
POLITICAL **ISSUE 2(30), 2018**
SCIENCE ISSUES
Academic journal

MOSCOW, 2018

POLITICAL SCIENCE ISSUES

Academic journal

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**ESTABLISHED BY LLC
"PUBLISHING HOUSE
"SCIENCE TODAY"**

The Journal is published with the participation of the Institute of modern policy of the Peoples' Friendship University (RUDN)

The Journal is registered by the Federal Service for Supervision of Mass Media, Communications and Protection of Cultural Heritage

Reg. Number PI No.FS77–46176
of August 12, 2011
The Journal is published quarterly

The journal is included in the database of the Russian Science Citation Index

The Five-year Journal's impact factor is 0,808

The Journal is included in Ulrich's Periodicals Directory

Academic papers published in the journal undergo obligatory editorial checking.

The authors' opinion not always coincides with the opinion of the Editorial Board.

At reprint of the article or a part of it the reference to the Journal is obligatory.

Address of the editorial office:
10, Zagoryevskaya street, building 4,
office 4, Moscow, Russia, 115598
Tel: (910) 463-53-42
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Signed for printing on 25.12.2018
Format 60x84/16. Offset paper.
Offset print.
Number of printed sheets
Circulation 500 copies.
Order 0000.

Printed at the LLC "PrintUP"
Nagorny drive, 12c1,
Moscow, Russia, 117105
Tel.: +7 (495) 925-00-06

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THE TEMPTATION OF FREEDOM

The article attempts to substantiate the thesis about the need for new approaches in the interpretation of human rights and freedoms in the context of the deepest crisis of liberalism and those tectonic shifts that introduce radical changes to the systemic and structural components of the modern world. The main attention is focused on the absolutization of the famous formula “man is the measure of all things” characteristic of Western countries, leading to the libertarization and the actual absolutization of human rights and freedoms in their Western understanding, considered as the ultimate truth suitable for all nations. Recognizing their importance as the greatest achievement of Western peoples, at the same time, it is shown the need to consider them in the context of national-historical, spiritual, socio-cultural, political-cultural components of the national identity of peoples how they are reflected in the transformations taking place in the world.

Key words: *Human rights, individual rights, collective rights, freedom, internal freedom, freedom of word, absolute freedom, liberalism, libertarinsm, the state, power.*

On the destination and boundaries of freedom

Freedom is a social category. Outside society, we have no right to talk about freedom, since it can only be realized in the system of relations between people. With common basic characteristics, the understanding of the content and ways of implementing freedom in each specific society depends on the historical, ethno-national, socio-cultural, political-cultural, religious and other values, norms, rules, and attitudes that prevail in it.

At the same time, freedom is a historical category, since its current understanding has developed in the course of a long historical development. It is appropriate to recall the truth that a person did not appear on the historical arena as an independent and free individual, but acquired these qualities, personal characteristics only in the process of historical development. Indeed, the interpretation of this concept by a person living in some primitive community, or in the ancient Greek polis, by modern American, French, Russian etc is significantly different.

The modern understanding of freedom, as is known, is inextricably associated with the formation and approval of the ideas of the personality, civil society and the rule of law. This fact found its expression in the wide popularity that the adherents of liberalism, democracy, human rights and freedoms received the well-known maxim formulated by one of the founders of sophism Protagoras: “Man is a measure to all things – the existence of existing and the non-existence of non-existent”. Apparently, in proposing his formula, Protagoras had in mind that the norms and rules of human life are not determined by the natural world, but man himself is the starting point in his relations with both other people and with the nature. Apparently, in proposing his wording, Protagoras had in mind that the norms and rules of human life are not determined by the natural world, but man himself is the starting point in his relations with both other people and with nature. In the humanistic tradition and the rationalism associated with it, this thesis in the form of Παντων χρηματων μετρον ανθρωπος – man is the measure of all things – has become one of the central. Man is indeed the center of the universe, in the sense that the universe itself as an object of knowledge is unthinkable without a man knowing it. From this point of view, a person can really be considered the measure of all things, especially as regards the world of culture created by him.

The whole historical experience shows that freedom is the intransient value and the fundamental essential characteristic of a person, the ontological fundamental principle of human life. The development and adoption of the idea of freedom as binding norms, rules and principles of human relations became the greatest achievement of Western humanity, which played a key role in its socio-economic, socio-political and technological progress. Perhaps, therefore, it is necessary to recognize, protect, promote in every way the assertion on a world scale of the values of human rights and freedoms, justice, democracy, fight against any forms and manifestations of tyranny, despotism, totalitarianism, etc.

For all that, as the experience of history shows, excessive faith in man, the maxim “man is the measure of all things” cannot be unambiguously assessed. For the divine Plato is a man, such an hell monster as Chikatilo is also a man. Perhaps in their genetic code in some link in one form or another, billion fractions of a millimeter diverge. The sacramental question arises: can they both be called individually as the measure of all things?

According to anthropological, archaeological, and historical researches, since its separation from the herd state and the acquisition of the species characteristics of Homo sapiens, a man had undergone only minor changes in their biosocial and social-psychological qualities over many millennia. The fundamental properties inherent in a man as a special kind that has emerged in prehistoric times, in those or other forms and degrees remain inherent in his nature in our days.

The same studies show that all sorts of ideas about the exclusively good nature of man, to put it mildly, are not always and not necessarily correlated with

the realities of human history. In the deep-billed ontological dimension in man, as the well known German scientist F. Schelling noted, “contains all the power of the dark beginning and it also contains all the power of light. It has both centers: the extreme depth of the abyss and the highest limit of the sky”¹. This is a complex issue that is quite extensively and deeply reflected in world science. Here it is enough to note the fact that freedom, free will, taken in itself abstract freedom is indifferent from the point of view of good and evil. It is indifferent in the sense that the possibility of both the highest good and the lowest evil is rooted in him. Freedom is an open path both up to the shining peaks, and down to the gaping depths. Therefore, the assessment of people’s actions should be based on taking into account not only a rational and good principle in human nature, but also an awareness of the imperfection of man, his commitment to not only goodness, love of neighbor, compassion, creation, but also evil, destruction and chaos.

The boundaries of freedom rely both on the inner nature of man and on the world, which provides him with a more or less strictly outlined living space, where, in turn, each one has a defined “space of freedom” that others cannot encroach upon. In striving for freedom, a person each time discovers that it is entirely determined by the imperatives and boundaries of freedom of other members of society, i.e. boundaries, which does not set himself. Perhaps it was this postulate that guided I. Kant when he formulated one of the key components of the categorical imperative: my freedom ends where the other person’s freedom begins, more precisely, the freedom of all other members of society.

One can agree with those authors who believe that the basis of morality is freedom, that in the very infrastructure of civil society there are certain moral constraints that define its unity and viability. However, in this regard, everything would be fine if all people were angels. It is well known that people often go beyond moral limits, violating the rights and freedoms of other members of society. The moment of “due” in the system of social relations exists in two forms, namely, in the form of law and the form of morality. Where moral standards do not work, as S.L. Frank noted, “the cold and cruel world of law with its inherent legalization of egoism and crude coercion comes into force”². “Any attempt to completely abolish the right and consistently subordinate life to a moral beginning,” he wrote, “leads to results even worse than the legal state - to the unraveling of the darkest and basest forces of a human being, thanks to which life threatens to turn into pure hell”³.

In other words, when internal taboos, internal censorship are lost, by virtue of which external taboos, outside censorship, should come out from the outside. And they can only be done by a strong state, which cannot be such, if it is based solely

¹ Schelling F.VI. Philosophical study of the essence of human freedom. – St. Petersburg, 1908. – P. 30.

² Schelling F.VI. Philosophical study of the essence of human freedom. – St. Petersburg, 1908. – P. 30.

³ Schelling F.VI. Philosophical study of the essence of human freedom. – St. Petersburg, 1908. – P. 162.

on super-abstracted and often detabuized postulates of liberalism, democracy, human rights and freedoms. This is what explains the undeniable fact that the state has the right to legitimate violence, with the help of which it has the right to deprive rights and freedoms, even the life of any person who violates this principle.

However, it seems that the modern Western man is losing the awareness that the security of a person, his rights and freedoms are ensured, first of all, by the state. It seems that in the modern world, which is characterized by the uncertainty of development vectors, the growth of instability, the emergence of new, not always amenable to a clear definition of internal and external threats, this view of the world can and should change. Without a strong national state there are not and cannot be human rights and freedoms, they actually remain only on paper. The validity of this thesis is shown by the chaos, the conflict potential that became the property of almost all countries that survived the so-called “Arab spring”, became victims of the so-called “export of the democratic revolution”, human rights and freedoms.

It is found that the widespread and indiscriminate implementation of libertarian rights and freedoms of a person leads to both an unprecedented increase in the sources of threats to the national security of the state, and the erosion of the conditions for ensuring the real rights and freedoms of its citizens. Accordingly, there are situations when it is necessary to ensure order and security in society at any cost, even at the cost of truth. The deadly sin of state power is weakness. It also happens that the most tyrannical power is better than anarchy and the chaos it generates, lawlessness, violence, war of all against all.

It seems that no state in the whole written history of mankind by its very nature could not exist, not exists and never will exist, if in its foundation as the cornerstone are laid solely by anyone and in no way violated human rights and freedoms. Undoubtedly, the life of every single person in itself is priceless – first of all, for himself. However, many sacramental questions arise here, among which the central place is occupied by the question of what place in the formula “Man is the measure of all things” occupy such impersonal values and attitudes, ideas, ideals such as sacrifice, willingness to accept death for certain values dear to the heart. As K. Jaspers emphasized, by its roots in the depths of pre-history, the tradition “constitutes the historical substance of human existence”¹.

Any human community, especially a state claiming to be suitable for the present and the future, cannot be viable without some super-personal ideals for the sake of which every single individual citizen is ready to sacrifice his life. Super-personal in the sense that any viable society is immeasurably more than just an arithmetic aggregate of people, their interests, the expression of human passions and aspirations, etc. Man and human life are endowed with meaning only if they are not viewed as equal to themselves, self-sufficient entities, but as entities

¹ Jaspers K. Meaning and purpose of history. – M., 1991. – P. 245.

conceived at the intersection of the natural and divine worlds, where social life is not divided into sacred and mundane, rational and irrational, subjective and objective, etc. If there were no phenomena that often seem to be compressed into a kind of clots in the form of ideals, missions, rituals, taboos, rules and behavioral stereotypes, etc., mankind might have forever remained in a primitive state where the principle of the war of all against all and the survival of the fittest to life prevailed. Here, as S. L. Frank emphasized, unity does not dominate plurality from without, but from the inside permeates it, providing the habitual internal unity of people. We are talking about heroism, martyrdom, sacrifice, and readiness to accept death for certain values, principles, and attitudes that serve as constant braces that unite tribes, ethnic groups, and peoples into principles, attitudes that serve as braces that unite people, nations into single communities, serve as the spiritual substrate of their living together. Without them, human communities would not have had their Prometheus, Icarus, Jesus, etc.

Human rights and freedoms in the mirror of the complex of the basic values

In this context, the form of self-organization of human communities is the embodiment of an objective super-personal ideal, regardless of how and by whom it is generated – by the divine principle or by man himself – and by what ways was established as an objectively existing given. Therefore, when a dilemma of choice between self-preservation, on the one hand, and the life of a single person, his rights and freedoms, on the other hand, arises before society and the state, priority is given to the imperative of physical self-preservation of the state. Without the willingness of citizens to sacrifice their lives to achieve this goal, while depriving the lives of the citizens of the opposing state, it is not possible to imagine the history, the present and the future of humanity itself and its inalienable fundamental institution represented by the state. This is the essence of all wars between nations, states, empires, civilizations. As emphasized by the famous German historian of the XIX century H. von Treitschke, “the individual can and must sacrifice himself for the nation. But a state that sacrifices itself for another people is not only not moral, but it contradicts the idea of self-assertion (Selbstbehauptung), that is, the most significant that that is in the state”. Therefore, Treitschke argued, “the state should not be considered as a necessary evil, it, on the contrary, is the highest necessity of (its) nature (hohe Naturwendigkeit)”¹. With this understanding, the very question: what is more important, an individual person or state, sounds as absurd as the debate about who is more important for the continuation of the human race – man or woman.

And further. They talk about escape from freedom. However, it seems that you can give up or run away from something that you own or is close or very

¹ Treitschke von H. Politik. – Leipzig, 1897. – P. 27.

dear to you. In fact, the overwhelming majority of people, if they are interested in freedom in the true sense of the word, then mainly or even exclusively in its understanding as the freedom of economic choice, the freedom to search and obtain means of subsistence. The essence of the issue is that freedom is too complex and delicate matter to be equally loved and revered by all people without exception. In the deep, metaphysical understanding, in the words of the well-known Russian philosopher N. Berdyaev, “freedom is aristocratic”, it is not within the reach of everyone. Indeed, not everyone is given the ability to create spiritual matters. Freedom requires from a person tension, effort, independence, initiative, ability to make an informed choice and be responsible for their actions. This, if you will, is in a certain sense a cross that not everyone can bear. “There is nothing more difficult than learning to live freely” the well-known French historian A. de Tocqueville rightly stated.

In this sense, the number of those who truly strive for true, rather than illusory freedom, in proportion to the total number of people is the same in both the so-called democratic and authoritarian states. Often, those who aggressively push through the principles of human rights and freedoms do not belong to this category, since they risk turning into people obsessed with fanaticism and a thirst for power in the way of implementing their utopia or ideal. Such people F. Dostoevsky called demons – “fanatics of philanthropy”.

Requirements for libertarian freedom are obscured by its versatility, diversity, ambiguity, inconsistency, conjugation with many other socio-political phenomena, institutions, values, such as power, authority, equality, justice, responsibility, morality, etc. In other words, freedom is an important, but not the only essential characteristic of a person. Here it is important to take into account the fact that liberalism gives priority to the rights and freedoms of a single person, withdrawing, as it were, the collective rights of various kinds of national, cultural, linguistic, confessional and other minorities. However, as evidenced by the historical experience and realities of the modern world, in the multinational states, and indeed at the supranational level, these two types are intimately connected with each other, complement each other and cannot be imagined without each other. This is a large and complex topic that requires independent research. Here we only note the obvious fact that the rights and freedoms of a representative of a minority will remain only an unattainable ideal if this minority is deprived of the right to choose its own way of developing its culture, language, forms of political self-organization, lifestyle, etc.

Many studies have established that the heterogeneity of society, expressed in the existence of a multitude of ethnic, confessional, clan, client and other groups, communities and connections may not necessarily become a factor hindering the adoption and affirmation of human rights and freedoms. Their features may well be integrated into the system of political values, orientations and norms, a unified model of political culture that naturally has its own special subcultures.

In this connection, the position of those authors who consider that “Japan is an open society of very closed groups” seems interesting. It has been established that here the political macro-structure in the form of parliamentary democracy, constitutionalism, the rule of law, a multi-party system and other attributes of classical democracy was created while preserving group, collectivist, solidarist principles. It is obvious that it follows from these realities that democracy is compatible with collective rights, moreover, in the modern world without their guarantee for many peoples with an organic socio-cultural system and political culture, it is unacceptable. In other words, a group, a collective, an ethnic group, a state can and does play an irreplaceable role in creating conditions for the realization of the rights and freedoms of an individual man.

On the disadvantage of absolutization of human rights and freedoms

It should be noted that the very idea of human rights and freedoms, although rooted in the founding fathers of liberalism, became one of the aspects of world politics only in the 1970s. Thus, following the idea of the US messianic mission, the super-ideologized Democrat J. Carter, who won the 1976 presidential election in the USA, declared the protection of human rights throughout the world as a core component of Washington’s foreign policy strategy. In 2015, with the equally over-ideologized Democratic Party President B.Kh. Obama, this strategy has acquired just the same extreme forms. After June 26 of the same year, the US Supreme Court voting by five members against four legalized the same-sex marriages throughout the country, Secretary of State J. Kerry announced that now the United States would seek similar rights for LGBT people around the world. Kerry stated that the mission was entrusted to a special envoy on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights.

Of course, in a free society, any person has the right to choose his own fate, including the choice of non-traditional sexual orientation. But the desire to impose in any way on society, especially on the rest of the world, the values and attitudes of any minority, especially legal innovations is contrary to the very nature of man.

If the legal laws are opposed to the laws of nature, then the legal laws alas, have nothing to count on. You can cancel the law of the US Congress or by the UN resolution cancel the law of conservation of energy, but the universe from this will not be either hot or cold. Therefore, no matter what laws are enacted by the relevant authorities of any state on allowing same-sex marriages, on prohibiting the indication of the sexes of men and women, girls wearing dresses in schools, addressing parents as father and mother, etc. etc. in no way will they cancel the fact that humanity consists of men and women endowed with the corresponding natural data, purpose, relevant biological, physiological, psychological characteristics, etc.

Taking into account the above arguments, it seems unlawful to talk about a certain abstract freedom, natural freedom, which could not and cannot exist either in the so-called “natural” or in a social or other state. Negatively interpreted freedom, with its denial of power and authority, knowing no limits, as a rule, sooner or later turns into its opposite, inevitably leads either to anarchy or to some form of despotism. The requirement of absolute freedom, giving freedom of absolute priority over all other values may in one form or another imply justification and use of any available means to achieve it, adopting the favorite motto of all consecutive revolutionaries “the end justifies the means”. This visual representation can be made on the example of the experience of various types of totalitarianism. Consequently, it should not be brought to the point of absurdity any idea or value, including the formula “man is measure of all things”, human rights and freedoms, democracy in the Western packaging etc.

Absolute and unlimited freedom of a man considered to be the measure of all things, would mean transferring to society the notorious law of survival of the fittest, the main purpose of which is to justify the right of the strong to subjugate the weak. An unbiased analysis of these phenomena shows that excessive faith in a person, and a person left to himself, under certain conditions, may be simply dangerous for other people and even human communities. If a person is a measure of all things and there is no other principle above him that is higher than himself, then, naturally, he is persistently pursued by the temptation to make the categorical imperative of leadership in life a maxim: “I want it, I do it”. Or, as one of the heroes of G. Marquez, the soldier of the revolution, claimed, “we are making a revolution so that you can marry even your own mother.” After all, you can choke with such freedom. If every single person would be allowed to do whatever he wishes, then he too would not be free, since the rest of society would have the right to do the same to him.

It is well known Lord Acton’s expression: “Power corrupts, great power – corrupts absolutely”. At the same time, one should equally listen to the American writer and historian G. Himmelfarb, who came to the conclusion: “Freedom also corrupts, and absolute freedom corrupts absolutely”. Indeed, freedom practiced without internal self-limitation leads to promiscuity. The validity of this thesis is evidenced by those processes and tendencies in the public life of Western countries, which, apart from de-tabooization, attempt to undermine the fundamental values and institutions of Judeo-Christian civilization.

At the same time, one cannot forget the fact that a state clothed with unlimited power can become a ruthless Leviathan, recognizing only his power and using all means up to the transformation of all his subjects into wordless slaves. Moreover, the state and those who seek unlimited power, often act in the name of freedom, using the essential characteristics of the person himself, including the person claiming unlimited freedom.

The validity of this thesis is confirmed by the fact that a certain regularity can be traced: the harder state power is, the more likely it is that the collapse is

fraught with anarchy and chaos, preached and supported under the slogans of democracy, human rights and freedoms. And, conversely, the broader and more arbitrary democracy, protected under the slogans of human rights and freedoms, opposed to authoritarianism, greater the likelihood of establishing a rigid authoritarian government.

In order to properly assess the meaning of these arguments, it is necessary to take into account that the concepts of “freedom of choice” and “inner freedom” are not legitimately regarded as synonyms. Freedom of choice is not always and may not necessarily be a reflection of inner freedom. If the first, with appropriate interpretation, can be the destroyer of all taboos, traditions, myths, legends, illusions that constitute the spiritual bonds of human communities, the second restricts freedom of choice in order to keep it within the Golden Rule, or within the limits of what is permitted. Otherwise, culture and tradition in the true sense of the word may become victims of violence from unrestrained freedom, from the philosophy of entertainment and pleasure. Perhaps this was what the famous Danish philosopher of the XIXth century Søren Kierkegaard had in mind, when he said that “people rarely enjoy the freedom that they have, such as freedom of thought, but instead they demand freedom of speech”.

With this understanding, the flip side of the idea of freedom in the libertarian interpretation is highlighted in ever-increasing degree, namely, nihilism in assessing everything that does not meet Western values and standards, rejection of values and cultures of non-Western peoples, ridicule their beliefs, various kinds of caricatures insulting their gods, prophets, heroes and martyrs. Paradoxically, tolerance, which is thought by many as an integral part of the mythology of human rights and freedoms, undergoes a kind of inversion. In this sense, the problem of the European extreme radicals of the spill of the notorious French left-wing / right-wing magazine *Charlie Hebdo* lies in the fact that they, from the seemingly innocent exercises of caricature of the founders and prophets of world religions, smoothly switched to the path of an uncompromising fight against confessional systems – relevant peoples, while aggressively imposing on them their own values, considered as the last truth in the last resort.

Such attitudes are probably not less dangerous for stability in the world and for its prospects than Osama Bin Laden and his followers of various stripes, since it is about invading value systems, fueling racial and religious hatred. Therefore, declaring and protecting freedom of speech, we must not forget that, for example, freedom of religion presupposes the freedom to profess or not to profess one faith or another. This is the freedom of all religions without exception, including the secular religion, the freedom of any secular worldview, including atheism. However, adherents of the new religion use the misunderstood freedom of speech as freedom to insult the representatives of other peoples and cultures. Such an understanding of freedom as a universal value does not fit with the interests of ensuring the viability of certain communities and the minimum geopolitical stability necessary for modern world.

Summing up the study, it can be argued that, elevated to the rank of certain absolutes, which determine the whole structure of the life of the people, society, state, way of life itself, the ideas of democracy, human rights and freedoms look, at best, over-ideologized constructs designed to justify a certain political strategy and lose their original meaning and devalued. And this is in conditions when, due to a complex of well-known factors, the moral authority of the West in the eyes of the rest of the world is essentially undermined and the very values of the Enlightenment, respectively, of democracy in its present form are being questioned.

The essence of the issue lies in the fact that in the name of the rights and freedoms of a person that are misunderstood, liberation from tradition, spiritual barriers, disciplining an individual, and restraining his egoistic impulses is encouraged in every way. With such excessive use and indiscriminate attachment to the regimes of various kinds of clown-like politicians, human rights and freedoms are transformed into ideas-candy wrappers, serving as instruments of ideological rhetoric and lose their original meaning and are devalued. Attempts to force them on other nations as the experience of implementing the strategy of the export of the democratic revolution has shown, lead both to an unprecedented increase in the sources of threats to the national security of states and to the erosion of the conditions for ensuring the real rights and freedoms of their subjects.

For all that, it would not be correct and even absurd to go to the other extreme and to assert that these values, ideas, attitudes, principles in the new conditions with their new challenges turn out to be unnecessary relics of history. Here we should talk not about thoughtless opposition to these values as such, but about opposing the emasculation and blind imposing them to the place and not to the place indiscriminately to all the peoples. At one time, the great Corsican, who was well versed in such matters, said that the bayonets could do anything, they couldn't just sit on them. In any case, the development trends of the modern world over the past decades show the need to search for ways to reassess and improve them in accordance with the realities of the new polycentric world order. As for the peoples of the rest of the world, they themselves have the right to determine the main vectors of development on the basis of their own values and forms of political self-organization.

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