse. Freedom is one of the magic words causing many positive emotions in everyday life. Certain social and philosophical studies highlight the ways of replacing traditional and, sometimes, spontaneous absolutization of human freedom at an empirical level of social consciousness. It lies in achieving desired results and being entitled to choose what to achieve. The difference between these “formulas” is obvious. In the second case, one can observe one's acceptance of certain restrictions of freedom due to social reality and understanding that it can only be fully realized through self-restraint. However, one needs to come to such conclusions on one's own. Practice shows that the categorical power of authorities in terms of citizens' duties mostly leads to opposite results. Therefore, more than ever, it is essential to develop a permanent, well-developed, multi-level humanitarian programme for working with the population based on social and philosophical studies. The state needs to build the “net” of permanent special state-owned institutions since it will improve the quality of public administration, pave the way for tolerance and successful compromises. The ultimate goal of this article is to form a conscious (rational) civic position and self-determination as a result of one's full awareness of responsibility for one's decisions.

Keywords: *lack of restrictions, effective development, models of upbringing, philosophical and political discourse, spontaneous absolutization, persistence of power.*

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1. Introduction

The freedom theme has always been in the center of life and philosophical and political discourse. Freedom is one of the magic words causing many positive emotions in everyday life. It is characterized by 1) an extraordinary attractiveness of content and extreme versatility of use; 2) constant and everlasting influence on human life (individual and social) in all its manifestations and all spheres. The liberty concept is the core of liberal democracy. The abundance of today's publications and speeches of politicians postulate the idea about optimal solution of all problems with the help of freedom. Without it, one cannot achieve self-improvement or build an independent state. It is the freedom that is seen as the primary way of survival and one of those few axiological views underlying the worldview of the most developed countries (Gerasymova et al., 2019; Maksymchuk et al., 2020; Melnyk et al., 2019; Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Onishchuk et al., 2020; Sheremet et al., 2019).

At the same time, such slogans as "For Your Freedom and Ours!", "One's Freedom is Everyone's Freedom!" always inspire people, even though not always making their lives better. Human freedom is the summit of happiness and, yet, one wonders if it is even possible. Today, one witnesses the freedom of migrants (most often, against native citizens' freedom), the free press (and freedom of deception), the freedom of lynching. An obvious confusion of the liberal and democratic elite has been caused by certain "cognitive dissonance" between positive knowledge about freedom, underlying models of upbringing the negative consequences of their practical implementation. But, by the words Sartre, man is doomed to be free cos he is only a "project" by the fact of birth, he is always unfinished; therefore he all time change himself but in his own choice. (Sartre, 2011). Therefore, it is relevant to study the lexeme "*liberty*" in a philosophical context and implement the obtained results. As noted by Orlyk, and Stezhko (2019), "the diversity of philosophical trends combined with negligent attitude to philosophy and its superficial understanding and interests, is able today to confuse and even to distort also substantially the rational basis of everyday life" (Orlyk, and Stezhko, 2019, p. 153). Consequently, rational philosophy is considered to be the methodology of this study since it ensures the maximum realization of human cognitive capacity. Philosophy as methodology, using a system of categories (*freedom-necessity*) based on such principles as objectivity, rationality, determinism and logic, requires them to be consistent and stable at all the stages of cognition and practical implementation.

The above-mentioned aspects prompt the profound study of freedom as an emotional term, scientific concept and philosophical category. Given the fact that such studies exceed the limits of an article, **the aim and objectives** of this article are to conduct a social and philosophical analysis of an issue of realizing the *freedom* concept and develop verbal and evaluative models of upbringing.

Research methods include the following: *theoretical methods* – analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, balancing the abstract and the concrete, semantic analysis, analogy, generalization, systematization; empirical methods – survey, questionnaire, conversation, comparative analysis of survey results and their further synthesis in conclusions.

2. Identifying Freedom with Arbitrariness

Important are the fundamental researches of the freedom category, firstly classic works. Popular is the understanding of freedom as the studied necessity, the identify freedom and knowledge (Spinoza, 2001); Hegel's idea that "the origin of the very necessity concludes in the freedom" (Hegel, 1977, p. 339), close to words of Spinoza; Hobbes says about the compatibility of freedom and the need for natural and civil liberty (Hobbes, 1965); Schopenhauer understands freedom as a subjective principle but underlines the multiplicity of its display (Schopenhauer, 2000). Analysis examples of the freedom concept are possible to see in modern philosophical researches, often in connection with various spheres of public life - history (Orlyk & Orlyk, 2019), economics (Stezhko & Shalimova, 2016), culture (Holm, 2019), rights (Osyadla, 2016), religion (Matlasevich, 2013). However the social sciences and humanities representatives, which are linked with the formation of verbal and assessments models of person upbringing (for example psycholinguistics), pay not enough attention to this problem. However, the representatives of social sciences and humanities who deal with the development of verbal-and evaluative models of upbringing (psycholinguists) do not pay sufficient attention to this particular issue. Therefore, it is vital to continue studying the *freedom* concept. In preparing this article for publication, the authors conducted an empirical study among the students from the Central Ukrainian National Technical University to determine how they understand the meaning of freedom. Thus, over 100 students participated in a written survey and were asked to complete the phrase "Freedom is ...". Answers should be quick, freehand.

The obtained results show that 81% of respondents understand freedom in the following ways: *no restrictions, harassment, prohibition in general;*

absolute independence from anyone and anything; comfort, limitless hope; happiness; when you decide where to go, what to do, how to do, with whom to do; when you do not depend on someone but live your way of life; ability to do whatever you want; wind; a bird in the sky; unlimited actions; no bans at all.

At the same time, 11% of respondents consider freedom as *thinking; when you express your point freely; when you express your opinion without fear; lack of limits to consciousness* and 8% of them as *the right of choice*.

This, most students identify freedom with the lack of any restrictions or bans and absolute independence, which is, in fact, arbitrariness. Indeed, only 8% of respondents associate freedom with the right to choose.

Next, the respondents needed to complete the phrase “Arbitrariness is ...” It turns out that 72% of respondents understand arbitrariness as *injustice; anarchy; actions contrary to certain norms; chaos; corruption; negative factors; something which is not always good; a sick mind*. It is important to note that 11% of respondents did not answer or did not know what to write (*don't know; no idea*). Still, 10% of respondents see arbitrariness as *the freedom to decide for oneself; actions controlled by an individual; an extraordinary choice; the natural right to do something; a free behaviour*. It means *no borders or unmanageability* for 7% of respondents.

As one can see, the time-related distribution of questions caused some confusion among respondents since they either added expressive negative connotation to the definition of arbitrariness or did not answer at all. Yet, 7% of respondents almost gave a close to the correct answer, which is “*no borders*”. It should be noted that empirical studies conducted by Bubnova and Kazachenko (2018) showed similar results.

A partial overview of the survey results indicates 1) some significant gaps in respondents' understanding of *freedom*, mostly in terms of some absolutization of individual positive components of its content. Given the differences in interpretation of freedom by different people and groups from various social spheres, it becomes clear that freedom is not merely a term with only positive content but an extremely complex, multi-level and contradictory mixture of content components; 2) the common-place identification of freedom with arbitrariness (as a result of an improper understanding of the *freedom* concept) shows that philosophical discourse about the relation between freedom and arbitrariness is not complete. One example is a courtroom dialogue between two lawyers: A: “My defendant is a free person; therefore, he has a right to wave his fist in any direction; B: “Your client's fist movement should stop at my client's face. Consequently, even well-educated people may face some problems trying to differentiate between freedom and arbitrariness which could exceed only local problems.

Thus, methodological analysis of the *freedom* category should precede a profound analysis of the *freedom-arbitrariness* concepts since *arbitrariness* has no philosophical status. Once, their identification has been incorporated into verbal and evaluative models of upbringing without conducting methodological analysis, one cannot optimize social life through comprehensive personal development. It is because arbitrariness is the misuse of freedom. It means a violation of others' freedom, illogical actions. Ukrainian dictionaries offer negative interpretations of *arbitrariness* and German and English ones mostly negative.

One should start analyzing the *freedom* category in the context of human nature. Indeed, an anthropological paradigm specifies philosophical truths to optimize them in practice. According to Nietzsche (1990), "in man creature and creator are united: in man, there is not only matter, shred, excess, clay, mire, folly, chaos; but there is also the creator, the sculptor, the hardness of the hammer, the divinity of the spectator and the seventh day – do ye understand this contrast?" (Nietzsche, 1990, p. 226). Given that freedom is one of the determining factors in contradictory human, it has different characteristics, which are not only positive. Below are some characteristics of freedom without which one cannot make life better: 1) free decisions are always *contradictory* and ambivalent (Stezhko & Stezhko, 2018); 2) *responsibility* is an integral part of the *freedom* category; 3) freedom is the tragedy of human life since being unable to change anything, one is doomed for freedom by the very fact of birth and "cursed by it" because of responsibility (Sartre, 2011); "in fact, people do not need freedom which is impossible without responsibility and the very responsibility frightens them" (Freud, 1930, p. 56).

One should also be able to isolate relativity as a feature of the *freedom* category. The variety of free choices is always finite, limited by external circumstances, such as determination and necessity.

The history of philosophy mostly interprets freedom as relative and burdened with responsibility. Religious philosophy introduces the "free will – what for" concept so that people can feel the "limits" of freedom, and recant a sin, which means being responsible.

Thus, a philosophical analysis of the *freedom* category is transformed into the following methodological requirement for social sciences and humanities: actions of an individual or social group *cannot* be free if they absolutize a positive aspect of freedom, do not assume responsibility and, at the same time, assume the possibility of choosing an *unlimited* list of options. According to rational philosophy, either abstract or ideological interpretation of freedom can lead to the opposite results. Unfortunately, "political

analytics dominates over philosophic explanation of complex democratic processes making the inner basis of the social human being more obscure instead of clear identification of human values and future global prospects” (Khmil, 2016, p. 47).

One might agree that the government largely ignore “political analytics” in the implementation of state tasks. However, a closer inspection may show that it is not entirely “unfortunately” since the authorities have some reasons to react in this way. This article, first of all, assumes the problem of the quality of theoretical studies on social reality. It should be noted that the mentioned disadvantages are not dominant and are mostly objective and subjective. However, it does not mean that they are not worthy of attention since they sometimes significantly reduce the effectiveness of research.

According to some representatives of psycholinguistics, such free interpretations of analysis are sometimes possible. “Universal elements inherent in unity disappear during analysis. Such analysis which leads one to products which have lost their universal features is not such in the true sense of the word” (Vygotsky, 1982, p. 14). Understandably, such analysis and separation from its paired synthesis cannot give unequivocally scientific results for using them in a practice. If one takes into account insufficient links with philosophy as a methodology of cognition; insufficient consideration of multilevel nature and dynamics of social processes; absolutization of some atypical examples, features or “favourite” provisions; certain dogmatization of knowledge; identification of review and analysis; certain simplification of the diversity of social reality; isolation of “scientific” laws from a sensually-and emotional vision of everyday life; elements of conformism and conventionalism, it becomes clear that there are reasons that somewhat diminish the effectiveness of scientific research, including that on the *freedom* concept as a basic one, partially distorting its real course in space and time.

However, the authorities today need optimal scientific recommendations under difficult conditions of management since human freedom is an area of activity in which a democratic state cannot interfere. Using legal norms, it should only outline the limits within which an individual acts freely and maximize the limits of freedom in the context of a liberal-democratic line). The practice of democratic countries shows that this way of personality development is exhausting its possibilities. One can see that certain confusion of the political elite leads to deviant behaviour among youth, mass aggression and even bloodshed.

Using philosophy, the authors of the article have outlined the depth of the problem, without its apocalyptic nature, though. Significant problems pose significant yet solvable tasks which philosophy as methodology and social sciences and humanities need to accomplish both in research and their applied sphere. Therefore, it is necessary to build a new paradigm of research that will coincide with the depth and scale of real-world problems.

This new paradigm needs to be based on a clear methodological framework since the diversity of philosophical areas combined with a superficial understanding of philosophy and interests can significantly distort the basis of everyday life. Contrary to total domination of irrational philosophy in the postmodern era, one should remember about the priority of the *rational* which includes the sensual, irrational experience of the average person into the overall rational system, rather than neglects it (which is not even possible). It is also essential to highlight a bit forgotten philosophical principle of concrete truth since abstract truth can form only abstract, life-distant models of upbringing.

3. Analyzing the concepts of freedom and arbitrariness and designing effective models of upbringing

Thus, the authors of the article have formulated methodological requirements which one can use to meaningfully analyze the concepts of *freedom* and *arbitrariness* and develop effective models of upbringing.

Using the principle of concrete truth, one first should determine the priorities of research and the leading direction of analysis, which is maximum freedom of an individual or some way of improving the country and even civilization. Given the priority of maximum individual freedom, research needs to be in the form of postmodern narrative which seeks to find optimal solutions. If a state or civilization is the priority, which is “the road to perfection pre-ordained for men” (Freud, 1930, p. 22), one should mind that “the development of civilization imposes restrictions on it, and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions” (Freud, 1930, p. 21). Using this priority, this research places the key characteristics of the *freedom* category (contradiction, relativity, responsibility) at the heart of the paradigm, bringing them to the level of principles and methodological “frameworks” of research. At the same time, one can observe how analysis changes its direction. Thus, a somewhat disturbing and confusing statement, that is “if there are more and more young people who view freedom as a complete disregard for society, their very existence is under threat” (Bubnova & Kazachenko, 2018, p. 21) proves the real “dead end” of psycholinguistic studies on the freedom since freedom as a complete

ignoring of society is arbitrariness, rather than freedom. Given that arbitrariness is the opposite of freedom (being absolute, without any responsibility and restriction), it should be studied differently.

Nevertheless, one wonders why people so easily identify them in everyday life. It is because freedom and arbitrariness are not opposites since they are united by absoluteness. Nietzsche (1990) explains, “measure is alien to us, we admit it; it is the immeasurable that excites us and we only find *our* bliss when the greatest *danger* threatens us” (Nietzsche, 1990, p. 225). An individual chooses a correct variant of his or her future actions from the contradictory diversity of reality. Concerning intentions, he or she can subjectively choose whatever he or she wants, even murder of the opponent and, yet, only in mind. When coming to reality, the freedom of mind loses a moment of absoluteness (the latter does not exceed “the line of limits”). Now, it is determined by external circumstances, necessity, responsibility and becomes relative. Arbitrariness seeks “the endless” till the very end and absolutizes everything, including its intentions and their actions. Therefore, one can understand Nietzsche’s greatest danger of such actions as a prediction which becomes real.

A methodological analysis within the framework of this paradigm also points out to the reason behind fundamental irresistibility of arbitrariness. Although according to Nietzsche (1990), human nature is a contradictory diversity of positive and negative aspects, it still has a single core, which is interest. It “is the beginning of all our thoughts and all our actions” (Helvetius, 1938, p. 34). The irrational power of an (unsatisfied) interest is commensurate with the striving for arbitrariness and absolute rather than relative freedom. The conducted empirical research also shows the closeness of arbitrariness and interest. Indeed, respondents state that “freedom without restrictions” is happiness, as well as “interest is simply to say what everybody considers necessary for their happiness” (Holbach, 1963, p. 311). Being rather self-centred, interest easily crosses limits of morality, society. As a result, asociality and immorality of arbitrary actions of large masses of people cause alarm on a global scale.

Thus, the obtained results prove that arbitrariness is congenital, irrational, asocial, immoral and destructive. Such conclusions seem to be correct and, yet, not exactly since one can observe the absolutization of negativism. At the same time, arbitrary actions are as ambivalent as free. The principle of concrete truth solves everything.

Social philosophy states that rationally justified freedom and irrational arbitrariness can coexist only in science (these are acceptable abstractions). In reality, an action can be either freely arbitrary or arbitrarily

free. However, free actions could sometimes cause certain confusion in the ruling elite which, for some reasons, can hardly be corrected by rational determination and material incentives, as advised by science. History has many examples when individual freedom can “go” against rational argumentation and material well-being. It can be evil and pride, as well as the cause of both personal and social catastrophes while accepting responsibility for what has been done. Powerlessness can urge the authorities to apply force. Still, the force cannot be a way out of a collision of free persons. When moving to arbitrariness, the manifestations of freedom deviance are gradually but steadily transforming into “normality” on a global scale. Given its substitution of truth with post-truth, interpretation, simulacrum, the postmodern era facilitates the neglect of mind and the absolutization of subjectivism. The authors of the article believe that these are manifestations of a spiritual crisis. Politicians are attempting to transform new theoretical studies into new recommendations and new applied models of upbringing, that is the request for a new spiritual age. Undoubtedly, such recommendations and models of verbal and evaluative models of upbringing should also be developed within the framework of certain methodological requirements, including the priority of rationality and the principle of concrete truth. Analyzing a sufficiently large period of history, one can assume that it has something to do with negative dialectics. It assumes that, when developing irrationality, a primitive cult of a mind returns to a form of concrete and richer certainty (the priority of the mind), which can take into account emotional and irrational moments, “mysticism”, thus balancing and stabilizing them within the framework of the common rational system.

When one extrapolates this philosophical position to research areas of social sciences and humanities, it becomes apparent that allusions to their “insufficient scientificity” are justified only partially since the rational determination of science may include the irrational. Moreover, if one takes into account the contradictions of human nature, the multidimensionality of the psyche, the fleeting nature of being, rational explanations and predictions cannot *fully* cover social reality.

This statement significantly changes the field of scientific thinking. Indeed, the determination of permissible *limits* of a rational approach to studying the *freedom* concept becomes as much important as the assurance of freedom with the help of rationality. After all, the “symbiosis” of methods, approaches, variants of the rational and the irrational should be the systematized and profound rational core, aligned with the basic principles and categories of philosophy.

The areas and results of these studies direct one to a narrower “paradigm”. After all, the applied field of social sciences and humanities needs radical changes in the narrative. *Rationally developed* models of upbringing should include irrational “achievements” of postmodernism as additional but commensurate means of influence. At the same time, it is not necessary to rely on these recommendations as the only possible ones within this paradigm. It is only about some optimal ways to solve this particular issue. For instance, one chooses mutual understanding between individuals and groups, rather than a rational explanation, as a meta-standard for conflict resolution since rational arguments concerning the actor’s freedom of action lose priority over sensory ones. It is essential to study the causes and extend the precedents of partial refusal from absolute freedom in small social groups. Besides, it is vital to show that there are possibilities of preserving personal safety, self-affirmation and emotionally rich life in legitimate groups with positive freedom. In the postmodern era, there is a wide field for developing verbal and evaluative models of upbringing using psycholinguistics through a (rationally directed) game of interpretations, post-truth streams and feeling-and emotional images. Modern practice shows the sufficiently high efficiency of such transcoding of the human psyche. One should also remember about the possibility of improving material life conditions using new forms of rationality which, hopefully, will be developed in the nearest future.

4. Conclusions

Thus, social and philosophical studies highlight the ways of replacing traditional and, sometimes, spontaneous absolutization of human freedom at an empirical level of social consciousness. It lies in achieving desired results and being entitled to choose what to achieve. The difference between these “formulas” is obvious. In the second case, one can observe one's acceptance of certain restrictions of freedom due to social reality and understanding that it can only be fully realized through self-restraint. However, one needs to come to such conclusions on one's own. Practice shows that the categorical power of authorities in terms of citizens' duties mostly leads to opposite results. Therefore, more than ever, it is essential to develop a permanent, well-developed, multi-level humanitarian programme for working with the population based on social and philosophical studies. The state needs to build the “net” of permanent special state-owned institutions since it will improve the quality of public administration, pave the way for tolerance and successful compromises. The ultimate goal of this article is to form a

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