

LIMBA ENGLEZA

FREEDOM

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FREEDOM

The word "freedom" is full of ambiguities. An unemployed man is free, because he is not restricted to behave in a certain way by the schedule of a factory, job, or the burden of daily servitudes. An unemployed man is, still, a slave because he is submitted to restrictions of misery, or the restrictions that his needs impose on him. So he is free to look for and find a job, but his employers are free to offer him nothing. Consequently, the unemployed man is not free to live any longer. Many unemployed people commit suicide being free to choose not to live. All in all, freedom supposes ambiguities.

Historically speaking, people have associated the notion of freedom with their being free to impose on the others their own will, while the others were "slaves", or imposed upon. This social meaning was challenged when certain people discovered that we are born naturally free – all of us - ; consequently, the individual and the community became fully aware of their social and political rights as free people. Following the path opened by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, some philosophers such as John Locke, David Hume, Edmund Burke, Thomas Hobbes defined "natural state" as a state of "perfect freedom" of man to decide upon their actions and make choices according to their will. This meant political and juridical equality between people: they are equal in front of the law and in front of the political institution. But these considerations refer to political philosophy, demonstrating that fear and freedom are compatible (we do something out of fear but we may refuse to do it; for example, paying taxes – we are free not to pay them, but we still do it for fear that we might get sanctions). Liberty is also compatible with necessity.

Philosophically speaking, we need to adopt a form of negative definition so as to apply it to all form of freedom: freedom is the absence of constraints, or restrictions. So, we can accept the existence of types of freedom. For example, in Physics, we speak about free fall. In Politics, we speak about freedom of association opinion (being independent of the authority of the government), in Economy, we refer to free economic change, meaning trade free from customs taxes, or imposes payments.

Starting from this enlarged definition, the metaphysical philosophers created the concept of absolute freedom. This idea opposes nature, consisting a kind of passage to the limits: we represent our free action as successively "free" from any types of causes. But this type of freedom is the power of acting independently not only in connection with outer, or exterior restrictions, but also in connection with any inner determination. This is called the free will of the metaphysical philosophy, and refers

to the mysterious power of carrying out actions that are not previously determined by my ideas, my instincts or my aptitudes.

Referring to the free will, we find out that we can not demonstrate the existence of such a type of freedom. To do so, we have to come back to necessity, and liberty or freedom supposes contingency, or the absence of necessity.

Paradoxically, a piece of evidence of freedom would kill freedom.

Nevertheless, if we can not demonstrate the existence of freedom, we could experience it under the form of free will.

Descartes, the French philosopher, Leibnitz, the German philosopher, speak about the "vivid inner feeling" of free will.

If we refer to Descartes, he states that we experience an infinite type of free will, similar to God's free will. "We think, so we exist" means that I believe what I see clearly and distinctly with the light of my intellectual mind. But I see only what I watch and I watch what I want. The evidence of truth is submitted to the free benevolence of my attention. And this interpretation is debatable, because my power of attention within my mental life can not be isolated; on the contrary, the power of attention is determined by my mental life.

The "free action" should be tested in such circumstances in which we would not have a reason to make us have a preference or motivation. This gratuity of the action would be what distinguishes man from the animal. Otherwise, all the actions are motivated by interest, curiosity, passion – a possible cause. The "free action" is determined by the very reason that we need to behave unconventionally.

Nevertheless, our unconscious mind is able to dictate to us actions that are motivated by secret frustrations or complexes of inferiority. The "inner feeling", the experience have no objective value.

In conclusion, it is absurd to accept "the arguments in favour of a pure free will action", because we would have to accept irrational behaviour in the course of the human actions.

The philosophy of necessity (stoical philosophy or Spinoza's system) states that man is a mere element of the cosmic world, a small part determined by the whole. According to it, freedom is an attribute of necessity: hormones and chemical changes determine our behaviour; our childhood gives reasons for our adult behaviour; Sociology explains our actions by our social and educational background. That is why there is an universal determination of our actions (of biological, psychological and sociological inspiration).

This concept, in the light of stoical or Spinozian philosophy, means that, if we want to be free, it is sufficient to consent to necessity; freedom means submission to the divine necessity, adopting determinism willingly means being free. Men's actions seem strange because they depend on our wishes and, equally, on

external causes. We are weak and afraid of what might happen to us, we are initially slaves, literally, because our actions are not reflections of our own will.

People often commit suicide because they feel they have failed, even if our most ardent wish is to survive. Also, the mean person obsessed by gold deprives himself of the most elementary goods, forgetting that gold has the only advantage of satisfying our needs.

This originary servitude of the human condition may be converted into freedom by man's actions depending on his own internal nature and not on external causes.

More concretely, Spinoza proposes a solution called "of ancient wisdom": to be free in the universe, we need to accept the universe. We break free if we accept what is happening to us. Everything that happens to us is necessary and if something bad happens to me, I am completely free from suffering and I will feel relieved from my suffering exactly because I will have understood the nature of this necessity.

So, freedom could be reduced to modern rationalism resignation in front of the divine will.

In contrast with this stoical attitude (we do not attend an examination because we know we will fail it), the 20th century states that: we are free not when we take action without a reason, but when we do what we satisfy our most profound tendencies. In other words, when we think free, we think with our own mind, without outer constraints.

The free action is the most profoundly thought over action, the most profoundly motivated. The free action is considered, according to modern rationalism, as an intelligent solution to a problem.

Accordingly, freedom is not inborn, not something that characterized human nature, but something that is conquered, the result of a liberation of some kind. It is something that should be done, probably an original solution to a problem I am confronted with.

Moreover, a free action is not only an action that solves a problem raised by our relationship with the others, but it underlines the problem of freedom of the human being in connection with the world. The 20th century is no longer the 17th century, when man was crushed by the universe. At the beginning of its history, man is the slave of the universe, being "estranged" in a hostile world. In the long run, man has progressively conquered the forces of the universe, becoming a master instead of a slave. Man will learn the laws of the universal determinism and will use these laws for his benefit. That is why the apprehension and the use of necessity will be the instrument of the liberation of Man.

Nevertheless, one should not reduce the triumph of man to mastering nature by technical and scientific means. It is true that

technique and technology frees man from nature. Unfortunately, man has become the slave of his own technique. This is because we, the humans, do not know enough in the field of mechanism of human societies, or of human behaviour; this explains the rise of so many dictator-ships in the very 20th century; Hitler, Stalin, Mao-Tze-Dun are such regrettable examples. International relationships are being affected by the limitations in the field of Economy and Politics, of distribution of resources.

Freedom is not anarchy; on the contrary, it supposes rational organization. Otherwise, the weak one will be destroyed by the strong one, and no freedom would be possible. "Economic liberalism", or market economy, only guarantees a type of abstract economic freedom; that is why man needs a progressive knowledge and command of natural and social determinism.

One important moment – a critical one, in fact – in defining freedom, was French existentialism, different from rationalism, but essentially a philosophy of freedom (1945-1968). Its main theses are: existence precedes essence; existentialism appears as a reflection on human condition; existentialism is a humanism.

We are condemned or doomed to be free, and our choices may be made any moment of our lives.

Also, man is defined by consciousness and there is no psychological uncsciousness. Whenever we faint (in front of a furious tiger), we do not suppress the danger in a rational, objective way, I do it in a subjective, magical way; so we suppress the consciousness of the danger, not the danger itself.

To sum up, the three great statements of existentialism are: the role of consciousness; the stress laid on history interpreted as the fight of freedom in situation with what it is conditioning it human transcendence. All of them are systematically rejected by structuralism.

Structuralism is represented by "the three musqueteers", in fact four, of structuralism: Claude Levy – Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault. This trend takes scientific modern logics and linguistics as its fundamental pillars; also it opposes existentialism by three points of view: firstly, history is diminished in importance, because successive civilizations are discontinuous and each has their own language and way of organization.

Secondly, structuralism underlines the reality of the uncscious mind and its importance for the freedom man longs for.

Thirdly, structuralism is essentially antihumanistic, because structures wipe away the human being. Language is an impersonal concept and essential and prior to acts of speech, so speaking as a human action is subsidiary.

In conclusion, man has become a were object of knowledge, and his very essence, that is uncscious for himself, is free to be

decoded in the structure of his language. Man is no longer a master of transcendence, but an object of study by rational and logical structures.

In the most enlarged meaning, freedom is the absence of constraints, so there are as many types of freedom as many constraints there are for us to fight against: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of living a happy life, freedom to choose what is best for us.

Nevertheless, freedom is an abstract concept that may be called an illusion, or an ideal to struggle for.