

THE DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN FREEDOM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract. This article provides a philosophical analysis of the complex, complementary, and contradictory relationship between human freedom and social responsibility. It explains the ontological and ethical layers of freedom, the mechanisms through which responsibility is formed via normative and social institutions, and their dialectical unity and conflicting tendencies. The paper presents Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, views of classical and modern authors, as well as contemporary approaches to the issue in the context of digital society, ecological crisis, and intercultural dialogue. Directions for strengthening the balance of freedom and responsibility in the context of Uzbek society are proposed.

Keywords: freedom, responsibility, ethics, law, dialectics, community, individual, social institution, information society.

Introduction. The question of freedom and responsibility has always been central to philosophy. Human freedom ensures one's creative potential, spiritual growth, and active participation in society. However, if unchecked, freedom can harm both oneself and others. Responsibility, on the other hand, defines the internal normative boundaries of freedom, requiring conscious acceptance by individuals of the consequences of their choices. Yet freedom and responsibility are not simple opposites; they exist in dialectical unity. Dialectical interdependence is understood as mutual negation and mutual conditioning, the harmony of opposites at a higher level. The purpose of this article is to illuminate the theoretical foundations of freedom and responsibility, to demonstrate how they are balanced through essential mechanisms for societal development and individual growth, and to reveal new facets of this relationship in modern conditions.

Literature review. In antiquity, the issue of freedom was primarily considered within the framework of political and moral norms. Aristotle viewed personal virtues and civic participation in the polis as conditions for living freely. The Stoics regarded inner freedom, that is, spiritual independence not subject to external circumstances, as fundamental. In medieval thought, freedom was analyzed in connection with divine will and fate, and responsibility was interpreted as an important stage on the path to spiritual perfection.

The mindset of the modern era significantly elevated the status of the individual and the importance of legal guarantees: the individual began to be interpreted not only as an element of a political unit but also as an autonomous subject recognized for their rights. Analyzing the intrinsic link between the natural state and political order, T. Hobbes defines freedom primarily as the absence of external obstacles and emphasizes the necessity for individuals to create sovereign power by concluding a social contract to ensure security [1].

J. Locke, however, asserts the natural rights of the individual - life, liberty, and property - as norms superior to political power; the legitimacy of government depends precisely on the protection of these rights, therefore power must be limited [2]. Locke's idea that "life, liberty, and property are natural rights that supersede power" placed man at the center of the political system and laid the foundation for modern liberal-democratic thought. Historically, this approach developed as a philosophical response to the unlimited power of the feudal-absolutist system. For Locke, government is not an end, but a means; it loses its legitimacy if it fails to protect the



natural rights of man. In this sense, he interprets power not as “sacred”, but as a conditional and accountable institution.

The positive aspects of this approach are that it:

- defines the individual as an active subject and the state as a service-providing system;
- creates a philosophical basis for the concept of human rights;
- demonstrates the need to legitimize power through mechanisms of limitation, balance, and accountability.

According to I. Kant, freedom is autonomy arising from reason, and an individual must determine their behavior in accordance with a universally applicable moral rule - the categorical imperative, with responsibility based precisely on this requirement of universality [3]. This approach portrays man as an autonomous moral being: true freedom is not being dependent on one's desires, but acting according to reason and duty. Therefore, for Kant, responsibility is not “fear of punishment”, but a rational understanding of duty and its conscious fulfillment. The categorical imperative’s requirement “Can the rule of action be elevated to the level of a general law?” encourages a person to contribute to the general moral order through each action.

The positive aspect of this approach is that it makes morality independent of personal interest, religious fear, or social pressure. Through this, Kant finds the inner source of morality - man, through his reason and conscience, obeys the “inner law”. Therefore, this idea serves as a foundation for modern legal and moral systems: although laws have binding force, their conscious and voluntary implementation is a measure of moral maturity.

Research Methodology. Ontologically, freedom pertains to a person's self-determination as a being, goal creation, and meaningful assimilation of external determinism. At this level, freedom relies on the harmony of internal capabilities, will, and consciousness [4]. In the axiological layer, freedom is measured by values. Moral norms direct freedom not towards evil, but towards good. Here, responsibility takes center stage. Responsibility encompasses principles such as foreseeing the consequences of choices, avoiding harm, and recognizing others’ freedom. Freedom is guaranteed by legal norms. Laws protect negative freedom, while political institutions implement positive freedom. Elections, freedom of speech, and the right to associate require responsible civic participation.

Personal responsibility involves self-discipline, wise use of time, health, and resources, and accountability for ethical decisions. This is the primary foundation of freedom, because without internal order, freedom becomes unstable. Social responsibility is an awareness of duty towards others, the community, and future generations. It strengthens social justice, solidarity, cooperation, and trust capital. Transparency, accountability, and adherence to ethical standards are crucial in the activities of institutions such as the state, corporations, media, education, and healthcare systems. This serves to protect freedom and prevent abuse.

Freedom and responsibility do not negate each other; rather, one conditions the other. Freedom without responsibility is unstable, responsibility without freedom is meaningless. According to the dialectical approach, they struggle as opposing principles but harmonize at a higher point of synthesis. For example, freedom of speech supports societal renewal and critical thinking, but responsibility demands truthfulness of speech and refraining from slander and hate speech. Economic freedom stimulates entrepreneurship, while responsibility creates a regulatory framework through taxes, compliance with environmental standards, and protection of employee rights.

Analysis and results. Digital platforms have expanded opportunities for individuals to express themselves, gain knowledge, and collaborate. At the same time, risks such as the spread of unfounded opinions, manipulative algorithms, and privacy breaches have increased. Here, freedom expands user autonomy, while responsibility manifests through fact-checking, information hygiene, and adherence to digital ethics. Platforms must also assume institutional responsibility and fairly apply transparency and moderation standards. In the context of climate



change and resource scarcity, free choice should be combined with environmental responsibility. If personal consumption habits, corporate strategies, and state policies do not align with sustainable development principles, freedom itself will limit the freedom of future generations. Thus, responsibility extends over time and encompasses the interests of future subjects. The pandemic experience has shown a delicate balance between personal freedom and public health. Personal choices (for example, attitudes towards quarantine or vaccination) directly impact the lives and health of others. The dialectical approach requires rationally establishing responsible constraints and social solidarity mechanisms, depending on the level of risk, while preserving freedom.

In the context of globalization, different values clash. Freedom allows for the expression of this diversity, while responsibility ensures respect, compromise, and dialogue. Intercultural competence enriches freedom, while responsibility prevents discrimination, stereotypes, and hatred.

Freedom is often seen as a maximalist ideal, but in practice, there are factors that limit freedom. Determinants such as resources, social capital, education quality, health status, and level of legal protection define freedom in terms of real opportunities. Responsibility also fluctuates between two poles. At one pole lies excessive paternalism, which can undermine individual autonomy. At the other pole is laissez-faire indifference, that is, radical individualism denying its influence on society. The dialectical solution involves developing a normative rational balance. This balance is found through socio-political dialogue that is situation-specific, informed by empirical evidence, and considers a balance of values.

Free choice must consider potential harm and benefit to others. Medical ethics, public policy, and business practices are based on this duality. While freedom aimed at benefit serves society in the long term, the principle of non-maleficence becomes a criterion for responsible restriction of freedom. The authenticity of freedom is linked to equal opportunities. Imbalances in areas such as education, healthcare, and labor market access freeze freedom at the level of formal rights. Responsibility manifests through social policy, redistribution mechanisms, and creating an inclusive environment. The collective infrastructure of freedom relies on trust. Without transparency and accountability, cynicism, indifference, and conspiratorial attitudes intensify in society. Accountable institutions encourage personal and collective responsibility.

Conclusion. The relationship between human freedom and social responsibility is a complex dialectical unity. Freedom without responsibility destroys itself, while responsibility without freedom becomes meaningless. Personal autonomy is reinforced by inner discipline, moral compass, and knowledge. In collective life, principles such as solidarity, justice, equal opportunities, and sustainability enrich freedom substantively. Legal and political institutions guarantee this balance through transparency and accountability. In the context of digital society, environmental challenges, and cultural diversity, the need to reinterpret freedom and responsibility is growing. In the Uzbek context, consistent reforms in education, legal culture, mahalla institutions, digital ethics, and environmental policy can further strengthen the harmony between freedom and responsibility.

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