

Гонтар Василь Едуардович
Hontar Vasiliy
Національний університет біоресурсів
і природокористування, Київ (Україна),
National University of Bioresources and Environmental
Management of Ukraine Kyiv (Ukraine)
vasyahontar@gmail.com
ORCID ID: [0000-0002-8237-9733](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8237-9733)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34768/r94f-0y07>



Nr: 3 (2021)
e-ISSN 2658-154X

Metaphysical and political freedom: overcoming the «conceptual abyss»

Abstract

The article is devoted to the presentation of metaphysical ideas about the free will of the individual, hidden in political ideologies, through conceptual analysis and the thesaurus of analytical philosophy. In this paper, we analyze the extent to which the metaphysical postulates of the most famous ideological projects of modernism (communism, Nazism and liberalism) are compatible with modern theories of freedom in analytical metaphysics, and show their poor compatibility. At the same time, we have proposed an alternative to modern ideologies in the form of republicanism, which does not seem to have unsolvable metaphysical problems in its own definition of freedom. In this article we have demonstrated that the fundamental metaphysics of individual freedom is a legitimate criterion for assessing the relevance, validity and relevance of political ideologies, as it is not an abstract detached theorizing, but the founder of our ideas about the constitution of normative in terms of personal responsibility.

Key words: freedom, modern ideologies, liberalism, Marxism, right statism, republicanism, compatibilism, incompatibility, metaphysical libertarianism, counterfactual analysis.

The polysemantic nature of the term “freedom” leads to the isolation of the understanding of freedom in socio-political discourse from the fundamental metaphysical problems of freedom. This, in turn, threatens the internal normative coherence of political doctrines, the legitimacy of the requirements of moral and ethical responsibility, which are formed within these doctrines and the compatibility of the programs of these doctrines with the structure of our world. The main problem and concealment of metaphysical foundations of political ideas about freedom is that the implementation of such political programs can lead to systematic institutionalized suppression of personal freedoms in the complete absence of understanding by both the people and supporters of political ideologies. When it is unclear how the metaphysical level of ideological doctrine does not allow the conditions for the exercise of free will, people can choose a political system in which human freedom and responsibility can not be justified, and this threatens serious socio-political and anthropological crises.

In modern philosophy, the question of freedom has been raised many times, but the understanding of the concept of “freedom” in political philosophy is very different from the understanding of this concept in metaphysics. The concept of “freedom” has been studied since ancient times: from Plato and Aristotle to the philosophers of the New Age - Hume, Kant, Locke, Hobbes, Smith, Rousseau, Montesquieu and others. Until the modern era, the fundamental and applied issues of freedom were considered by the authors in a synthetic connection, ie socio-political ideas about freedom were consistently substantiated and derived from metaphysical ideas. But in the twentieth century, metaphysical (fundamental) problems of freedom of will and political freedom (normative aspects of freedom) diverged into isomorphic separate discourses. We are interested in the revival of the classical tradition of reflection on the hierarchical connection between the levels of freedom. Therefore, we will analyze the metaphysical foundations of modern political ideologies, using the conceptual resources of modern analytical philosophy of free will, ie appealing to compatibilistic^{1, 2, 3, 4} metaphysical libertarian^{5, 6} and hard incompatibilist⁷ theories. Compatibilism in the question of freedom of will presupposes its compatibility with the structure of our world (with causal determinism, some compatibilistic theories presuppose compatibility with

¹ Denial Dennett, *Brainstorms: philosophical essays on mind and psychology*. Gloucester: MIT Press, 1981, 336–338.

² Harry Frankfurt, *Alternative possibilities and moral responsibility*, *Moral responsibility and alternative possibilities. Essays on the Importance of alternative possibilities*, ed. by D. Widerker & M. McKenna. Burlington: Ashgate, 2003, 339–345.

³ John Martin Fischer, *Deep control: essays on free will and value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 243.

⁴ Peter Frederick Strawson, 1962 [1993], *Freedom and Resentment*, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Reprinted Fischer and Ravizza 1993, 45–66.

⁵ Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2000, 67–88.

⁶ Robert Hilary Kane, *The Oxford handbook on free will*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 672.

⁷ Derk Pereboom, *Living without free will*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 225–227.

causal indeterminism). Compatibilistic theories - this is the most popular family of theories. Despite some differences in conceptualization, they are united by naturalism, they do not require the postulation of supernatural substances and special causal properties of human decisions, and they do not provide for revisions to the notion of responsibility. Incompatibilists argue that free will is incompatible with causal determinism, and some incompatibilists insist that free will is incompatible with indeterminism. Incompatibilists are divided into two opposing camps – there are those who say that free will is incompatible with determinism, and there is free will, and determinism is a false metaphysical position. - they are called metaphysical libertarians. There are those who believe that there is determinism and there is no free will, because it is incompatible with it - this position is characterized as a rigid incompatibilism. But there are not many representatives of these (incompatible) positions, because they have big problems with justification. The most popular and widespread position is compatibilism. Political doctrines that have metaphysical assumptions that deny the existence of personal freedom have the same problem as rigid incompatibilism – the impossibility of discussing personal responsibility; political ideologies that exaggerate the role of the agent have the same problem as his metaphysical libertarianism - the inability to justify the existence of an agent whose solution would be causally autonomous. We believe that authors working in the field of political philosophy and political theory should take into account not only their own ideological preferences, but also the possibility of metaphysical and logical compatibility of their programs with the fundamental structure of the world.

We seek to create a “conceptual bridge” between discursive approaches to understanding “freedom”. Given that most authors of political theories do not realize what fundamental theory of freedom is needed to metaphysically support their teachings, the aim of our article is to explain the concept of free will of the agent underlying the assumptions of political doctrines and compare these teachings. We seek to find out whether the realization of individual freedom of will is realized in the implementation of their ideological program settings.

Modern ideology

The first modern ideology proposed for consideration is Marxism. Marxism has a very specific relationship with freedom, one might say “dialectical”. On the one hand, Marxism advocates the liberation and freedom of people, and on the other - according to this doctrine, "being determines consciousness", there is historical and economic determinism, everything in the world determines the movement of matter, and agents are not individuals but classes. Industrial relations determine how the representatives of certain classes will think, what will be their beliefs, motivation, goals and interests. If we take a Marxist position, it is logical to assume that all people are “thrown” (“*Geworfenheit*” in Heidegger’s terminology) into a world in which certain economic

and production relations prevail even before their birth; according to Marx, these relations shape the consciousness of people, determine their motivations and views. As A. Didrov and R. Penner write: «for K. Marx, the search for the essence-abstract of freedom is not important at all, the idea of realizing the self-rupture of reality is paramount.»⁸

An interesting fact is that Karl Marx is not a philosopher of ethics at all, he is not so interested in the question of the ethical justification of the need to liberate peoples. "At the level of pathos" in his works there is still a kind of "call of the liberator", but theoretically Marx believes that revolution and communism are historically determined by the laws of motion of matter. This is not a question of bad or good, but only a question of the subordination of human social existence to the "natural laws of motion of matter," which Marx simply postulates in his speculative constructions, rethinking Hegel's systematic teachings. It turns out that class liberation and class struggle are a matter of the luck of some people to be in a certain class at a certain stage of historical development and the failure of others to be in a certain class at a certain stage of historical development. Even if communism took place, people would be doomed by birth to exist in a classless society, that is, they would be doomed only to those actions that would support the existence of this type of social organization. Thus, the way of human existence is determined and it is not even possible to act differently (even in the sense of counterfactual analysis), because according to Marx, history develops linearly. This also applies to class liberation as the last stage in the development of Marxist fatalistic metaphysics, because freedom of the individual (even weak combitalist freedom) is also impossible. According to Marx, only the actions of classes are of causal importance, but no man has control over the whole class within his individual control, because no man is a collection of other people and the economic and production relations between these people. Therefore, it turns out that class liberation and class struggle is not a rational conscious choice of individual subjects, but only a reflection of the production relations of society in the historical context, ie the question luck of some people to be in a certain class at a certain stage of historical development. According to Marx, the factors that determine the activities, character and goals of people are beyond individual control in both *regulatory* and *managerial* sense. Freedom is available to classes as groups of people, but not to people themselves individually – "there is no freedom, but there is liberation" – paradoxically it turns out that Marxists want to liberate people without recognizing the causal importance of the will of the people. Conditions for the existence of the agent as a source of control in Marxist metaphysics are impossible by definition, so the questions of individual freedom and moral responsibility are replaced by questions of individual luck to be in a certain class. Therefore, Marxist communist teaching can be called optimistic

⁸ Artur Dydrov, Regina Penner, New about freedom in the German philosophical tradition: I. Kant, G. Hegel, K. Marx, Bulletin of Khmel'nitsky State University, 2014, 28.

fatalism: utopian in the socio-economic sense, but totally unfree and incoherent in terms of individual freedom of will and personal moral and normative responsibility. Marxism acts as an incompatibilistic metaphysics because it denies individuals the possibility of individual causal influence on reality, because Marxists postulate that all factors influencing human actions are beyond their individual control. In Marxist theory, people are not free agents, but the result of a place in the structure of the social environment, which is determined by the circumstances given before the birth of specific people. Right-wing statist teachings, like the aforementioned left-wing statist teachings, have problems with fundamental freedom of will. Racism and the Nazism based on it are also quite fatalistic and incompatibilistic. To understand this, we can read the works of the ideological founder of the theory of racial inequality A. de Gobino, whose ideas were developed and tried to implement by the Nazis, building the 3rd Reich. O. Hoffman put it this way: «It is important to emphasize that first in the concept of Gobino as the main subject of consideration and the main subject of the historical process is race, or, for Gobino is synonymous, ethnicity⁹. In his opinion, social institutions do not determine the life of races (ethnic groups), but, on the contrary, are determined by them – «These are consequences, not causes.» We can see that racism insists that entire peoples, races and ethnic groups cannot act in such a way as to justify their existence by their actions because of their determinism in the characteristics they inherited from their ancestors. It should be noted that these traits, although claiming heredity, were by no means considered genetic in the modern sense of the word; they were understood more as mystical properties of the spirit of peoples and races. It is not clear what views (in the terminology of modern analytical metaphysics of free will) racists had on the freedom of members of their races - they are combitalists, incompatibilists or metaphysical libertarians, but it does not matter, as one can say for sure – in relation to other races they were hard incompatibilists. Because racists exclude for members of other races the opportunity to make the right choice, a choice compatible with the justification of their existence. They certainly do not recognize any agency for hundreds of millions, if not billions of people, that is, members of some races, according to racists, have no freedom at all to do morally right. This can be called selective incompatibilism and pessimistic fatalism in relation to the free will of certain groups. That is, some people, according to racist theorists, do not have the freedom to act so that their actions can be assessed as ethically correct from the standpoint of responsibility, and the factors that cause such an unpleasant situation are beyond the control of people themselves. because they are rooted in hereditary racial traits that humans themselves cannot choose. Even in the sense of counterfactual analysis, members of the “inferior races” cannot act in such a way as to at least justify their right to exist, racists believe. Therefore, what kind

⁹ Alexander Gofman, *Elitism and racism: philosophical and historical views of A. De Gobino*, *Society and Law*, no. 4 (6), 2004, 26.

of freedom, given the ethical assessment to establish the degree of responsibility of the representatives of these races, can we talk about, if at all in any of their actions racists will still end up dooming them to death. Freedom is the basis of responsibility; and if, regardless of one's actions, one's destiny is recognized as doomed in advance, what would "responsibility" and "freedom to act" mean for such doomed people? - Nothing, because for such people there is no freedom and moral and ethical responsibility in the racist paradigm, they are denied moral and rational agency, and hence freedom and responsibility. An alternative to Nazism and Communism is traditionally considered liberalism, this modern ideology is based on the freedom of the individual, unlike the other two ideologies, the freedom of each person for liberalism has the highest meaning. But liberalism also has problems with the metaphysical basis of the idea of freedom. The ideas of the English philosopher Sir I. Berlin became decisive for the self-positioning of liberals in discussions about the essence of political rights. He actually created "conceptual slots" for the modern "left" and "right" understanding of political rights and freedoms, ie his classification of freedoms, their division into "negative" and "positive" is a watershed in the debate on political rights¹⁰.

What can be said about these approaches, given the cartography of positions on free will in analytical philosophy. Negative freedom (freedom "from") is based on metaphysical libertarianism, a strong modal and autocausal understanding of free will. Because if we do not postulate strong freedom of will, which is necessary for strong responsibility, it is unclear how it is possible to morally justify those bad consequences for people that can be described in the category of "merit". Historically, the origins of liberal theories presupposed the existence of a metaphysical libertarian agent - for example, the classical liberals J. Locke, I. Kant and A. Smith were believers, so they allowed responsibility and merit in the strong sense provided by the substantial nature of the human soul. By negatively understanding freedom, we actually claim that people morally deserve everything they receive, but this does not go well with naturalistic theories, the thesis of the causal isolation of the physical world, biological data, and so on. Without the postulation of an agent-substance or abnormally causal events-decisions, it is difficult to explain how one can deserve something negative, provided that the very possibility of getting something depends on those factors that are beyond human control. Therefore, political liberals need to prove the existence or at least the possibility of the existence of a metaphysical libertarian agent, that is, to defend the truth of metaphysical libertarianism. Positive freedom (freedom "for"), in turn, correlates well with compatibility, it is obvious that it is not compatible with hard incompatibilism, as it hard incompatibilism excludes the possibility of the existence of freedom in any sense.

¹⁰ Oleg Davydov, *Negative and positive freedom in the context of social life*, Russian Journal of Education and Psychology, p. 5 (49), 2015, 216.

The compatibility of understanding free will as an opportunity to act voluntarily bypasses the problems of determinism, indeterminism, modal alternatives to do otherwise and the causality of the causal agent. However, the liability for such freedom will be more limited. And if we prove that the factors that causally determine human abilities are outside the limits of guiding control and really take place in our world, then the responsibility of people for their actual life and financial situation can be rightly questioned. Proponents of negative freedoms, liberals, to be consistent in their understanding of freedom and responsibility must 1) to justify the need for the existence of a metaphysical agent or anomalous causal significance of human decisions (which so far no one has succeeded) 2) or, speaking out against positive freedoms, in the case of proving, for example, a strong causal effect of genes^{11,12}, be consistent and advocate for absence compulsory maintenance of the disabled, frail elderly and orphans at the expense of the state and taxpayers. Because if we believe that the determination of intellectual abilities by genes that affect the possibility of decent work and life is not a reason to ensure positive freedoms (for a dignified existence), then why should we believe that orphanhood, age-related weakness or disability should be a reason to establish the right to benefits from positive freedoms? Both factors are not chosen by people, so inconsistently treat their role in the legitimacy of the justification of positive rights and freedoms.

Negative freedoms

In addition, negative freedoms, in addition to socially unacceptable consequences in the form of reasonableness of refusal to fund the disadvantaged, are based on a strong understanding of responsibility as the self-worth of merit, which implies a strong metaphysical freedom of will. Political liberalism without metaphysical libertarianism cannot defend the thesis that people deserve their position, which they come to through elections, which, in turn, without metaphysical libertarianism, are determined by factors beyond their control. Also, liberal ideology is fundamentally incomplete in its definition of freedom. For example, consistent liberal views prohibit regulating the income levels of large corporations, which will be able to get so rich that other entities will have virtually no opportunity to defend themselves against lobbying for anti-liberal laws that will benefit those corporations. We attribute this to the fact that the fundamental metaphysical understanding of freedom (as freedom of will), which historically and conceptually precedes liberalism, does not involve counterfactual analysis. The republican approach

¹¹ 11. Dorret Boomsma, Jurgen van Baal, *Genetic influences on childhood IQ in 5- and 7-year-old Dutch twins* // *Developmental Neuropsychology*. – 1998. – Vol. 14., 115–126.

¹² John Clinton Loehlin, *Partitioning environmental and genetic contributions to behavioral development* // *American Psychologist*. - 1989. - Vol. 44. – 1285–1292.

is fundamentally different. O. Glukhov comments on the position of the most famous republican F. Pettit: «The fundamental amendment that Pettit makes to the liberal understanding of freedom allows us to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal. Republicanism sees the source of political evil in the “human factor” – in “arbitrariness”, which leads to human dependence on man. The republican principle of freedom excludes the “human factor” from politics. According to the well-known thesis, the republic is the power of laws, not people. Consistently applying the principle of non-dominance as a litmus test to all areas of politics, Pettit reveals and neutralizes all “arbitrary” moments, obtaining a smooth regular version of political life, that is, nothing more than a political ideal.»¹³

If we understand freedom as non-dominance, then actions that have at least the potential to encroach on the freedom of others are considered unacceptable. That is, such an understanding of freedom is very well superimposed on the combitalist counterfactual analysis of the possibility of realizing one’s own desires, even if they were completely different. Liberalism does not have the conceptual resource to defend against its opponents, who can use liberal means to accumulate energy and resources to combat liberalism itself. With liberal ideology, it is possible to accumulate so many resources to destroy liberalism itself and abolish all liberal rules, but liberals, unaware of other people’s motives, have no reason or right to prevent their ideological enemies from reaching such power that they (enemies of liberalism) can to destroy liberalism and the liberals themselves. Therefore, from the republican point of view, it is necessary to theoretically and politically destroy liberalism, at least in order to exclude the very possibility of a state of affairs in which people who gain power under liberal rules will begin to destroy liberals themselves.

Republicanism, we can say, understands freedom as the inadmissibility of interfering in the affairs of others in all possible worlds – and this is a very compatibilistic analysis of freedom. In this respect, republicanism, unlike liberalism, does not set itself a “conceptual bomb” that will explode as soon as its opponents, following its own rules, become strong enough to establish a dictatorship and refute all previous rules of public life. Thus, just as the compatibility of the understanding of free will is conceptually better than the metaphysical libertarian understanding, so the republican understanding of political freedom is better than the liberal one. The republican analysis of political freedom as non-dominance is very similar to the counterfactual combitalist understanding of freedom as the ability to act according to one’s own will, even if it was different. If we turn over this compatibilistic understanding, we can conclude that republicanism understands freedom as the factual and counterfactual impossibility of acting against the freedom of others. Both compatibilism and republicanism operate in the space of counterfactual analysis, which we consider

¹³ Alexey Glukhiv, *Republicanism: correction of the" crooked hewn board*, *Philosophical and Literary Journal «Logos»*, vol. 28, no. 2 (123), 2018, 259.

the most productive. In metaphysics, counterfactual analysis does not lead to unsolvable conceptual problems, and in politics – to ideological suicide.

That is why we see the tandem of compatibilism and republicanism productive in both theoretical and practical terms – these teachings from different fields of knowledge can successfully complement each other, and this seems to be much more promising than liberalism in politics and libertarianism in metaphysics. About the advantages of republicanism over other ideologies of modernism – Marxist communism and “ideologies of the 3rd way” and say nothing. We have also demonstrated their metaphysical failure in terms of fundamental personal freedom even earlier when we have shown how these totalitarian ideologies destroy any agency of a large number of individuals (in the case of racism) and the agency of all individuals in general (in the case of Marxist communism).

In this article, we have considered the insurmountable difficulties faced by fundamental freedom of will, if we assume that the world really has hidden metaphysical attitudes of modern ideologies. Modern ideologies cannot satisfy the principle of correct notions of personal freedom, because communism and Nazism do not allow free will on the basis of which it would be possible to build a working theory of responsibility. Liberalism, on the other hand, presupposes the postulation of too strong an auto-causal agency and a strong moral and ethical responsibility, which cannot be well combined with the naturalistic system of the world. We have found a “golden mean” between these extremes in the form of republican doctrine. Using the conceptual apparatus of modern analytical metaphysics of free will, we have shown that there is a strong conceptual-structural similarity between the compatibilistic analysis of the metaphysics of freedom and the republican analysis of political freedom as non-dominance; this similarity is that both approaches appeal to counterfactual analysis. As we have shown, counterfactual analysis solves metaphysical problems by the free will of compatibilistic theory, and we have shown that with its help the republican program also successfully avoids metaphysical and practical-political problems. Based on this, we believe that further research at the intersection of political and metaphysical analysis of freedom in the space of counterfactual approach may have a conceptual perspective, scientific value and political utility.

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