

THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVE FREEDOM IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

O PROBLEMA DA LIBERDADE SUBJETIVA NA COMUNICAÇÃO POLÍTICA

EL PROBLEMA DE LA LIBERTAD SUBJETIVA EN LA COMUNICACIÓN POLÍTICA

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ABSTRACT: The paper is aimed at studying political communication as a factor of formation of subjectivity. The initial premise is the idea that perverse restrictions on freedom are rooted in infosphere, characterized by the panoptic nature of human being and the ethical uncertainty of the use of personal data. In the modern world, the communicative infrastructure is threatened by two interrelated and mutually complementary tendencies: a systematically conditioned reification and a cultural decline (conformist consciousness). The liberation of the individual from traditional dependencies entails his/her removal from moral landmarks and causes the increase of his/her dependence on the system. The notion of universal truth carries danger of totalitarianism, forcing everybody to think and act according to one pattern.

The authors reveal social and ethical foundations of freedom as the basic value, give a phenomenological description of freedom in political communications and determine the conditions of the exercise of liberty in modern society. Arendt's concept of activity is applied for explaining political communication phenomena.

KEYWORDS: Freedom. Political communication. Discourse. Moral. Hannah Arendt. Roger Berkowitz. Isaiah Berlin.

RESUMO: *O artigo objetiva estudar a comunicação política como fator de formação da subjetividade. A premissa inicial é a ideia de que as restrições perversas à liberdade estão enraizadas na infosfera, caracterizada pela natureza panóptica do ser humano e pela incerteza ética do uso dos dados pessoais. No mundo moderno, a infraestrutura comunicativa é ameaçada por duas tendências inter-relacionadas e*

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mutuamente complementares: uma reificação sistematicamente condicionada e um declínio cultural (consciência conformista). A libertação do indivíduo das dependências tradicionais acarreta seu afastamento dos marcos morais e acarreta o aumento de sua dependência do sistema. A noção de verdade universal acarreta o perigo de totalitarismo, forçando todos a pensar e agir de acordo com um padrão.

Os autores revelam os fundamentos sociais e éticos da liberdade como valor básico, dão uma descrição fenomenológica da liberdade nas comunicações políticas e determinam as condições do exercício da liberdade na sociedade moderna. O conceito de atividade de Arendt é aplicado para explicar fenômenos de comunicação política.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Liberdade. Comunicação política. Discourse. Moral. Hannah Arendt. Roger Berkowitz. Isaiah Berlin.

RESUMEN: *El trabajo tiene como objetivo estudiar la comunicación política como factor de formación de subjetividad. La premisa inicial es la idea de que las restricciones perversas a la libertad tienen su raíz en la infosfera, caracterizada por la naturaleza panóptica del ser humano y la incertidumbre ética del uso de datos personales. En el mundo moderno, la infraestructura comunicativa está amenazada por dos tendencias interrelacionadas y mutuamente complementarias: una cosificación condicionada sistemáticamente y un declive cultural (conciencia conformista). La liberación del individuo de las dependencias tradicionales implica su alejamiento de los hitos morales y provoca el aumento de su dependencia del sistema. La noción de verdad universal conlleva el peligro del totalitarismo, lo que obliga a todos a pensar y actuar de acuerdo con un patrón.*

Los autores revelan los fundamentos sociales y éticos de la libertad como valor básico, dan una descripción fenomenológica de la libertad en las comunicaciones políticas y determinan las condiciones del ejercicio de la libertad en la sociedad moderna. El concepto de actividad de Arendt se aplica para explicar los fenómenos de la comunicación política.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Libertad. Comunicación política. Discordancia. Moral. Hannah Arendt. Roger Berkowitz. Isaiah Berlin.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to deepen the understanding of the personal freedom nature in political communication. The tasks, respectively, include: 1) explication of social and ethical foundations of freedom as the basic value of relations; 2) phenomenological describing of the realization of freedom in political communications; 3) determining the

conditions for the implementation of communicative freedom in modern society.

Freedom is a basic concept for European culture, that determines the ability of the subject to be a cause of his or her actions. The idea of individual freedom is formed within the discourse of the arrangement of public life; thereby, firstly, it is connected with key values and ethics, and secondly, with the notions of civil society and government. In a number of modern sociological theories, civil society is considered as a social sphere occupying an intermediate place between a person and a state, as a communicative process between a citizen and a state, which acquires the form of “discursive consciousness” (GIDDENS, 1984) or “communicative rationality” (HABERMAS, 1985) in modern conditions.

Freedom in political communication is directly connected with the moral statements coordinating individuals' actions: if we demand behavior from others or justify our behavior, then we should turn to such norms that are intersubjectively meaningful. However, in any world outlook morality is intertwined with the notion of the good, the reference point of which is the life pattern. Thus, the first difficulty of freedom realization in political communication is due to the fact that the moral norms governing the communication interaction are not universal.

The study is particularly important in the context of total mediatization and the expansion of the space of influence and control in political communications. Various utopian models have demonstrated the danger that the notion of universal truth carries within itself: it is totalitarianism, forcing everybody to think and act according to one pattern. The fundamental categories that characterize human existence collide in problem of freedom: individuality and society, possibility and reality, the will of an individual and external predetermination. Freedom is revealed through the individual internal readiness to be free and external conditions. The problem is that one may not be aware of his/her lack of freedom or be aware, but not want to change anything. As the hero of the novel-parable by H. Hesse *The Glass Bead Game* Knecht said: “*But he would be no less a coward and traitor who betrayed the principles of the*

life of the mind to material interests – who, for example, left the decision on the product of two times two to the rulers”.

Methods

For explication of freedom, the authors refer to the communicative-activity approach, concept of positive and negative freedom of I. Berlin, and activity approach of freedom of H. Arendt. The article takes into account the concept of freedom as a recognized necessity. So understood freedom resides in determining and expanding the objective limits of action; therefore, freedom is not only the absence of limits, but also a possibility that allows a person to compensate for lacks: “Scientia potestas est” (F. Bacon). There are other sources of freedom restriction: affect passions (B. Spinoza), fears (S. Kierkegaard), fear of freedom (E. Fromm), and power (M. Foucault). The powerful pressure exerted on a person manifests itself in the form of political and legal violence.

Results and Discussion

Public liberty and inner freedom

In order to determine the basis for communicative freedom, as well as to trace the conditions for its implementation, it is necessary to clarify some key concepts. The concepts “freedom” and “liberty” are synonyms, but the meaning of liberty is historically connected to the absence of arbitrary restraints (such as French *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*) and, thus, to the rules of law. It is further necessary to distinguish politics as state management and political communication as the linguistic interaction of individuals, groups and institutions in or in connection with this administration sphere; that is, a reform (for example, retirement age raising) is a political act, and the discussion of this reform is political communication. They are connected, but one cannot be reduced to another. Secondly, political communication takes place through different channels: media, institutional and interpersonal ones. Just talking about politics is also political communication, since politics affects not only the public but also the private sphere. Influence effects, changing attitudes

and behavior are indirect feedback of the communicative process, which reflects transformations in political environment.

The third point is the differentiation of freedom in the public sphere (ideological liberty, which includes freedom of speech) and in the private sphere (inner freedom). One of the most important questions is if ideological liberty is an essential foundation for private freedom and human development. This distinction can be linked with Isaiah Berlin's paradigm of the negative and positive liberty (BERLIN, 1969). Berlin believed that liberty (and freedom of speech) is not a direct condition for the development of talent, abilities, critical thinking of an individual. So, he challenged the idea of John Stuart Mill, according to which if there is no free exchange of ideas, we cannot find the truth; there will be no opportunities for the development of identity, originality, genius, mental energy and moral courage. Berlin refuted this by referring to the development of a person in Puritan societies.

Liberty and communicative freedom are not the main human needs. A poor person primarily needs food and shelter, not freedom, but freedom of expression can be an instrument for changing society. We agree with the main idea of Berlin: if the limitations of liberty are subordinated to the goal of preserving justice, equality, security, then negative liberty ("freedom from") is necessary as a legal field in which an individual can act. Moreover, the author considered it more humane than the positive liberty ("freedom to"), because it implies pluralism, in which everyone can be who he is. Berlin reduced the results of the implementation of positive freedom, when a person acts as the subject of his decisions, to social movements that in the past turned into tyranny and in which people's freedom suppressed individual's freedom (for example during the French revolution and the building of communism). The collective, ideal Self, the all-encompassing mind, supplants individuality, and as a result reduces it to the means of achieving the good in the future. In 1958, when Berlin was giving this lecture, it was natural to talk about the weakness of logocentrism and to associate it with utopian projects that eventually turned into totalitarianism. Indeed, if a person decided to be unfree in the

name of a great idea, he/she cannot become free and be the subject of changes: an empirical Ego of passions gives up to the power of a transcendental ideal. Berlin did not anticipate that fifty years later the boundary between private and public domains would almost disappear in social networks and messengers, and an individual initiative could become the basis of collective political decisions. The collective polylogical "I" of the Internet does not require self-denial in order to achieve freedom.

The System serves power relations communicatively

Of course, we can give examples where freedom of speech ceases to be freedom. It is not even about countries where human rights are violated (China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, etc.). Restrictions can arise everywhere: Norway, one of the three leading countries with free media, has not allowed E. Snowden to enter the country for getting the PEN Center prize for his contribution to the defense of freedom of speech. *That is, a person in political communication is not free, if he is free only in public, at the level of freedom of speech.* Inner, positive freedom is necessary to a person as a political subject for going beyond the everyday routine existence and for resisting the economic mechanism of consumption which undermines identity and spirituality.

In addition to economic and political factors that affect a person's ability to exercise their freedom in political communications, we can talk about the existential foundations of inner freedom. Communicative space of postindustrial mediasociety is stretched due to lifeworld reification and the increase in the quantity of formal connections. The number of contacts is increasing, but it does not lead to balanced and stable relationships, nor to the growth in the volume of useful, socially significant information, nor to effective ties, "habits and ideologies continue to separate us" (Tajsin, 2019). Thus, the bureaucratization of the state system negatively affects both the result of the activity and the interactions themselves. The system discourse objectifies self-valuable vital relations and forms a contextual semantic structure that comes into conflict with them. In this sense, according to Habermas:

“In the deformations of everyday practice, symptoms of rigidification combine with symptoms of desolation. The former, the one-sided rationalization of everyday communication, goes back to the growing autonomy of media-steered subsystems, which not only get objectified into a norm-free reality beyond the horizon of the lifeworld, but whose imperatives also penetrate into the core domains of the lifeworld” (HABERMAS, 1985).

The social system communicatively serves power relations which are perverse interactions with obligatory subordination and suppression. Forming of subjectivity is associated with the implantation of power inward in the process of rational and irrational assimilation of external structures by an individual. At the same time, one cannot fail to notice that such formalization is a natural consequence of the development of the communicative sphere. The invention of writing pushed the folding of the bureaucratic apparatus in ancient civilizations.

The Constitution protects the right to freedom of speech. However, it does not protect people from the possible consequences associated with free statements. You have the right to remain silent. In other words, freedom of speech means protection from government censorship, but it does not protect a person from social censorship or from the need to observe socially worked out standards of acceptable or unacceptable speech. Massmedia use framing not only to keep acceptable public discourse within certain limits, but also to help citizens understand and feel how this discourse fits into a broader trend, event or socio-political context.

Ethical apologia of political immorality

Freedom in political communication is directly connected with moral statements coordinating individuals' actions: if we demand behavior from others or justify our behavior, then we should turn to such norms that are intersubjectively meaningful. However, liberal norms that are close to a number of European societies may not be accepted by Eastern peoples. In

any world outlook morality is intertwined with the notion of the *good*, the reference point of which is the life pattern.

Thus, the first difficulty of freedom realization in political communication is due to the fact that the *moral norms governing the communication interaction are not universal*. In the information society, the limitations of an individual are connected with an ideological and political component (for example, A. Gramsci spoke about cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), and M. Foucault - about power discourse (FOUCAULT, 1971)). The common point of both the ethics of duty (Kant) and eudemonism (Aristotle) is the conformity of an act to a norm; an individual is responsible for actions and results. This means that the subject of moral discourse must correlate his or her own action with the norm in a statement. At the same time, morality may lose the status of a behavior regulator, being subordinated to a certain ideology. In this case, politics and ideology are absolutized, illegally appropriating the universal powers of morality, becoming an absolute norm-creating entity. The result of the subordination of a goal to a means, and morality to an ideological doctrine is the ethical apologia of political immorality.

The differentiation of areas of morality and knowledge that became apparent after the three Kant's Critics, manifests not only a methodological division, but also a conceptual stratification of discourses. Thus, a moral argument was removed from the legal discursive field; generally valid social decisions can be considered as objective if they are free of values and emotions. Division of rational and moral can be identified in social communicative environment. Secularization in the Age of *Enlightenment era* led to the fact that the cult of reason *drove out* religion that had been linking different spheres of life in the traditional society. Rationality reduced to goal-setting does not fulfill integration function, rather, on the contrary, rationality as an impersonal fulfillment of the tasks of dominant discourse power, objectified in the system, dominates the private sphere and hides meanings. According to the accurate definition of H. Marcuse, this makes us "*immune against the expression of protest and refusal*" (Marcuse, 1964). There is no need to

restrict a person, it is enough to immerse him in the world of corresponding clichés, turning him from a citizen into a consumer.

Imbalance in communication

The reasons for the restriction of freedom today are rooted in the very communicative environment. Latent threat in media society is the panoptic nature of the presence of a person in the information space and the uncertainty of the ethical boundaries of using personal data bases. The field of influence and control is expanding, including political communications. At the XII ISUD World Congress in Peru, an American philosopher W. Harwood (Harwood, 2018) compared the current attitude of the law of information ethics with the situation in the Lochner era. In 1905, one of the most controversial decisions in the history of the United States Supreme Court was made. “Freedom of contract” has triumphed over freedom and human rights, just as databases are now triumphant over the freedom to not provide personal information, to the detriment of the right of confidentiality, the necessary part of a democratic society. It is about the need to protect people from their own desire to be not free. Indeed, as D. Strauss rightly noted in his article on the Lochner case, “freedom of contract” should win in the courts if the contract protects the interests of both parties, and not one (STRAUSS, 2003).

Freedom is connected with responsibility. In mass political communication there is an imbalance in language interactions between a collective and an individual subject when you cannot know exactly how free you are. The concept of *responsibility* in the political discourse is rarely accompanied by the pronoun *I* (“*I take responsibility*”). It can be said that in the political discourse a contradiction is manifested at the level of discrepancy between a communicator and a speech subject: thus, in the phrases “*our irresponsible attitude will make global problems*” or “*this issue requires a responsible decision and mutual trust*”, the subjects are the nouns “attitude” and “issue”, that is, the subject of an action is blurred, and it is not clear who really should take responsibility in these cases. The specificity of political discourse is the dominance of passive

constructions and impersonal sentences. This lack of willfulness in language can be used by an individual as an instrument for removing political responsibility from oneself. The application of strategies of hidden discursive influence of a communicator (the using of the pronoun *We*, the future tense of verbs) makes it possible to shift accents, to use as an action subject not a political power representative, but people and to reduce implicitly an action to a promise.

Another feature of the speech order of power is a syntactic composition, the combination of non-synonymous concepts that allows to considerate designated realities as semantically close. Outside discourse, they are not synonyms: ex., government-we-responsibility-justice-democracy. In addition, political discourse is characterized by nominalization (a verbal nouns using with suffixes), which leads to the disappearance of a political decision subject. The semantic result of nominalization is that political statements are depersonalized. Elimination of a subject from the discourse let conceal the use of ideological manipulations in political communication and convey something not as planned or desired, but as a fact of reality: "it is necessary to work together to create a just society" (it is assumed that the creating has already begun).

Freedom as action

The process of the breaking of traditional ties in local communities is heterogeneous (namely, we can reveal the features of traditional society in Russian rural way of life). Consequently a political system becomes self-referencial and distinct from its environment, and in the context of a mass consumption society there is the differentiation of the system and life world. An individual is more a consumer than a citizen, and in public communications his weight in making political decisions is reduced to blind voting. Thus, the role of a citizen loses its content. Modern private sphere is being limited by the system, and consequently an individual is often unable to identify the discourses of a citizen and a system "client", the

consumer of power relations. Thus, values are in a subordinate position in relation to system constraints.

Back in the 1970s Hannah Arendt argued that the bureaucratization of the political system leads to the death of democracy and human freedom, since freedom is not reduced to existential abandonment and free will; freedom is expressed in action (Arendt, 1972). Freedom, she believed, is a political phenomenon, involving the participation of the subject in the management of himself and society, together with others. People are really free, and not just have the gift of freedom while they do things, because being free and acting are one and the same thing. An American philosopher Roger Berkowitz, in his talk *Protest and Democracy: Hannah Arendt and the Foundation of Freedom*, speaking of disillusionment with democracy, refers to the work by Arendt and a number of political theorists of recent decades, who justify the need to strengthen the protest movement. Berkowitz analyzes the position of D. Graeber, an activist for Occupy Wall Street: “Graeber finds that the locus of political freedom has moved from politics to protest <...> The end of Graeber’s story is that as we are seeing the disappearance of political freedom in Western representative democracies through the loss of political participation, direct action gives people the joy and the fun and the experience of acting freely” (Berkowitz, 2018). In our opinion, the difference in the interpretation of freedom by the theoreticians of protest (D. Graeber, J. Rancière and S. Critchley) and H. Arendt is that protest can be interpreted as negative freedom *from* coercion, and the possibility of political participation in order to reach consensus, as a positive freedom *for*. Another thing is that it is easier to express disagreement than to reach agreement on any issue. The perception of a protest action as a manifestation of freedom of expression shifts the emphasis from the freedom of political communicative action to the feeling of freedom.

Summary

We suppose that such an implementation of free communication leads to the fact that public discourse breaks down into lifeworld discourse with its focus on mutual understanding and political and economical rational-purpose discourse – the discourse of money and power, which becomes often the domain of private interests realization.

Well, how to overcome this difficulty? Rationality is inherent in the communication itself and it could become practically effective to the extent that it fulfills the regulating function in social interactions, social reproduction and life-world preservation. The discourse of political communications should reflect, first of all, common interests with the obvious focus on intersubjective sphere. Thus, it becomes a means by which cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization are carried out. As American philosopher A. Fiala stated at the 23d World ISUD Congress: “think globally, act locally: it means that we should support a universal dialogue on the basis of trust, justice and understanding.

Conclusions

Taking the key position of Arendt about freedom as an activity, we conclude: freedom in political communication lies in the fact that a person himself makes a decision that unites individuals, participates in the life of the state, changing the order. Media communities, on the one hand, pose a danger to the personal space of an individual, on the other hand, they contain an opportunity to implement the conditions of communicative freedom, in which the subject acts as a citizen, not a consumer. Reduced to goal rationality, systemically objectified common sense does not fulfill an integration function today; rather, on the contrary, as an impersonal fulfillment of the tasks of dominant discourse power, it dominates the private sphere and determines the dependence of a person on the system. The lack of freedom can be overcome in a communicative action aimed at reaching a consensus. The masses are not deliberative: in large social

groups, the subject who assumes responsibility is blurred, therefore, the more communicative communities that decentralize power, the more effective communication is. Polylogue is the basis for independent actions opposed to opportunistic behavior.

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