

AN ESSAY ON FREEDOM.  
A SHORT CRITICAL ANALYSIS RANGING FROM ARISTOTLE TO  
NOZICK

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**Abstract.** Space, time and other “*a priori* synthetical cognitions”, through powers of mathematics and physics, these phenomena have been proven to exist. However, Kant asserts that “Freedom of the Will, the Immorality of the Soul and the Existence of God” are still questions that go beyond the possibilities of a *priori* and *posterior* (Muller 1992, 32). What is the role of man in politics? How he manifests himself as a person and as a moral being? How creative is he and whether is capable of being aware of his actions? All these questions are within the debate of spectrum of the philosophical and political anthropology (Haugaard, 2016). The phenomenon of freedom has been debated since the ancient philosophy, and that we are speaking of not only about free will, but also about the individual’s freedom, whether “he is free” from the collective, in being naturally free, or being “free with” the collective, as means social freedom (Haugaard, 2016). Determinism and Indeterminism are two opposite philosophical concepts in which determinists believe in the objective nature of causality and, on the contrary, supporters of indeterminism completely deny objective causality, and causality in general (Ewer, 1907). This essay will illustrate views of political philosophers ranging from Aristotle to modern-day thinkers.

**Keywords:** essay, political theory, philosophy, politics, social science, freedom, free will

Terrible wars have been fought where millions have died for  
one idea – freedom. And it seems that something that  
means so much to so many people would be worth having.  
*Robin Williams*

Although Kant states that “freedom is said to be as fundamental in man’s moral life as it is impossible for his understanding” (Perry

1900, 630) he delves into the argument by stating that God and Freedom is still a “product of logical analysis” (1900, 637) or that “transcendental idealism makes it possible” (Saunders 2016, 164). Therefore, freedom as an idea in the *Critic of Practical Reason* is illustrated as “the moral law” and that this “fact of reason” that will derive freedom (Allison 1986, 394). Kant suggests that a ones individual freedom should not interfere with another. For instance, the as a general principle, the unlimited freedom of action of the individual should be narrowed so that it is compatible with everyone’s freedom. This limits the freedom of action of each individual and a positive law is based on this principle. This condition for the peaceful coexistence of people with different views and opposite goals, suggest that through moral law is possible (Gilje and Skirbekk 2001). Consequently, Saunders disagrees with Kant’s approach since his approach to find the “true” meaning behind the unknown trinity only looks at the perspective from the first and second person (2016). This is because, although Kant argues that the phenomena can’t exist without the noumena, he avoids recognising other rational agents (2006). For instance, Saunders supports Grenberg’s (2013) interpretation of freedom that “the moral phenomenology in question is exclusively first personal” and thus the only way to define freedom is through knowledge or how Kant sees it as “transcendental idealism” (Saunders 2016, 165). However, Saunders claims that interpreting freedom through transcendental idealism is shadowing the itself view of the term since without human experience, we cannot see the world as it by which suggests that the interpretation of freedom is incomplete (2016, 170).

The domino effect of German idealism presents us with Hegel’s admiration for Kant’s “speculative” thought and that he was one of the closest to discover the truth to determining what freedom through a glimpse idea of self-determining reality. Whilst this may be true, Hegel’s view on freedom has been more rational (Smith 1973, 438). For instance, Hegel avers that individual’s freedom is cemented to the state and that all of the “spiritual reality” is

possessed through the state. Through this establishment of “traditional interpretation” Hegel uses the “state” as an object of rational freedom that aids the “Idea of Spirit in the external manifestation of human Will and its Freedom” (Goldstein 1962, 65). This way, Hegel attempts to differentiate between the political order and the state by insisting that regardless of the political regime within the state, “the spirit of nation” and “culture” is the “external magnification of human will and freedom” not through obedience but through history that helps us to look at what went right and wrong, in order to find the appropriate equilibrium in the “dialectic” (Goldstein 1962, 69). On the other hand, Marx argues that Hegel’s “civil society” expansion of “population and industry” will cause an inability to express the actual freedom in the stable society, because there wouldn’t be enough jobs meaning that the class sort will be differentiated significantly meaning one’s will have power over the other, suggesting, that the higher class would form the state (Duquette 1989, 223).

Machiavelli’s interpretation of freedom provides additional similarity to Hegel’s idea of the state being cemented to the individual, but also, the rulers that manipulating them is what is equally important (Skinner 2000). For instance, Machiavelli asserts that in order for rulers to have a “free state”, they should observe great examples in history such as from the ancient Rome in which they feared to lose everything to Spartans and collectively went to war to protect the commonwealth (Kahn 1990, 471). Additionally, Machiavelli states that in order for citizens to be free within the state and their ruler, the city must “remain free from all forms of political servitude”. For instance, Machiavelli asserts that the state is “a form of government based on the people” and which will outcome in a “community” that will live in freedom making significant gains to the power of the state since it will avoid the division of class which will outcome in a free state (McCormick 2007). Case in point: In order to make a “free-state”, Machiavelli asserts that through “God” to get out true “human excellence” but keeping it away from the state (Skinner 2000, 59). Conversely, Burns argues that Machiavelli

has substituted the “higher law of humanity and justice” for liberty (1948, 329). In particular, shadowing the rights of individuals and prioritising the all the power to the majority in which history shows from Socrates to modern day banning of books such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, that injustice leads to the contrary to freedom (Millett 2005). Furthermore, Millett (2005) argues that, avoiding conflict in Machiavelli’s ideology would be seen as “weakness” and prioritised the war as the “health of the state” which really questions if freedom is actually “liberty”?

Nevertheless, Mill’s perception of freedom focuses on many angles including the “harm principle” (Baum 1998). For instance, Mill states that “your liberty to swing your fist ends just where my nose begins” illustrates the importance in this is the not only just for the full freedom of one’s individual, but also everyone’s freedom in order to avoid “conflicting directions” (Baum 1998, 187). For instance, Mill argues that imposing harm of oneself is acceptable since it does not harm other, however, if one’s person freedom harms the other, the government is necessary in order to adequately sustain liberty. Further to this, in order to sustain liberty, within the government, power must lie within the “human beings in the maturity of their faculties” (Mill 2001, 14). To justify, those in need of being taken care of such as children and young adults need guidance to be protected against their actions that more likely to affect others freedom (Hultug 2002). On the other hand, Skinner argues Mill stating that if power is exercised within the state, then freedom will be diminished due to the division of class, in which power lies on the ruler which constrains individuals acting independently (Baum, 1998). This is because, power is considered as oppressive and restrictive in which the “necessary autonomy” serves an individual not for the good but for worst (Baum 1998, 189). Case in point: if injustice occurs within the state and two individuals one with and without power has an option of the prison sentence, it is clear to establish that a sentence is more likely to interfere with “individual liberty” rather than a “small fine” that can be paid without worry from the elite and affecting the rest (Holtug

2002, 366). This way, if this question is raised to the sever level such as life sentence and a significant fine then freedom of one's individual is demolished since the problem of the quantity of welfare restricts will cause a difference in the outcome of the victim's sentence (Turner 2014).

Having lived through second world war and the rise of Pan-Africanism, Rawls has established the veil of ignorance a morality method that illustrates humans as rational and free (Svensson 1989). Case in point: The "thought experiment" in which each individual thought of state of "neutral" not knowing the outcome of their position in life, will need to say what justice is for them (Gilje and Skirbekk 2001, 451). This experiment is important because Rawls notes that welfare as well as poverty is entitled to rapid change in life, where one can gain, win a lottery ticket for instance, and lose significantly in a very short amount of time like in a bank bailout (Gilje and Skirbekk 2001). This way, through the thought of "neutral state" Rawls suggest that people would have freedom since inequality would not be an issue if one's advantage would disadvantage other individuals within the state. On the other hand, Nozick's asserts that freedom lies within a legal way of self-ownership and morality is what grants citizens freedom (DeStigter 2008). For instance, Nozick's entitlement theory asserts that each individual's freedom has property rights and therefore if one works harder than another, the state has no right to seize the property (Francis and Francis 1976). In other words, "self-ownership" should not equate to "property in the person" since for instance an unhealthy person cannot just assume unfairness and seize blood of a healthy person because he has more of it and better, since the unhealthy person did nothing to earn a healthy lifestyle that another has earned (Pateman 2002, 22). Further to this, Nozick presents an example where individuals buying tickets and dropping twenty-five cents in a "special admissions box" in order to see a "home" basketball game with Wilt Chamberlain (1974, 161). Nozick asserts that although, from these small contributions Chamberlain would be gaining two hundred and fifty thousand dollars more than other

players is justified, since he received it though legal obligation contract and of course the demand (1974, 161).

Touching upon the theme of freedom, Aristotle presents a question of “what is good and useful can be brought to light” in the individuals within the state (et al., 1979). Aristotle believes that the most important virtue is justice, and that it is in every individual’s right to receive what they are entitled to according to the state as well as being virtuous which “can be possessed in excess” (Long 1996, 787). By this means, in order for an individual to be free, they shouldn’t focus on “being” free and unlimited liberty but strive in excellence of moral high ground since one can tell someone what to do but cannot tell them how to feel. This way, if liberty is an external good then through virtue eudemonia is possible which will give individual freedom (Long 1996, 787). Nevertheless, Huby (1967) argues that Aristotle at his time of writing didn’t encounter the problem of “freedom versus determinism” since he was a determinist (Hardie 1968). This is because according to Huby (1967) Aristotle “failed” to discover the “freewill problem” because in his arguments he would use restricted determinism in which virtue men are praised and opposed in their inferior actions. Since free will is the product of freedom, this suggests that Aristotle only observed it only using determinism, but not, indeterminism which shows a limitation of defining freedom (Hardie 1968, 274).

Hobbes states that “A Free-Man, is he, that in those things, which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has a will to do” shows that a man is undetermined and thus has the freewill to decide upon their actions (2017, 171). Just like water in the “banks or vessels” or people that are sick and tied to their bed they maybe not entitled to freedom, but there is “larger space” in which note that freedom is possible but is unreachable at some stages of people’s lives (Hobbes 2017, 171). This way Hobbes illustrates that freedom is possible since individual’s choice is available to them which points out that through availability of liberty, freedom exists (Van Mill 1995). By the same token, determinism can be seen in Hobbes’s interpretation of freedom

since although “no liberty can be inferred to the will, desire, or inclination”, liberty and necessity are like water and the river, where it is free to exist but has a necessity of flowing by the channel (Hobbes 2017, 172). To illustrate this on human nature, he asserts that a man does what he does because of “their will”, and behind one’s action there is other actions which were originally placed by “God” (Hobbes 2017, 173). Equally important Hobbes draws attention to the state in which he asserts that people has given their freedom (Damrosch 1979) because Aristotle suggests that individuals in democratic states are re-educated freedom in a sense that it is achieved only within their own state, excluding others (2017).

Locke asserts that all individuals are equal, and everyone has free will and compared to Hobbes he looks at individuals not within the state of war but within the state of nature (Stanton 2011). Locke’s indeterminism or volition leads to suggesting that a man can decide which direction he moves and what his mind tells him, enabling him to be a “free man” (Greif 2010). This is because, in his interpretation of the “falling man” he suggests that if a man falls, it is not voluntary since the he does not have a choice at the current situation, however, if a person would to be in a neutral position and able to move, he would have a choice of action granting him freedom (Locke and Greif 2010). On the contrary, principles that Lock has put forward such as “the earth was given by God to all mankind” contradicts his view on freedom since “God” is part of determinism, which suggests that freedom not always is associated with religion in Locke’s perceptive (Kerstetter 1943).

In conclusion, all of the political philosophers regardless of whether they are determinists or indeterminist, their arguments are legitimate since their assumptions are justified through examples of history of the past or at their time their existence. By all means, the “true” meaning in freedom should be observed through first, second and third person (Saunders 2016) and through looking at a broader view of determinism and indeterminism (Huby 1967 in Hardy 1968). Both realist and liberalist had similar views around

freedom and the role of “god” upon people, but it had different meaning when it comes to politics. Thus, “true” freedom still remains unclear since most of its products such as free-will is seen differently from determinists and indeterminists and the middle ground that for instance Hobbes allocates himself in (2017). Finally, what is more important, is the fact that freedom is subjective just like god and immorality, and although we as well as political philosophers can only make assumption, but one day, hopefully, we will all truly understand this extraordinary phenomenon.

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