

HOW TO RECONCILE EQUALITY WITH FREEDOM? ON THE TWO WAYS IN LIBERALISM

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Abstract

The article examines the relationship between the two central political ideas and values, equality and freedom, and its implications within the theories of two liberal thinkers Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls. The current debate around basic income and COVID-19 around the world, alarmist predictions about the future of humanity, and possible other issues, both global and local, provide enough incentive to reconsider this issue. While making some general remarks on both theories, and especially highlighting the rival nature of the relationship of equality with freedom, the article uses the method of comparative analysis to explore how these liberal thinkers reconcile these two central political ideas in their own way. Two different ways of reconciliation, developed by Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls, show a discrepancy with the initial attitudes of the authors. And, finally, equality and freedom demonstrate paradoxical relationships, both contradictory and mutually supportive.

Keywords: *freedom, equality, liberalism, value monism, value pluralism, social justice, tension, reconciliation, paradoxical nature of relation.*

Introduction

There are issues in political theory and philosophy on which debates are renewed as practical concerns enforce to revisit them. As a result, new dimensions and aspects are gained. In its turn, conceptual frameworks already developed take a chance to be viewed from a new angle and opened from a new perspective and to provide guidelines in tackling of those practical matters. The current debates on the basic income and COVID-19¹ all over the world, alarmistic predictions about the future of humanity and possible other issues of both global and local nature create enough incentives to reconsider the

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¹ COVID-19 pandemic which has brought to restrictions on freedoms (for instance, the freedom of movement and freedom of occupation) and probably even equality requires to ask: if there are limits in medical care and infrastructure, then whose life matters more? And the latter is not only a question of right or freedom but also of equality in treatment.

relation between the two central political values and ideas, between freedom and equality, in particular the nature of their relation and its aspects. As is widely known, the latter has been at the focus of political thought since the 17-18th centuries, namely, the rise and development of modern nation-states. And the nature as well as the aspects of that relation have forced political thinkers, actors, parties to define their ideological preferences and positions within political spectrum.

It is of special interest to consider how the issue was tackled during the Cold War period by the two influential representatives of liberal scholarship, I. Berlin and J. Rawls and consequences that arise from it. As liberal-oriented thinkers they view the relation of equality with freedom in tension, in rivalry but proposing two different ways of conceiving and resolving it and, in effect revealing its paradoxical nature. It is the latter that should be examined here as important insights can be got from it for solving current complex issues.

General Remarks

In order to come close to I. Berlin's and Rawls' enterprise and its insightful aspects a couple of questions are to be raised. First of all, they concern the title of the article. Why is the formulation "How to reconcile equality with freedom?" chosen? What assumptions as well as beliefs are behind it? First of all, it is inspired by the ways how Berlin and Rawls view the relation of equality and freedom though these ways are themselves grounded in traditions of Western political thought. So, the title's first part follows them and presumes that there is some tension, conflict, rivalry between political values of equality and freedom. Moreover, this way of viewing is much more typical to right-wing, liberal-oriented than to left-wing thinkers². Simultaneously, it is quite natural that I. Berlin and J. Rawls who are not at the far end of right-wing aim at finding some sort of reconciliation and seek a possibility to meet their requirements at the same time, so to speak, in the same world. If all these presumptions are true and a reconciliation is possible, then we could ask: "how and at what cost?" The latter will be answered gradually while the article progresses in its topic.

Some important remarks are to be made in order to delineate the scope of comparison between I. Berlin's and J. Rawls' theories. *Firstly*, the historical context matters a lot about which it has been already mentioned above. After the French Revolution the debate on equality and freedom evolved with a renewed interest after the second World War,

² With regard to the leftist position on the conflicting ideals of equality and freedom an analytic Marxist thinker Gerald A. Cohen writes: "Most leftists reply either that there is no real conflict between equality and freedom, when both are properly conceived, or that, to the extent that there indeed is one, freedom should give way to equality, since justice demands equality, and justice comes before all other political values" (Cohen 2006, 416). But actually, he considers the socio-economic aspect of equality and freedom. A post-Marxist political theorist Ch. Mouffe who represents a leftist position tackles the issue from the other angle, namely, the relation between the political aspect of equality and freedom. And for her there is a tension between them given their rootedness in the democratic tradition and the liberal tradition respectively (Mouffe 2000, 3-5). Hence, the left-wing scholarship is not completely secure from tension and conflict between freedom and equality.

strictly to say, as a result of the Cold War between the Euro-Atlantic Bloc and the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact countries in the second half of the 20th century.

Secondly, here both terms - equality and freedom - are taken widely. But for certainty their two aspects - the political as well as the social and economic - and their relations are especially at the focus. Perhaps not with the same extent but both I. Berlin and J. Rawls consider them and provide important insights.

Thirdly, no difference is traced between freedom and liberty, freedom and right as these political thinkers are not, in effect, interested to draw these distinctions. In his *Two Concepts of Liberty* Berlin mentions about the first one - freedom and liberty (Berlin 2002, 169). Actually, one can find interchangeable use of these concepts in *A Theory of Justice* by Rawls (Rawls 2005, 201-205). With this respect Th. Pogge points out: "Rawls never distinguishes precisely between basic rights and basic liberties, and for the sake of brevity, he often refers only to basic liberties or only to basic rights" (Pogge 2007, 82).

Fourthly, J. Rawls tackles the topic in the frame of his theory of justice as his primary concern is to develop a theory of justice. Yet he puts that topic at the heart of his theory. In case of I. Berlin, it has not to do with a theory or a conception of social justice but with different values, their relations - especially, their conflictual relations, where due to some circumstances the author ruminates mostly on liberty and equality but not on justice itself³.

Fifthly, needless to say that both I. Berlin and J. Rawls explicitly position themselves as liberal thinkers, namely, thinkers whose ideological preferences are strongly directed by the idea of individual freedom or liberty⁴. It is because of the latter that the value of freedom or liberty plays such a role in their theories respectively. It does not mean that their liberalisms are identical⁵. There are principal differences between them. In a nutshell, Rawls stresses upon the egalitarian nature of his liberalism and aims at hierarchizing principles in order to escape the pitfalls of pluralism as he views them. Berlin takes the way of so to speak situative normativity putting at the heart of it the negative concept of liberty etc. But with all of this together these thinkers have managed to enhance the debate on equality and freedom to a new conceptual level providing sophisticated starting points for others in their own quests and findings.

It is of no less importance to note that both thinkers conceptualize against the background of and for pluralist societies facing the reality of different moral, aesthetical, religious or metaphysical views that which J. Rawls calls 'reasonable pluralism'.

And last but not least. A strong opposition to all kinds of anti-democratic political regimes motivate them to initiate their own intellectual ventures. And this motivation 'feels' across their theories. Surely, there are other aspects worth to be mentioned here as well. But it is better to stop here and start again this time considering the title of the article from the other angle.

³ But though no one can find an explicit, well-elaborated theory or conception of justice in Berlin's views, nevertheless, in an interesting way, it is possible to discern some, as if it existed in an implicit, latent way.

⁴ On a certain occasion political thinker J. Shklar notices the amorphous nature of the word "liberalism" due to some circumstances. In order to resolve it she insists: "Liberalism has only one overriding aim: to secure the political conditions that are necessary for the exercise of personal freedom" (Shklar 1989, 21).

⁵ The overview of liberal thinkers by A. Ryan justifies the usage of liberalism in the plural and not in the single (Ryan 2007, 360).

Discerning the Roots of Tension

The tension or rivalry between freedom and equality has strong ontological grounds and is based on the relation between difference and similarity. Both are inscribed in various aspects of being and of general importance and given rise as a result of comparison turned into an opposition. In the case of political ideas and values, of course, this generality is staged in its own way. Hence, the examination of relation of freedom and equality enables us to view it from a certain angle and in a certain manifestation.

Equality is a political value the logic of which is homogeneity. So, it strongly tends to sameness or similarity, uniformity the price of which is the erasures of differences. In his essay on equality, Berlin has a passage which brilliantly illustrates the latter with respect to society and human being. He writes: “Only in a society where the greatest degree of similarity between members occurs - where physical characteristics, mental endowment, emotional disposition, and conduct are as uniform as possible - where people differ as little as possible from each other in any respect whatever, will true equality be attainable. Only in such a society will it be possible to reduce to a minimum those differences of treatment, or of power, or of position, or of natural or acquired characteristics, that are liable to lead people to complain that they have not what others have, and to ask for reasons why this should be so” (Berlin 1979, 92).

On the contrary, freedom’s logic is heterogeneity. Not only does it tend to differences but it is actually based on them and takes all attempts of their erasures as restrictions imposed on itself, as its violations. And it is differences that give rise to inequalities. Berlin resumes it in this way: “[...] So long as there are differences between men, some degree of inequality may occur [...]. I do not suppose that extreme equality of this type - the maximum similarity of a body of all but indiscernible human beings – has ever been consciously put forward as an ideal by any serious thinker” (Berlin 1979, 92-93).

As far as Rawls’ approach is concerned, then he better expresses it in his critique of utilitarianism in which denying “the loss of freedom” for the sake of “the welfare of society” he characterizes utilitarianism as a doctrine which “does not take seriously the distinction between persons” (Rawls 2005, 3-27). Reflecting on the view of social cooperation in utilitarianism he notices: “This view of social cooperation is the consequence of extending to society the principle of choice for one man and then [...] conflating all persons into one [...]” (Rawls 2005, 27).

Obviously, because of their ideological preferences both political thinkers are to be sensitive to differences and plurality as well. And they fundamentally incorporate it through the idea of freedom though, as we’ll see, not completely and making some compromises. Therefore, they are unable conceptually to ignore the tension, conflict between equality and freedom and not to face it. In this respect, probably, Berlin is much more sensitive as on one occasion he declares: “If you have maximum liberty, then the strong can destroy the weak, and if you have absolute equality, you cannot have absolute liberty, because you have to coerce the powerful” (Jahanbegloo 2007, 145). In this way, Berlin sets up a kind of measure for equality and liberty: they can be absolute or not, probably, relative, or to some extent. At the same time, they are viewed within asymmetric power relationships, within the relationships between the strong and the weak. Perhaps, that is because equality and freedom are political through and through,

either. But according to Berlin, in their absolute measures they are destructive in case of freedom or coercive in case of equality. And these statements, if accepted, could deprive one of any incentive to idealize or romanticize equality and freedom, especially in their absolute forms. And perhaps they serve as warnings against any efforts to idealize and romanticize in particular with regard to political values and their implementations in practice.

Two Senses of Liberty and Value Monism (I. Berlin)

In general, Berlin is interested in political ideas, in their roles played in history. So, one can often find a historical perspective in his examination of political ideas. He has reflected on liberty and equality on different occasions. The systematic account of liberty appears in his *Two Concepts of Liberty*, the inaugural lecture delivered by Berlin before the university of Oxford in 1958 and later republished in collections of his writings. Two years earlier in 1956 he already published an essay called *Equality* in the *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*. But ruminating both on liberty and equality he aims at criticizing that which he calls value monism and justifying that which on the contrary to it he calls value pluralism. Hence, these topics - liberty vs. equality and value monism vs. value pluralism - are largely intertwined with each other though the latter, value monism vs. value pluralism is closely examined and well-elaborated in *Two Concepts of Liberty*. In this respect, the essay *Equality* is a kind of preliminary reflections on the topic.

Berlin begins an examination of basic values of freedom and equality by putting forward questions and definitions which reveal what they are simultaneously distinguishing their forms and aspects. On the course of examination, he gradually demonstrates why value monism, as he conceives it, is impossible and even harmful and what makes value pluralism preferable and attractive. For instance, in *Two Concepts of Liberty* he proposes two concepts of liberty – the negative one and the positive one. He raises two questions concerning these concepts respectively. The question for the negative concept of liberty is: “What is the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?” (Berlin 2002, 169). His answer is shaped by the Western tradition of political thought, therefore, it states: “I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others. If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree; and if this area is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved” (Berlin 2002, 169-70).

So, it turns out that: a) there are degrees of freedom, namely, one can be more or less free; b) but there is a minimum under which freedom transforms into coercion or enslavement; c) that which is in opposition to liberty in the negative sense. For him “coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area” (Berlin 2002, 169-70) in which one could otherwise act.

This configuration between freedom in the negative sense and coercion reminds a scale where at some point one of them can prevail. Meanwhile, the area of freedom

directly depends on this configuration. The wider area of non-interference means the wider area of freedom. If the negative concept of liberty is adopted, then in practice, the whole matter is where to draw the line of minimum, how to measure freedom. On what grounds? Are there universal criteria for all societies and persons in this respect or on the contrary they are always context-based? Berlin does not have answers to these questions. “The sense of freedom in which I use this term entails not simply the absence of frustration (which may be obtained by killing desires), but the absence of obstacles to possible choices and activities – absence of obstacles to possible choices and activities – absence of obstructions on roads along which a man can decide to walk. Such freedom ultimately depends not on whether I wish to walk at all, or how far, but on how many doors are open, how open they are, upon their relative importance in my life, even though it may be impossible literally to measure this in any quantitative fashion. The extent of my social or political freedom consists in the absence of obstacles not merely to my actual, but to my potential, choices – to my acting in this or that way if I choose to do so” (Berlin 2002, 32).

He traces back this understanding of freedom to the classical English political philosophers especially to Hobbes. But Locke, Bentham and Mill are also among those who are concerned to secure some area of non-interference though disagreements arise on how wide the area should be. It turns out that this area of non-interference is generated from the limits imposed on so to speak natural or unrestricted freedom. And this is the condition to obtain other highly valued goals such as justice, happiness, culture or security, varying degrees of equality in human association. The alternative to this state of affairs is social chaos.

So, it seems from one side there are natural or unrestricted freedom, the absence of non-interference, social chaos, impossibility of justice, of some form of equality, insecurity, asymmetric power relationships, from the other side, the area of non-interference, frontiers of which encircle an area of this non-interference, a possibility to achieve other highly-valued goals and more or less harmonic human association. For Berlin these alternatives have been already revealed and grasped by classical political philosophers. He points out that there can't be universal maxims or rules which once and for all regulate how restrictions must be imposed on freedom of some in order to secure freedom of others. It is a matter of practical compromise. A minimum area of personal freedom is prerequisite for human nature otherwise it degrades.

The positive sense of liberty is to answer the question: “What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?” (Berlin 2002, 169). With respect to the latter Berlin writes: “The ‘positive’ sense of the word ‘liberty’ derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside. I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer – deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realizing them” (Berlin 2002, 178).

The positive concept of liberty as it is formulated does not seem dangerous, destructive, hence, unacceptable. It stresses on agency, autonomy of person, something which brings to the fulfillment of human capabilities and potentialities. As all conceptions of freedom imply a view what is a self, a person, a man Berlin finds that manipulations of the definition of man can result in whatever end one wishes. At the same time, the positive concept of freedom has historically taken two forms. The first one, that of self-abnegation is the case when a man chooses to refrain from getting ends or from all of those ends which are unattainable. The price of not being subjected to empirical fears and desires is the elimination not only of ends, but also desires, natural affections. And this is the way often chosen by ascetics, sages, quietists who prefer to escape the empirical world. This form of the positive concept of freedom has personal as well collective-political form, such as political isolationism or economical autarky (Berlin 2002, 181-87).

The second form of the positive concept of freedom is self-realisation, a total self-identification with a specific principle or idea. According to Berlin one finds the latter in the philosophies of Spinoza, disciples of Hegel and of many other thinkers between them. It believes that if there are obstacles imposed on freedom then the right thing to do is to know and understand them. This knowledge enables to conduct actions or follow a path which does not lead to collisions, for instance with rules, laws, external forces etc. whatever is at stake. At first glance, freedom is in opposition to necessity. But this form of positive sense of freedom believes that freedom is nothing else than to know and understand necessity. It is the latter that is closely related to value monism: "Thinkers of this type argued that if moral and political problems were genuine - as surely they were - they must in principle be soluble; that is to say, there must exist one and only one true solution to any problem. All truths could in principle be discovered by any rational thinker, and demonstrated so clearly that all other rational men could not but accept them [...]. [...] The rational solution of one problem cannot collide with the equally true solution of another, for two truths cannot logically be incompatible; therefore, a just order must in principle be discoverable - an order of which the rules make possible correct solutions to all possible problems that could arise in it" (Berlin 2002, 191-92).

This is what he actually calls value monism, the Platonic ideal, which has its roots in the Ancient Times. If to reconstruct the sequence of ideas here, then one finds the following order: 1) if a problem is genuine, then it is possible to solve; 2) every problem has only *one* true solution; 3) in principle, truth is discoverable; 4) rationality or reason enables to discover the truth; 5) all truths are compatible; 6) a proper demonstration of truth ensures its acceptability; 7) there is a just order where possible problems are solvable in accordance with rules (Berlin 2002, 192-93). It is a harmonious state of affairs where dilemmas, such as either equality or freedom, either justice or benevolence etc., do not arise, where ends do not collide with each other if they are defined by rationality or reason. In this respect, his main argument is that that this way of thinking, conceiving freedom and social order in general brings to disasters, such as brutal tyranny. And this is something against which he fights intellectually within his own programme.

Equality and the Defense of Value Pluralism (I. Berlin)

What is remarkable in Berlin's account of equality? How does it help in solving complicated issues? First of all, Berlin is completely aware that equality as an idea, end or value has a central position among other terminal values, such as virtue, happiness, progress etc. by the way not only in political thought. It is deeply rooted in mind and different doctrines, metaphysical and non-metaphysical, religious and political. And these doctrines construct sometimes radically different accounts of social and political order. For instance, equality is one of the oldest and deepest elements in liberal and democratic thought with their emphasis on *equal* rights or on equality. And the absence of any specific connection to any philosophical doctrine opens space for its different understandings and interpretations. He believes that like all human ends it cannot itself be defended or justified, for it is itself that which justifies other acts.

He provides a formulation of the principle of equality which is, in his view, is vague and ambiguous: "every man to count for one and no one to count for more than one" (Berlin 1979, 81). According to Berlin this principle has changed in connotation from one thinker and society to another and can be applied in many aspects of social life – the distribution of property or the vote in assembly, or the opportunities for education or pleasure etc. But this egalitarian formula is itself a specific application of another principle: "similar cases call for, i. e. should be accorded, similar treatment" (Berlin 1979, 82). Important aspects are discriminated to apply the principle of equality. Namely, the egalitarian formula presupposes an answer to the question which aspects of human life, a life in society, are important, those that deeply affect it or make a great difference to it, frustrate human desires or interests in a significant degree. Probably all aspects are important. But is it possible to achieve a similarity or uniformity of treatment for all in all aspects of life? At what cost is it achievable? These are the questions considered and answered by Berlin.

Inspired by Wollheim, another British philosopher, he suggests to tackle the issue of equality in terms of two conceptions, of rules and of equality proper. "All rules, by definition, entail a measure of equality. In so far as rules are general instructions to act or refrain from acting in certain ways, in specified circumstances, enjoined upon persons of a specified kind, they enjoin uniform behaviour in identical cases. [...] To enforce a rule is to promote equality of behaviour or treatment. This applies whether the rules take the form of moral principles and laws, or codes of positive law, or the rules of games or of conduct adopted by professional associations, religious organizations, political parties, wherever patterns of behaviour can be codified in a more or less systematic manner" (Berlin 1979, 84-85).

In other words, to set out a rule or a law means patterning human behaviour or conduct and this supposes itself a sort of unification. He takes this type of equality, which in its turn supposes obedience to rules, as a necessary condition for the existence of human societies, one of the deepest needs and convictions of mankind. In other words, equality presupposed by a rule or a law etc. is at first glance functional with regard to human being and human coexistence. Taken in this sense equality is coextensive with social morality. And the opposites, as he notices, would be the *ad hoc* orders of an inspired leader, or arbitrary desires. "In this sense, [...] to say that inequality is wrong

is, in effect, to say that it is wrong to obey no rules in a given situation, or to accept a rule and break it” (Berlin 1979, 85).

What makes worth Berlin’s examination of equality is that here he actually identifies equality with fairness and respectively inequality with unfairness. One finds the latter in different passages of the essay but the followings is illustrative: “[...] A situation in which some men, for no stated reason, and in accordance with no rule, consistently obtain more than other men with the same, or sufficiently similar, relevant characteristics (however this is determined) is then described as being unfair. [...] The notions of equality and fairness are closely bound up: if as a result of breaking a rule a man derives benefits which he can obtain only so long as other man do not break but keep the rule, then no matter what other needs are being served by such a breach, the result is an offence against a principle best described as that of fairness, which is a form of desire for equality for its own sake” (Berlin 1979, 85-97).

With respect to what he calls equality proper, Berlin actually answers the two questions:

a) Is it possible to achieve a similarity or uniformity of treatment for all in all aspects of life?

b) If yes, then at what cost is it achievable?

Regarding this aspect of equality, he writes: “In its simplest form the ideal of complete social equality embodies the wish that everything and everybody should be as similar as possible to everything and everybody else. [...] I doubt whether anyone has ever seriously desired to bring such a society into being, or even supposed such a society to be capable of being created. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the demands for human equality which have been expressed both by philosophers and by men of action [...] can best be represented as modifications of this absolute and perhaps absurd ideal. [...] It may be that the creation of so uniform a society, whether or not it is intrinsically desirable, may not, in fact, be feasible. It may also be that even the attempt to approach it as closely as it humanly possible requires a degree of radical reorganization which cannot be carried out without a highly centralized and despotic authority – itself the cause of maximum of inequality” (Berlin 1979, 90-92).

So, Berlin rejects the ideal of complete social equality arguing that its leads to the erasure of differences, in terms of our interests, namely, to the erasure of individual characteristics. Actually, it would mean dealing with a body of indiscernible human beings. In addition to the latter, it is not practically possible to achieve such an end. And even if it were, a case of radical reorganization of society, it would create a great inequality in authority. In fact, the latter reveals not only the impossibility of complete equality but also a chance of generating a despotism. Practically, the maintenance of complete social equality requires permanent interventions of authorities in all spheres of life. And Berlin cannot not to call the ideal of complete social equality an absurd. In theory as well as in practice, the whole matter is to define the area or areas over which the principle of equality rules or equal treatment is to operate. He examines the case of the liberal doctrine of the 20th century which states the equality of political and juridical rights while demanding no interference in other regions of activity (say, the economic). Though the latter brings to social and economic inequalities, the school of liberals

assures that this is the price paid for ensuring political and legal equality (Berlin 1979, 93).

At this point his value pluralism gradually “enters the game” though in this essay he does not use this term yet: it appears later in his *Two Concepts of Liberty*. But a ground is already for it. “[...] In considering what kind of society is desirable, or what are ‘sufficient reasons’ for either demanding equality or, on the contrary, modifying it or infringing it in specific cases, ideals other than equality conspicuously play a vital role. [...] Certain other ends must be striven for, such as happiness, virtue, justice, progress in the arts and sciences, the satisfaction of various moral and spiritual wants, of which equality, of whatever kind, is only one. [...] Equality is one value among many: the degree to which it is compatible with other ends depends on the concrete situation, and cannot be deduced from general laws of any kind; it is neither more nor less rational than any other ultimate principle” (Berlin 1979, 95-96).

The latter leads him to think that there is no single formula whereby all the diverse ends of men can be harmoniously realized. Some of them are incompatible, so the possibility of conflict cannot be eliminated from human life at all. But he is aware that there are values on which sacrifices cannot be put. He tries to figure out a way from this impasse and finds it in compromise. “[...] We cannot sacrifice either freedom or the organization needed for its defense, or a minimum standard of welfare. The way out must therefore lie in some logically, untidy, flexible, and ever ambiguous compromise. Every situation calls for its own specific policy [...]. [...] No solution can be guaranteed against error, no disposition is final. And therefore, a loose texture and toleration of a minimum of inefficiency, even a degree of indulgence in idle talk, idle curiosity [...] allow more spontaneous, individual variation [...] and will always be worth more than the neatest and most directly fashioned imposed pattern” (Berlin 2002, 92-93).

So, what Berlin states: *firstly*, a room must be made not only for equality but also for the other ends or values. No end can be privileged and pursued completely and it is impossible to achieve all of these ends completely at once. But as ends equality, justice, happiness, freedom etc. all of them are important for human beings and are worth to be pursued. *Secondly*, in his view, all these ends are achievable to a certain degree. But there are not any general rules for regulating to which degree these ends must be pursued or realized. It is always a matter of compromise and context-bound. With this respect, combination of ends in various degrees will vary from society to society from one period to the other. Here a question can be raised, how is it decided which combination is the right one for implementation? Berlin suggests practical reasoning as the proper procedure for it (?). He advocates value pluralism which is actually in the spirit of British Empiricism but has to provide a basis for value pluralism, a kind of axis. It is at this point that he privileges the negative sense of liberty vis-a-vis the positive sense of it. It is the negative sense of freedom enables value pluralism to come true, the only acceptable and humane way of dealing with matter in comparison to other possibilities: “Pluralism, with the measure of ‘negative’ liberty that it entails, seems to me a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of ‘positive’ self mastery by classes, or peoples, or the whole of mankind. It is truer, because it does, at least, recognize the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another. To assume that all

values can be graded on one scale, so that it is a mere matter of inspection to determine the highest, seems to me to falsify our knowledge that men are free agents, to represent moral decision as an operation which a slide rule could, in principle, perform" (Berlin 2002, 216).

Recapitulating what has been presented so far and answering the question of how Berlin reconciles equality with freedom it can be stated that for him both equality and freedom are ends, terminal values pursuing of which is out of question. At the same time, they are mutually incompatible or destructive in their extreme forms. So, a kind of compromise is needed in order to make a room for both. And in Berlin's theory, the negative sense of liberty functions as a sort of axis which opens a space for realizing and functioning of other ends or values among which is equality as well.

Does, in effect, Berlin achieve his desirable goal consistently to justify value pluralism? Is he consistent with regard to his own methodological commitments? Doesn't his value pluralism bring to value relativism, a moral approach which makes any choice or decision in these matters voluntary or arbitrary, contingent on subjective preferences? In fact, the latter means resetting a social and political order from time to time. And in that case, doesn't it destroy any foundation of stability. Last but not least: if the measure of 'negative' liberty is needed for value pluralism does it not mean that the 'negative' liberty is already privileged in comparison to other ends or values? Therefore, can we regard his value pluralism as a consistent doctrine or doesn't it bend toward value monism? Given the aforementioned his value pluralism tends toward values monism and in that sense his doctrine has inconsistencies which poorly provide foundations of stability for social-political order. It is here that Rawls' approach on the topic should be introduced and analyzed as Berlin's reflections lead to some inconsistencies which Rawls tries to escape.

Creating Compatibility (J. Rawls)

With respect to the issue some reflections on Rawls' approach are briefly presented above. But in this section of the article, they will be expanded and presented in detail. Surely, Rawls knows all arguments on the topic given the years of his engagement with moral and political issues. Before tracing his path of reconciliation, a couple of remarks are worth to be taken into account: a) Rawls is interested in the institutional aspect of the topic; his main concern is public rules operating in societies and not human actions; these rules structure human relations and frame human actions; hence, equality and freedom, their possible reconciliation are perceived with regard to rules, institutions and not actions; b) as his primary aim is to develop a theory of justice then he is to find for these two rival ideas proper places in it; roughly speaking, he makes equality and freedom the components of justice; justice becomes the 'place' of their reconciliation and equality and freedom are core values in relations between state and citizen and among citizens; in contrast to it, Berlin tries to set up horizontal relations between the fundamental political values making room for one partly at expense of the other; of course, first of all it is of great importance how these thinkers define the basic political ideas or values; but the way of conceiving their relations is itself already symptomatic; Rawls takes a

radically different path, a path of creating compatibility; c) though there are many aspects of equality, however, the two of them are especially important to consider in relation to freedom: the political and the socio-economic aspects. Historically, the tension between equality and freedom has emerged and discussed in political thought in these respects. Berlin does know very well about it. But he is not so much interested in dealing with the political and the socio-economic aspects separately. Therefore, he discusses the topic generally but always insists on finding a compromise in the political as well as in the socio-economic aspects contingent on a situation.

In the case of political aspect, the rivalry between equality and freedom evolves between the liberal tradition and the democratic tradition. The liberal tradition emphasizes the rule of law, the defense of human rights and the respect of individual liberty. The democratic tradition's main ideas are equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty. Some political thinkers, among which is post-Marxist thinker Ch. Mouffe, but not only she, insist that politically equality and freedom are in tension. In this respect, Mouffe writes: "There is no necessary relations between those two distinct traditions but only a contingent historical articulation. [...] Liberal democracy results from the articulation of two logics which are incompatible in the last instance and that there is no way in which they could be perfectly reconciled" (Mouffe 2000, 3-5).

Rawls advocates liberal democracy and he is well aware of this tension between equality and freedom but tries to manage a kind of reconciliation criticized by Ch. Mouffe. As far as the socio-economic aspect is concerned, the debate is on the jurisdiction of state and its possible redistributive functions⁶. It is a matter of hot debates between the right and the left within the political spectrum. Rawls discusses the matter in the end formulating principles of social justice. In his theory, there is a certain distinction between the two aspects of equality and a unity at the same time. And in both cases, he aims at reconciliation and compatibility. Therefore, he puts: "[...] Justice as fairness tries to adjudicate between these contending traditions, first by proposing two principles of justice to serve as guidelines for how basic institutions are to realize the values of liberty and equality; and second, by specifying a point of view from which these principles can be seen as more appropriate than other familiar principles of justice to the idea of democratic citizens viewed as free and equal persons" (Rawls 1996, 5). In his theory, the adequate procedures of deliberation serve to reach forms of agreement that would satisfy claims derived both from the liberal and democratic traditions. Hence, the political aspect of the issue finds its solution in that way.

It is well-known that following the Ancient tradition by Plato and Aristotle Rawls states the primacy of justice over the other possible virtues. At the same time, he stresses on the impossibility to make rights a subject of political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests prioritizing the legal-political component in the institutional design of a polity (Rawls 2005, 3-4). In his *Political Liberalism* he raises a question "[...] How is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines" (Rawls 1996, 4). What the question assumes: from one side there is a goal to

⁶ The question 'Should a state be more than a night-watchman carrying out redistributive functions for its citizens or be restricted to the defensive functions?' expresses the issue in the interrogative way.

attain a just and stable society of free and equal citizens over time, hence, the institutions are to be designed in a way that it provides not only justice but also stability. From the other side, plurality of doctrines divides citizens and members of society, so makes a cooperation of citizens and members of society vulnerable to instabilities and probably to injustices. Actually, there is a tension between the goal of attaining justice/stability and reasonable pluralism. Here Rawls chooses a way radically different from Berlin's way. Berlin prefers to maintain and nourish value pluralism rejecting any general rules and finding solutions within the situative normativity and temporary compromises.

Rawls takes a way close to Locke's and Kant's liberalism: the private sphere is separated from the public one, reasonable pluralism is located in the private sphere, namely, different philosophical, religious or moral views and doctrines are allowed to be expressed within it. But the public sphere needs a conception of justice shared by citizens and members of society. So, he also proposes the concept of well-ordered society. It is a society effectively regulated by a public conception of justice. That is (1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice, (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles (Rawls 2005, 5).

Not only does Rawls rule out the private sphere from the scope of operation of a conception of justice but also specifies which aspect is covered in his theory. "Many different kinds of things are said to be just and unjust: not only laws, institutions, and social systems, but also particular actions of many kinds, including decisions, judgments, and imputations. [...] Our topic, however, is that of social justice. For us the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" (Rawls 2005, 7). So, not only the institutional aspect but also the distributive aspect is of major concern here. The main social institutions among which are political, economic institutions (for example, political constitution, market etc.) form a scheme which highly affect people's life prospects. From the other side, there are always rights and duties in a society, advantages, benefits and burdens from social cooperation. At the same time, the social structure of a society contains different social positions and inevitably brings to inequalities. And men born into different positions have not only different life prospects, let's say, unequal prospects, but also expectations of life. Therefore, it is of vital importance how these institutions distribute rights and duties and advantages from social cooperation between men from different social positions. It is here that a society needs principles of justice in order to regulate these matters and these principles, as Rawls believes, must in the first instance be applied to the inequalities.

Hence, Rawls develops his theory of justice not primarily for stating the priority of justice, uncompromising value of freedom and liberties of equal citizenship but first of all for dealing with inevitable inequalities. His theory of justice is an effort to answer the questions concerning inequalities, inequalities that are dysfunctional or bring to negative consequences. There are both political and socio-economic inequalities as rights and duties, benefits and burdens as well as advantages from social cooperation, the way how all of them are distributed create those inequalities.

His emphasis on the benefits and burdens of social cooperation is the key to his understanding of society, to why men prefer to live together and not separately, why it is important to adopt a public conception of justice and respectively principles of justice etc. And relying on the contractarian doctrine Rawls foresees destructive consequences of conflicts of individual interests, ends and claims if a shared, public conception of justice, if a certain measure of agreement on what is just and unjust are not defined and accepted. "Among individuals with disparate aims and purposes a shared conception of justice establishes the bonds of civic friendship; the general desire for justice limits the pursuit of other ends. [...] In the absence of a certain measure of agreement on what is just and unjust, it is clearly more difficult for individuals to coordinate their plans efficiently in order to insure that mutually beneficial arrangements are maintained. Distrust and resentment corrode the ties of civility, and suspicion and hostility tempt men to act in ways they would otherwise avoid" (Rawls 2005, 5-6).

As is stated the procedures of deliberation play a central role in ensuring a reconciliation between equality and freedom in Rawls' theory of justice. Hence, it is not useless to touch on the procedural part of his theory and to find out how equality and liberty emerge in it and later institutionalized in principles of justice. Rawls notes that justice as fairness consists of two parts: (1) what he calls an interpretation of the initial situation and of the problem of choice posed there, and (2) a set of principles which would be agreed to. He insists that the principles of justice are thought of as arising from an original agreement in a situation of equality. Then it is of vital importance to understand what he means by saying a situation of equality. For him the initial situation which includes the original position is a hypothetical situation of equal liberty in which the parties would choose principles of justice in a joint act. As he puts the original position of *equality* corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. He invokes the idea of the veil of ignorance which implies that "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like" (Rawls 2005, 12). The veil of ignorance deprives the parties of knowledge on their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. And this is the condition of securing fairness of the procedural part and of principles of justice chosen. "It seems reasonable to suppose that the parties in the original position are equal. That is, all have the same rights in the procedure for choosing principles; each can make proposals, submit reasons for their acceptance, and so on. Obviously the purpose of these conditions is to represent equality between human beings as moral persons, as creatures having a conception of their good and capable of a sense of justice. The basis of equality is taken to be similarity in these two respects. Systems of ends are not ranked in value; and each man is presumed to have the requisite ability to understand and to act upon whatever principles are adopted. Together with the veil of ignorance, these conditions define the principles of justice as those which rational persons concerned to advance their interests would consent to as equals when none are known to be advantaged or disadvantaged by social and natural contingencies" (Rawls 2005, 19).

In the first part of this passage Rawls clarifies his understanding of equality in the procedure of choosing principles. In the latter, equality means having the same rights of making proposals and submitting reasons. Actually, there are tacitly operating

regulations which not only accept the legitimacy of these rights but also enable their exercising. But Rawls does not talk and even mention about them in this or that way. At the same time, he grounds them in moral equality of persons, in their having a conception of good and a sense of justice. In other words, the two moral powers, having a conception of good and a sense of justice secure equality of moral beings, hence, their rights to make proposals and submit reasons. The result is principles of justice agreed upon. In case of freedom or liberty, he insists that the parties are not only equal but also free. And here 'free' means being "a self-originating source of claims", "recognition of one another as having the moral power to have a conception of the good", "responsibility for ends" - capability to adjust their aims and ambitions in the light of what persons can reasonably expect and of restricting their claims in matters of justice to certain kinds of things (Rawls 1999, 330-32).

Reflecting in this way consistently and going back and forth within it it turns out that as moral beings, persons or parties of an agreement objectify, embody their personal equality and freedom in institutions, they objectify and embody their capacities in institutions. And this process of objectification and embodiment supposes a kind of transformation. Hence, the principles of social justice, that are agreed upon, are both the result of this transformative act and embodiment of equality and freedom. But without rationality, an ability of person to seek his/her own advantage and reflection it would be impossible to agree on a scheme enabling fair terms of cooperation between free and equal citizens: "[...] We are to imagine that those who engage in social cooperation choose together, in one joint act, the principles which are to assign basic rights and duties and to determine the division of social benefits. Men are to decide in advance how they are to regulate their claims against one another and what is to be the foundation charter of their society. Just as each person must decide by rational reflection what constitutes his good, that is, the system of ends which it is rational for him to pursue, so a group of persons must decide once and for all what is to count among them as just and unjust. The choice which rational men would make in this hypothetical situation of equal liberty, assuming for the present that this choice problem has a solution, determines the principles of justice" (Rawls 2005, 11-12).

Now it is time to turn into the second part of the theory, into the principles of justice adopted and to find in them institutionalized equality and freedom. As is known, Rawls proposes two principles of justice; the second principle itself consists of two principles:

"a. Each person has an equal claim to fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties, and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value" (Rawls 1996, 5).

"b. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society" (Rawls 1996, 6).

The two principles express an egalitarian form of liberalism:

- The guarantee of the fair values of the political liberties,
- Fair equality of opportunity,

- The difference principle, the social and economic inequalities attached to offices and positions are to be adjusted so that, whatever the level of those inequalities, whether great or small, they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society,

He adds to this list the fourth aspect either, where “[...] The first principle covering the equal basic rights and liberties may easily be preceded by a lexically prior principle requiring that citizens’ basic needs be met, at least insofar as their being met is necessary for citizens to understand and to be able fruitfully to exercise those rights and liberties” (Rawls 2005, 7). What does the latter mean? In an interesting way, some sort of equality, equality which is established when basic needs are met, equality that is social and economic by nature is the condition for fruitfully exercising the basic rights and liberties. Therefore, at this point and in this sense, equality turns out to be not the rival of or in tension with freedom but the condition of its effective functioning. At first glance, it is a surprising outcome given the fact that the liberal thought mainly insists on equality of rights and liberties and tolerates social and economic inequalities. And as central political values equality in its two aspects and freedom have to cooperate as well as conflict with each other.

Why is it so important to turn into this specific issue which, at first glance, does not concern the relation between equality and freedom and their reconciliation? The examination of his theory allows to state that his principles of justice institutionalize the values of equality and freedom. Setting a priority between his principles of justice Rawls aims at prioritizing freedom over equality in the social and economic sense. But as it is found out his effort is partly failed because the satisfaction of basic needs at least in *Political Liberalism* emerges as a necessary condition for the enactment of the first principle, the principle concerning basic rights and liberties. Needless to say, that he tries to reconcile freedom of the liberal tradition with equality of the democratic tradition. Hence, his liberalism is one of the best examples of a theory of social justice in which equality and freedom demonstrate paradoxical relations: from one side they ensure each other, from the other, they are in tension. And the latter, this paradoxical side of their relations, manifests complexity of social reality and in particular of political matters.

Conclusion and discussion

Resuming the aforementioned it is evident that both equality and freedom are central political ideas and values for Berlin as well as Rawls. Being aware of their rival relationship, of a deep tension between them, nevertheless, they find their own ways for their reconciliation. In this or that way, both liberal thinkers actually aim at finding a frame in which they can coexist. Berlin seeks a kind of compromise in order to make a room for both within his idea of value pluralism though in the end he has to privilege the negative sense of liberty. The latter functions as a sort of axis which opens a space for realizing and functioning of other ends or values among which is equality as well. But his value pluralism tends toward values monism and in that sense his doctrine has inconsistencies which poorly provide foundations of stability for social and political order.

The examination of Rawls' theory of justice allows to state that his principles of social justice institutionalize the values of equality and freedom. Actually, Rawls tackles the issue in the two aspects: the political and the social and economic. In the case of political aspect, he tries to reconcile freedom of the liberal tradition with equality of the democratic tradition via deliberation. Setting a priority between his principles of social justice Rawls aims at prioritizing freedom over equality in the social and economic sense. But as it is found out that his effort is partly failed. The social and economic aspect of the issue reveals that though freedom is privileged, however, the equality in satisfaction of basic needs is a prerequisite for achieving freedom. Hence, in his theory of social justice equality and freedom demonstrate paradoxical relations: from one side they ensure each other, from the other, they are in tension. And the latter, this paradoxical side of their relations, manifests complexity of social reality and in particular of political matters.

Summing up the results of this article, it should be noted that the tasks that contributed to the disclosure of the main characteristics of the concept of pluralism of values as one of the most debatable concepts of Western political philosophy were solved.

The solution of the first task involved the consideration of value pluralism as a methodological principle of political philosophy. For this, the concept of pluralism of values in the works of Isaiah Berlin was analyzed and its importance as a methodological component of political philosophy was shown. Based on the analysis, it was concluded that the concept of pluralism of values is an integral part of political philosophy in general and one of the criteria for its definition, as it allows you to work with problems that are based on a value component.

The solution of the second research task implied the disclosure of the specifics of the concept of pluralism of values in the political philosophy of Berlin. Here, special attention was paid to the idea of a minimum set of values. It is this idea that becomes, according to most researchers, the key to distinguishing between the concept of value pluralism and relativism. As a result, it was shown that Berlin's idea of a minimum set is not the only possible theoretical construct to explain communication between cultures and societies in conditions of pluralism of values.

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