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SOCIAL FREEDOM AND THE POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION

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Abstract: The study focuses on the theoretical-methodological analysis of the concept of social freedom as a special concept of individual autonomy in relation to the social conditions of its applicability. The aim of the analysis is to reveal and clarify the main political implications and normative claims that result from it for political theory. The thesis is formulated and argued in the article that the philosophical concept of social freedom in its applicability programmatically leads to a model of the politics of emancipation as a process of social transformation and political overcoming of recognized forms of unfreedom, historical forms of social oppression and domination. Social understanding of individual freedom becomes the normative basis of politics as a form of collective activity through which associated individuals govern the social conditions of their lives. By comparing the two basic forms of emancipatory politics – class politics and identity politics – the main problems of such an understanding of politics are discussed.

Keywords: moral autonomy, social freedom, normative political theory, politics of emancipation, Axel Honneth

Introduction

Normative political thought is generally characterized by its close connection to certain moral ideals. Ideals influence and determine our ideas about the proper political order and functioning of society; they enable us to evaluate and critically reflect on political practice, to formulate our demands and claims on political institutions. For modern political thought, such a normative ideal has become above all the idea of the freedom of the individual, as his capacity for autonomy and self-determination; 'of all the ethical values prevailing and competing for dominance in modern society, only one has been capable of leaving a truly lasting impression on our institutional order: freedom, i.e. the autonomy of the individual' (Honneth, 2014, 15). The reasons for this were provided by the very historical development of modern society with its individualization and rationalization of social relations. In social and philosophical consciousness, this was reflected in the gradual expansion of the egalitarian understanding of freedom as an expression of fundamental human dignity. Freedom ceased to be seen as a social privilege of a few and became a universal claim of all, in equal measure. It is this universalization of freedom that also brings the biggest theoretical challenge facing modern political thought from its beginnings until now, from Hobbes to Rawls, to provide a guide for suitable social conditions for the coexistence of freedom, for the social enablement of individual freedom. It seems easier

and more effective to model society's political structure and institutional reproduction on the basis of inequality (as ancient and medieval thought did) than on the basis of equality, i.e. on the basis of mastery and dominance than on the basis of freedom.

Philosophical thought, in its development, brought several distinctive ways of conceptualizing the ideal of individual freedom, which are still competing to become the normative basis of political theory. According to Honneth's critical reconstruction of this development, three concepts of freedom can be distinguished: negative freedom, reflexive freedom and social freedom (Honneth 2014, 13–62). Our intention is to show that each of these concepts not only represents a distinct understanding of the phenomenon of individual freedom, but, in its social applicability, also leads to a fundamentally different normative understanding of politics. In this regard, we have already analysed the first two concepts elsewhere. We have shown that the concept of negative freedom leads to a normative demand of delimiting the sphere of private life and public authority, to a so-called modus vivendi policy aimed at the peaceful coexistence of citizens enjoying freedom in the private sphere of their lives. In the case of reflexive freedom, we have shown that with its critical distinction between autonomous and heteronomous will, it focuses on the political category of the public as a dialogical space for the mutual formation of collective will, that it leads to a politics of participation focused on the institutional support of public discussion forums. In this article, we will try to expose the political claims of the concept of social freedom and show that this understanding becomes the normative basis of the politics of emancipation.

Society as a medium of individual freedom

If the attribute of negative in connection with freedom refers to the absence of social obstacles that would prevent individual self-realization and the attribute of reflection to the possibilities of autonomous determination of goals and forms of self-realization, then the attribute of social in this connection refers to social conditions and possibilities of their successful fulfillment. As in the case of reflexive freedom, it also applies to social freedom that the mere absence of external obstacles to human effort is not a sufficient condition for freedom and individual self-realisation, that this effort must express an autonomous capacity for self-determination. However, it differs from reflexive freedom by pointing out that the autonomous setting of practice goals in itself does not at all ensure their feasibility, that the possibilities of their practical realization are not considered here at all, and this question is, in fact, left aside. From this point of view, the idea of reflexive freedom as such remains only a one-sided and incomplete expression of the ideal of individual autonomy, 'freedom as the understanding conceives it, is one-sided; but what is one-sided always contains an essential determination and therefore is not to be discarded. But the understanding is defective in exalting a one-sided determination to be the sole and the supreme one' (Hegel 2008, 29–30). The idea of social freedom then emerges not as a denial of reflexive freedom but as an effort to expand it and thus overcome its own one-sidedness.

Axel Honneth directly connects the idea of social freedom with Hegel's philosophy of freedom, with his effort to overcome subjectivism in the question of freedom by subordinating the objective side of reality, i.e. social reality, to the demand for freedom. From the point of view of the philosophy of freedom, this is an extraordinary feat and 'the idea of social freedom represents the most distinctive innovation of Hegel's theory and its single most important contribution to social and political philosophy' (Neuhouser 2000, 5). As Hegel rightly points out, 'reflection on self — the Freedom above described — is abstractly defined as the formal element of the activity

of the absolute Idea', for the idea of freedom to take on real being we must turn our attention to the key question, 'what means does this principle of Freedom use for its realization?' and this 'question of the *means* by which Freedom develops itself to a World, conducts us to the phenomenon of History itself. Although Freedom is, primarily, an undeveloped idea, the means it uses are external and phenomenal; presenting themselves in History to our sensuous vision' (Hegel 2001, 41, 34). In other words, the very question of the means of realizing individual freedom leads us directly to the whole of the society in its historical, i.e. concrete form, because, after all, all means of freedom are a social creation. Therefore, 'what makes this new, discursive view of freedom ′social′ is the fact that it regards a certain institution of social reality no longer as a mere addition to freedom, but as its medium and condition' (Honneth 2014, 42). Here it is fully true that 'individual freedom is not only a central social *value*, but also an undetachable social *product*', 'an undetachable *product* of social arrangements' (Sen 1990, 114, 101). In this sense, the idea of social freedom can be understood 'as the outcome of a theoretical endeavour that expands the criteria underlying the notion of reflexive freedom to include a sphere that is traditionally set in opposition to the subject as external reality' (Honneth 2014, 44). This external fact of individual freedom is primarily society; from the individual's point of view it is ''society' which stands opposed, as the 'outer world', to the 'inner self'' (Elias 2001, 127). It is this turn from the individual to the society in the view of freedom, from an individualistic standpoint to a holistic one, that returns the modern idea of freedom fully to the ancient philosophical tradition, to the Aristotelian understanding of man as a *zoon politikon*, whose individual being is inextricably connected to the whole of the society.

The individual's view of society and social institutions as something external is objectively justified by the very fact that their being precedes the existence of the individual, i.e. the individual is already directly born into them, is situated and socialized within them. Moreover, and this is essential in this respect, they are always the historical result of large-scale social relations, not of isolated individual activity. Social institutions as means of practice stand here as something external to the individual and therefore *alien* in the sense that he never has them under his exclusive individual control, because they themselves are the result of extensive cooperation and social relations of many individuals across space and time. It is this perspective that identifies external nature with an alienated relationship, that is behind the limitation of the sphere of freedom to the so-called inner world of the individual. In modern society, moreover, this view is greatly intensified and accentuated by the processes of individualization. The problem is not that means of freedom are objectively external, but that they are at the same time perceived as something *alien*. In the case of negative freedom, the consequence of this perspective manifests itself in the extension of freedom to the area of individual privacy, which is basically just an extension of his inner world. This view apparently also led Kant to a strictly deontological position, to identify autonomy exclusively with free will, but not with the conditions of its external realization. However, the dignity of man based on the recognition of his capacity for autonomous self-determination is incompatible not only with his subordinate position vis-à-vis natural forces, but equally with social forces, with social institutions.

Individualism and holism

From the perspective of the above-mentioned position, which identifies freedom with the inner world of an isolated individual, the term social freedom appears as an exemplary *contradictio in adjecto*. This is where the widespread fear comes from, that in the focus of

freedom on society and social conditions of its realization, the individual himself is lost and his individual freedom is misappropriated. First of all, it is necessary to emphasize that even in the social understanding of freedom, the subject of freedom remains the individual; individual freedom can only apply to the individual, not to society; the concept of a free society is additive and expresses only the degree of freedom of its members. The stated opinion and concerns about the subjectivity of the individual are based on a peculiar understanding of society as a category standing in opposition to the individual. If the concept of the individual as a moral subject is decisive for the interpretation of reflexive freedom, the concept of society and the relationship of the individual to society is key for social freedom. The question of this relationship is much more complex than it appears, but as Elias repeatedly points out in his examination of the question, it is clearly necessary to reject the antagonistic perspective in the first place, because 'strictly speaking, one can oppose 'individual' and 'society' to each other like figures in a puppet show only on a purely linguistic level', not in their own reality, therefore 'it is an error to accept without question the antithetical nature of the two concepts 'individual' and 'society'' (Elias 2001, 146, 56).

Just as an individual is not an isolated, self-existent and self-contained being, neither is society a distinct category with its own objective being separate from and superior to individuals. If we interpret individualism and holism as two opposing philosophical perspectives in this way, then they are only extremes of the same kind, both equally flawed. An individualistic understanding of society 'as a mere accumulation, an additive and unstructured collection of many individual people' is as flawed as the holistic one, as long as society is seen 'as an object existing beyond individuals and incapable of further explanation', because in reality the individual and society do not constitute 'two ontologically different entities' (Elias 2011, vii). The Aristotelian understanding of man as a social being is, in its own way, an expression of the ontological unity of the individual and society.

Individualism and holism take different forms in political philosophy and 'some of the most compelling individualist theses are entirely compatible with the most plausible holistic ones' (List – Spiekermann 2013, 632). In this regard, it is very helpful if we distinguish the ethical, value side from the methodological one in individualism and holism. In the sense of this distinction, the focus of freedom on society as an external reality and a means of freedom does not weaken value individualism in the understanding of freedom, but only connects it with methodological holism. Honneth refers to this special connection by the term holistic individualism, 'this makes freedom an element in a holistic individualism. On this account, freedom – the free realization of one's own intentions or aims – cannot be realized by individuals at all, but only by a collective of the kind just described, without this collective having to be regarded as an entity that is superior to its individual elements' (Honneth 2017, 27). Perhaps the most important and essential thing that the concept of social freedom brings in contrast to the negative one is the realization that an individual cannot be fully free as an isolated individual, but only as a social being. The exercise of individual freedom is essentially social, the freedom of others is a necessary condition, not an obstacle to individual freedom. It is fundamentally true here 'that no one can be emancipated by others but, as well, that no one can emancipate herself without others' (Balibar 2015, 6). In this sense, 'the representatives of Critical Theory hold with Hegel the conviction that the self-actualization of the individual is only successful when it is interwoven in its aims – by means of generally accepted principles or ends – with the self-actualization of all the other members of society' (Honneth 2009, 26).

The idea of social freedom is not a defence of the domination of society over the individual, a defence of totalitarianism or collectivism, but a defence of the domination of *associated* individuals over society; 'this concept of social freedom differs from collectivism in that it is primarily concerned with the conditions for the realization of individual freedom. It also differs from traditional individualism in that it regards this freedom as being contingent on participation in a certain type of social community' (Honneth 2017, 33–34). The concept of social freedom refers to this association as a condition for the realization of individual freedom.

The concept of associated individuals in political philosophy is primarily associated with Marx's idea of communist society as a society of 'freely associated men' (Marx 2010, 90). However, the concept itself is not inseparably linked to such a futurist perspective, which presupposes the withering away of the state as a social institution, and also politics in its historical form, which in itself may complicate its normative use in political theory. In this context, we use it more in the sense of Habermas's theory of deliberative politics, where it appears in the form of a legal and political community, 'as an association of free and equal citizens, this community determines for itself what rules should govern social interactions' (Habermas 1996, 9). In any case, the main normative conclusion arising from the condition of association is that the individual cannot realize his freedom as an isolated being, but only as a social being. The question of the form of association remains open.

Rationality and freedom

Any wider conception of freedom than the negative one seems to invoke reason and human rationality in some way as conditions of freedom, expression and capacity of self-determination, freedom then is the ability to be guided by reason. We can also see this in the case of reflexive freedom, and even its social form cannot do without an appeal to rationality; moreover, here, the demand for freedom as rational self-governance goes beyond the horizon of the individual and refers to social reality as such. Not only for Hegel, but also for social freedom as such, it is true that 'reason cannot govern reality unless reality has become rational in itself' (Marcuse 1955, 7). The application of rationality in relation to social institutions is also a basic condition for overcoming the aforementioned alienation, 'full emancipation is simply the moment in which the real ceases to be an opaque positivity confronting us, and in which the latter's distance from the rational is finally cancelled' (Laclau 2007, 2). However, it is precisely the requirement of rationality that raises the concern that, in focusing on 'a rational plan of social life', there is an unwitting transition 'from an ethical doctrine of individual responsibility and individual self-perfection to an authoritarian State obedient to the directives of an élite of Platonic guardians', to 'the transformation of Kant's severe individualism into something close to a pure totalitarian doctrine on the part of thinkers some of whom claimed to be his disciples' (Berlin 2002, 201, 198). However, this widespread concern is not universally valid and, therefore, does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle, is conditioned by a specific understanding of reason and rationality as an objective reality existing independently and separately from the subject, disconnected from practice and accessible to pure cognition. The objectivity of reason understood in this way is then enforced in society by the weight of its absolute truth and timeless validity, reducing the subjects of practice to its passive receivers and executors. It is not at all accidental that in formulating this concern Berlin refers precisely to Plato, who is the pioneer par excellence of such a philosophical position. The current understanding of social freedom is not dependent or

limited to the objectivity of reason of this kind, the concept of social freedom is far from conditioned by such an assumption.

If we understand social freedom as an extension of reflexive freedom, then the reflexive understanding of rationality and subjectivity is also transferred to the social area, 'politics is conceived as the reflexive form of substantial ethical life' (Habermas 1998, 240). Rationality is then contained in the communicative intersubjectivity as a rational way of determining the goals of practice, which the political category of the public enables to develop and fulfil. As Honneth shows, 'Habermas secures the Hegelian idea of a rational universal by means of the concept of communicative agreement, whose idealizing presuppositions are supposed to meet the concern that the potential of discursive rationality regains universal acceptance at every new stage of social development /…/ Habermas understands the idea of communicative understanding no longer as a rational aim but only as the rational form of a successful mode of socialization' (Honneth 2009, 24-25). Before rationality can appear as content, it must be a form, before it can be an aim, it must first be a means. In this way, the close relation and normative connection between reflexive and social freedom, between the politics of participation and emancipation is exposed. Participation is a condition for emancipation; a reasonable plan of social life cannot be imposed on society from the outside but must be the result of its own practical efforts. Only to this extent can it be permanently successful. The determining factor here is the concrete collective experience of society, successful emancipation can rely only on it, therefore 'the idea of a critical theory that is not backed by the experience of a collective, and which in some sense exists for its own sake - that is, for no one - is incoherent' (Boltanski 2011, 5). No matter how rational politics is in itself, unless it finds support in or departs from the living collective experience of society, sooner or later, it must fail. Even from an individual point of view, reasonable goals of self-realization cannot be socially prescribed to individuals, but in the conditions of rational social relations, they themselves must come not only to their cognition but also to their realization.

The politics of emancipation as a process of social transformation

Accepting the demand of social freedom to extend the concept of freedom to the social sphere presupposes overcoming the opinion that social institutions have some natural, rational or metaphysical basis and accepting with full seriousness the empirical fact that they are a complex historical creation of people themselves, that they do not act as external and alien forces standing above them, but are the result of their own social activity. In this fact, the idea of social freedom finds its own empirical justification and justification of its normative demand. The idea of social freedom is, therefore, primarily a demand to overcome the alienation of the individual from society. Since social institutions are a human creation fundamentally influencing their own effort, its possibilities and forms, it is fully justified to normatively subject them to the criterion of freedom. The extension of the understanding of freedom to social institutions does not remain only in their evaluation, but the demand clearly goes to the level of political practice, where it appears as a demand to adjust social institutions in the spirit of freedom, i.e. in such a way that they do not oppress a man's individual freedom, but on the contrary, to support it in every way and to enable its realization. This demand for liberation is generally referred to as emancipation and the political activity aimed at promoting it as the politics of emancipation. The demand of social freedom is not limited only to a selected circle of institutions, for example, only to the state with its power apparatus and positive law, as in the case of negative freedom, but applies in

principle equally to all social institutions, 'emancipation affects all areas of social life and there is a relation of essential imbrication between its various contents in these different areas' (Laclau 2007, 1). In principle, because they all, in a certain way, mediate, determine and at the same time limit the individual efforts of the individual, but also because the individual institutions are interconnected and dependent, forming a functionally connected and integrated social system, they are only relatively independent. The concept of social freedom is as extensive as the concept of reflexive freedom.

For social freedom, the political key to a free society and fulfillment of the ideal of freedom as individual autonomy is not the politics of modus vivendi, but the politics of emancipation. The solution to the problem of social coexistence of individual freedom, which was raised by its negative interpretation, is not the mutual restriction of individual freedom through social institutions, but their transformation in the exact opposite way, so that they do not limit and oppress freedom, but allow it to develop, 'the problem of making possible such a harmony between individual liberty and the other is not that of finding a compromise between general and individual interest, common and private welfare in an established society, but of creating the society in which man is no longer enslaved by institutions which vitiate self-determination form the beginning' (Marcuse et al. 1965, 87). Unfreedom in its social interpretation is not only manifested in the form of a formal prohibition, but primarily in the form of mastery as the domination of society and social institutions over the individual. Domination that is present and felt by the individual in his immediate individual activity. A consistent 'sense of emancipation emerges from the recognition of instituted powers' capacity to seduce subjects into voluntary obedience even when they enjoy formal liberty' (Coole 2015, 532). The gravity of this fact becomes fully apparent when we realize that it is not a specific ability of a certain political regime, but rather a universal feature and an important condition of political power. Every historical form of political government relies substantially on its ability to compel obedience through the institutionalization of its power, 'no government exclusively based on the means of violence has ever existed /…/ Even the most despotic domination we know of, the rule of master over slaves, who always outnumbered him, did not rest on superior means of coercion as such, but on a superior organization of power-that is, on the organized solidarity of the masters' (Arendt 1970, 50).

In the social sense, freedom is not a political state, but a process of political overcoming of recognized forms of unfreedom, 'freedom is liberation, a specific historical process in theory and practice', therefore 'freedom is still to be created even for the freest of the existing societies' (Marcuse et al. 1965, 87–88). Political demands of negative and social freedom, politics of modus vivendi and politics of emancipation, are ultimately in sharp opposition to each other. While the negative concept of freedom demands a principled limitation of politics and the sphere of its social action, social freedom demands and presupposes the social engagement of politics as a means of its realization. In order to eliminate the domination and oppression of social institutions, the social engagement of politics is necessary. In the sense of emancipation, politics is a form of collective activity through which associated individuals control and guide the social conditions of their lives, which are beyond the reach of their own individual activity. Only through such a kind of politics is it possible to overcome the alienation of the individual in relation to social institutions.

The concept of social freedom is not only a historical, but also a dialectical concept; social institutions in it represent a limitation and, at the same time, a means of freedom. Freedom is the negation of negation, reads the well-known thesis of the critical school inspired by Hegel's dialectical philosophy of freedom. According to this thesis, freedom is historically always preceded by certain social institutions and forms of practice, which in some way and to a certain extent negate the possibilities of free action of individuals as members of a certain community. Emancipation presupposes oppression, 'there is no emancipation without oppression, and there is no oppression without the presence of something which is impeded in its free development by oppressive forces. Emancipation is not, in this sense, an act of *creation* but instead of liberation of something which precedes the liberating act' (Laclau 2007, 1). The experience of unfreedom leads to the demand for freedom, and just as this experience is not general but concrete, the process of emancipation is essentially historical. The historical essence of social institutions represents the possibilities and, at the same time, the limitations of the realization of emancipatory politics. Since they are creations of human activity, people can also consciously change them and subordinate them to their goals, since they are fundamentally historical, i.e. the result of the social activity of many generations, it is not possible to simply change them voluntaristically and arbitrarily, but always only with regard to the real existing and acting social conditions.

Forms of emancipation - class politics and identity politics

If from a formal point of view, the definition of the politics of emancipation as the overcoming of social oppression is, in principle, generally accepted within the framework of political philosophy, when it comes to its content determination, agreement quickly disappears and sharp theoretical disputes arise about what human emancipation actually requires and where political efforts need to be focused. The disputes are not about what is the general goal of emancipation - a free individual and a free society - but about the means to achieve this goal, their priority, importance and significance. Any consistent notion of emancipation must in some way answer three strategic questions, 'enduring political questions for a theory of emancipation are: who is emancipated, from what, and how?' (Coole 2015, 531). It is understandable that individual theories differ in the answers to these questions. The problem here is primarily that any concrete idea of emancipation is always dependent on the understanding of the actual society as a certain functional unit, i.e. understanding of the phenomenon of social reproduction. In this descriptive respect, the different conceptions diverge fundamentally, which in turn gives rise to their different normative conceptions. Moreover, there is also a widespread tendency to overlook or underestimate the historical dimension of society and the issue of its reproduction, which then leads to the idea that individual social institutions are more or less freely and independently disposable, from which it is only a step to the mentioned Platonic sages, who knowing the truth, are also called to enforce it. Often forgetting that there is always present also 'the possibility that politics of emancipation and transformation that combat barbarity produce other forms of barbarity' (Balibar 2015, xv). As a result of these theoretical and ideological divergences, the politics of emancipation as such is open to a wide range of diverse and conflicting interpretations.

In general, if in the first half of the 20th century, the question of emancipation focused primarily on economic structures and social institutions related to the material reproduction of society, nowadays emancipation prevails in the form of the so-called identity politics focused on issues of multiculturalism, cultural hegemony, sexual emancipation and gender equality and on social

institutions related to symbolic reproduction. Since the second half of the 20th century, emancipation projects have been associated in practice with diverse social movements whose common denominator is their complete resignation to class politics and structural critique of society, 'the unsatisfactory term 'new social movements' groups together a series of highly diverse struggles: urban, ecological, anti-authoritarian, anti-institutional, feminist, anti-racist, ethnic, regional or that of sexual minorities' (Laclau – Mouffe 2001, 159). In the social sciences and humanities, these movements centred around a particular collective identity (cultural, ethnic, civic, racial, gender, sexual) are generally described by the term identity politics, whereby 'identity politics makes collective identities salient, contributes to their politicization and radicalization, and triggers political protest' (Klandermans 2014, 1). In political philosophy, this kind of politics is also described as a politics of difference (class politics is then described as a politics of equality) or a politics of recognition. An extensive and very inspiring critical discussion of class and identity politics, the relationship between them, their philosophical argumentation and normative claims, can be found between Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (Fraser – Honneth 2003).

The reasons for this substantial shift from class politics to identity politics are multiple and largely related to the structural changes in the development of modern society. The contemporary rise of identity politics is explained as 'a product of economic well-being and the lack of viable alternatives to capitalism' or 'a misplaced response to rapid social change resulting from economic dislocation', which can 'suggest that an economic downturn could provoke renewed attention to class-based politics' (Bernstein 2005, 52). From a theoretical point of view, however, this was also due to a prematurely optimistic belief that the issues of economic oppression and domination had already been resolved in contemporary society, that the individual had been liberated in this respect. In the context of post-war development, with economic growth and the development of the welfare state, naive ideas prevailed about the disappearance of exploitation and the growing share of the working class in national welfare, which politically neutralised class conflicts in society. The prevalence of this view is evidenced also by the fact that even such a critical philosopher as Erich Fromm succumbed to it when he came to believe that 'it is a perfectly valid assumption that provided no major catastrophe occurs, there will, in about one or two generations, be no more marked poverty in the United States' (Fromm 1966, 95). Today we can clearly see how illusory and naive these opinions and expectations were. Today it has already been sufficiently and unequivocally proven 'that the two world wars, and the public policies that followed from them, played a central role in reducing inequalities in the twentieth century' and, therefore, commensurate with the neoliberal dismantling of these policies and the deregulation of capital, it necessarily happened 'that inequality began to rise sharply again since the 1970s and 1980s', once again 'the past devours the future' (Piketty 2014, 237, 571). As a result, poverty has not disappeared, but on the contrary, has once again spread globally in its old-new forms, 'the result has been the creation of a global 'precariat', consisting of many millions around the world without an anchor of stability' (Standing 2011, 1).

If class politics is sometimes accused of economic reductionism, the most serious consequence of promoting identity politics is the culturalization of politics, which means that 'political differences – differences conditioned by political inequality or economic exploitation – are naturalised and neutralised into ´cultural´ differences, that is, into different ´ways of life´ which are something given, something that cannot be overcome. They can only be ´tolerated´ (Žižek 2008, 140). Current social conflicts are no longer politically interpreted as problems of inequality

or injustice, but as problems of intolerance; social inequalities are understood as different notions of a good life. With a touch of irony, one could say that in this perspective of the culturalization of politics, even homelessness, for example, will eventually cease to be perceived as what it actually is – i.e. an extreme form of absolute poverty and social exclusion, a socio-pathological phenomenon – and it will be presented as a particular conception of the good life that just needs to be tolerated. This ironic remark is not as exaggerated as it might seem if we consider that, for example, John Rawls does not present slavery as a radical form of unfreedom, but as an example of 'a conception of the good' and 'comprehensive doctrine' (Rawls 1996, 196). The phenomenon of the culturalization of politics is, in its own way, a fundamental change not only of the form but also of the very goal of politics. Emancipation here turns into tolerance, and tolerance becomes an end in itself. The goal here is no longer the liberation of people's lives from powerfully determined and restrictive social institutions of various kinds (class, gender, race, nationality, religion, etc.), but on the contrary, their political naturalization and respect in the given form. The individual's freedom is then limited to their arbitrary choice and free passage between them, but the institutions themselves need only be respected, precisely because they are, as it were, a manifestation of the individual's free choice. Thanks to this clever ideological turn, social institutions themselves finally become immune to political criticism. The demand for tolerance evaluates the effort to transform them as a manifestation of intolerance. In fact, identity politics no longer focuses on radical social transformation in the sense of overcoming forms of oppression, but on the contrary, subtly supports the preservation of existing power structures; 'conversely, what is proclaimed and practiced as tolerance today, is in many of its most effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression' (Marcuse et al. 1965, 81). It is therefore not surprising that it finds broad power support for its implementation in existing social institutions and in hegemonic ideology, 'the diversion of struggles into cultural channels has served neoliberal hegemony well and that a critical engagement with political economy is timely' (Coole 2015, 545). Today, there are more and more voices pointing out the limits and shortcomings of identity politics, emphasizing that 'a critical theory of contemporary society must include an account of the relation of status subordination to class subordination, misrecognition to maldistribution' (Fraser – Honneth 2003, 59).

There is one more essential difference between (modern) class politics and (postmodern) identity politics. Solidarity is a key value for any politics of emancipation; its success, therefore, presupposes some form of ideological universalism capable of engendering social solidarity. In order to be able to mobilize broad strata to political action, it must provide them with a certain unifying vision, abstracting from insignificant differences it must identify and defend the common determination of their lives, which is the proper cause of common oppression, even if its immediate manifestations in everyday experience may be diverse. Which differences are or are not significant cannot be answered generally, but always only concretely, in relation to what is identified as a common determination of oppression. For example, if a certain emancipatory politics focuses on the elimination of economic oppression in the form of exploitation, then national, gender or sexual differences are insignificant or secondary in this regard; 'the last thing it (proletariat) needs is recognition of its difference' (Fraser – Honneth 2003, 17). But this does not mean at all that they are insignificant as such, that in relation to another form of collective oppression, on the contrary, they are not significant. However, the ideological focus of identity politics is in exactly the opposite way. Fundamentally rejecting universalism as an ideological relic, a dangerous legacy of past times or a hidden threat of oppression, it clearly prefers particularism; instead of social solidarity, it supports the atomization and individualization of

society; instead of the politicization of the possibilities of solving social problems, their privatization. From this point of view, it is not so surprising to find that 'for all its dangers, Enlightenment universalism has provided a theoretical underpinning for emancipatory projects much more effective than anything postmodernists have been able to devise' (Wood 2012, 305).

Not only these theoretical and ideological disputes complicate the political interpretation of social freedom. According to Honneth, difficulties are also caused by the fact that we lack intuitive and unambiguous criteria for assessing freedom in a social sense, 'when it comes to individual plans and aims, we have enough everyday criteria that can help us distinguish between what is free and not free, but we appear to lack any such intuitions when it comes to the sphere of social reality' (Honneth 2014, 44). However, this is not because social freedom lacks its own criteria for differentiation and evaluation of the degree of freedom, but because a negative understanding of freedom prevails in everyday social consciousness, also due to its simple and intuitive definition. This idea 'touches a deep-seated intuition of modern individualism' (Honneth 2014, 23). But intuition itself tends to be a very treacherous guide for understanding the world; intuitively, the earth also appears to us to be flat and, intuitively, heavier things fall faster than lighter ones and yet this is not true. It is the same with freedom, only rational and experiential cognition can reveal to us the limitations of the negative understanding of freedom and the validity of the social one. There is, however, one crucial difference: while natural (and technical) cognition is, in principle, power-neutral (and, therefore, free to develop across political conditions), social cognition always has the potential to threaten or serve ruling interests, therefore, it is always subject to greater or lesser political manipulation. Already Hobbes observed this when he aptly noted that 'for I doubt not, but if it had been a thing contrary to any mans right of dominion, or to the interest of men that have dominion, *That the three Angles of a Triangle, should be equall to two Angles of a Square*; that doctrine should have been, if not not disputed, yet by the burning of all books of Geometry, suppressed, as farre as he whom it concerned was able' (Hobbes 1965, 79–80). Here we need to look for the reason why the negative understanding of individual freedom has such abundant power support in the hegemonic neoliberal ideology. Next to intuition, this is the other reason for its popularity and prevalence in the contemporary social consciousness. These explanations, however, remain only at the ideological level, at the level of social consciousness and its political conditions; deeper reasons for the dominance of negative freedom lie ultimately in the very material conditions of social reproduction.

The object of social freedom is social institutions and its subject is associated individuals. Therefore, 'emancipation refers to a path leading towards a change in the relationship between the collective and institutions', that 'it can lead to emptying institutions of the different forms of over-determination they invoke in order to justify their existence and mask the violence they contain' (Boltanski 2011, 157). The first normative criterion for assessing social freedom is the degree of violence that social institutions apply in relation to individuals. As long as their reproduction in society relies on some form of violence, however well ideologically justified and socially veiled, even if only in the form of a threat, we can hardly speak of full-fledged individual freedom and autonomy. We can talk about social freedom in proportion as social institutions do not need to rely on the threat of violence, sanctions and coercion, but find their support only in the reasonably determined common will of committed individuals. The second complementary criterion for evaluating social freedom is the degree of self-realization possibilities that these social institutions make possible. It is precisely in this that they find their irrevocable

justification, their normative meaning is to enable, support and develop social conditions for the autonomous self-realization of individuals.

Conclusion

Negative, reflexive and social freedom are not parallel concepts, independently existing alongside each other, but are the result of a certain philosophical development in the understanding of freedom, while each of these concepts articulates and emphasizes a particular side of the ideal of freedom as moral autonomy. Hegel 'himself regards his conception of freedom as the product of a long and comprehensive dialogue with the philosophical tradition that precedes him' (Neuhouser 2000, 5). Overlooking or disregarding this fact in their mutual evaluation can lead to many misunderstandings and apparent contradictions. The mentioned concepts certainly represent alternative ways of conceptualizing the same normative idea, with fundamentally different normative conclusions and consequences at the political level; in this sense, they are fully competitive concepts competing even in contemporary political philosophy for the primacy of the ethical, normative basis for political theories. However, their competitive relationship does not necessarily result in antagonism, individual concepts are not necessarily mutually exclusive. But it depends, above all, on the point of view from which we look at these concepts of freedom.

If we start from the standpoint of negative freedom, other concepts of freedom implicitly appear to be mistaken and are excluded. The determining reason is that the very condition of freedom – the absence of external obstacles to the individual's will – is formulated not only as a necessary but also as a sufficient condition, which in itself fully exhausts the phenomenon of freedom. Any other normative conditions imposed on freedom, such as those put forward by reflexive or social freedom, exceed and thus negate the sufficiency of this condition. If we start from the standpoint of social freedom, it is clear that it fully presupposes and contains within itself also the reflexive form, because, ultimately, it is only an extension of the reflexive understanding of autonomy in an attempt to overcome its own unilateral limitation. Moreover, even in the social understanding, the subject of freedom remains the individual, not society, which is only the means of freedom. The subject of freedom here is not an abstract man, a kind of an idea of man, but the concrete individual in his immediacy and determination, and therefore reality, 'for a person is a specific existence; not man in general (a term to which no real existence corresponds) but a particular human being' (Hegel 2001, 38). It is noteworthy that this is emphasized by such a holistic philosopher as Hegel, who theorizes the idea of freedom metaphysically as the inherent nature of Spirit and the ultimate goal of human History, who is therefore often misinterpreted as the enemy of individual freedom, while many philosophers espousing individualism and defending the individual against society confuse him with his abstraction, most often in the form of homo economicus. Since the idea of social freedom is not a defence of the domination of society over the individual, but of the domination of associated individuals over society, one can only agree with Berlin (2002, 207) that any interpretation of individual freedom must also contain a certain minimum of negatively defined freedom. What cannot be fundamentally agreed with from the standpoint of social freedom is only that a negative idea exhausts the idea of freedom as such; 'the negative and reflexive models of freedom are also embodied in social institutions', but 'it is a cognitive fault if these two models of freedom are regarded as general, because it reveals the insufficiency of cognition about the models themselves' (Okochi 2012, 15).

However, in evaluating normative concepts, we should not remain only biased by theory and 'pure' philosophy, proceeding only from their philosophical argumentation, theoretical persuasiveness, and logical consistency. We should turn our attention primarily to social practice, which is not only the goal of normativity but also its own source. Freedom is not just an idealistic concept, but, above all, a practical value immanently contained in social reality. Freedom emerges and is asserted in social struggles in the form of raised claims for it, its forms and ideas are shaped in the context of these struggles. Even if it is difficult, when evaluating competing concepts of freedom, we should ask ourselves the key question from this perspective: Which of them best corresponds to the normative claims contained in the very development of society? Which of them allows their best expression?

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