Sociology and Classical Liberalism in Dialogue

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Freedom is Something We Do Together

Edited by Fabio Rojas and Charlotta Stern

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Freedom in Economic Sociology

Patrik Aspers

Liberalism's core aim is a state of affairs in which "coercion of some by others is reduced as much as is possible in society" (Hayek 1960, 11). The constraints under which actors live and act, for example, property rights, are codified in law. It is the state's task to monitor behavior and impose negative sanctions against whatever is not in accordance with the law. In the liberal tradition the state and its formal institutions, including laws, are seen as an outcome of a "contract"—in practice, the "unspoken agreement to abide" by it—between the state's citizens (Dahrendorf 1985, 89).

The classical liberal tradition can be understood as a reaction to its respective societal problems. Early liberal thinkers were living in an era of rising individualism (Calhoun et al. 2007, 6), which gives the sociological background to their ideas (Collins 1998). The tradition of liberalism is rooted in the works of Montesquieu, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Smith, Tocqueville, and Mill. Hayek and Popper, as well as more neoliberal thinkers, such as Friedman, Buchanan, and Nozick, have also made contributions to the, broadly speaking, liberal tradition (Festl 2021).

Some liberal authors stress contractual solutions, alluded to by Hobbes, to problems of order by referring to formal institutions, such as property rights, and to coordination, which primarily occurs in markets. Implied is the idea of actors who possess some civic virtues, such as participation in the public realm and contractual capacity. Given these conditions, actors can utilize and express their political freedom.

This chapter points, in addition to political freedom, to the need for resources and intervention by a central authority to safeguard the resources, in a broad sense, necessary to enable actors' use of politically available freedom. This typically implies that people must have access to basic resources, such

as health care, housing, and education, so they at least get to the age at which they can provide for themselves (cf. Dahrendorf 1983, 132).

But even under conditions of political freedom and resource availability people may be unable to act freely. This chapter focuses on the third aspect of freedom, namely, actors' social conditioning because of their structural positions and cultural priming. This conditioning enables people to act freely, but it may also prevent them from doing so. The social conditions discussed here imply more than just freedom guaranteed by a well-functioning legal system that safeguards freedom. This sociological idea of societal priming and the relational constitution of human beings to friends and society at large, with its corresponding implicit and sometimes explicit critique of liberalism, is to some extent heralded by the communitarians, who argue for the importance of contextual factors (Beckstein 2021). The issue of how relations and resources are important for agency is also touched upon by Berlin (1969) with his discussion of positive versus negative freedom. However, sociology proper offers a more detailed and more research-grounded view of human beings and action conditions. This leads to the question of how classical liberal ideas fare when encountering sociology. Put differently, is there something that the liberal tradition could learn from sociology?

To address this question, action in the market economy (Smith 1981) is chosen as a case in point for analyses, because it is often considered by liberals to be the arena in which contracts are signed between free individuals. It may thereby be possible to see how structural and cultural factors constitute human beings, and how these enable and constrain their actions.

SOCIOLOGY'S EGOLOGICAL STARTING POINT

Sociological ideas emerged at a time when people in Western countries were becoming free in the classical etymological sense, namely, not slaves.[1] Though sociology has never been inherently liberal, individualism served as its starting point. This idea that that individuals, like atomistically existing egos or monads, operate in solitude and only occasionally are social, is a presumption in many theories. This assumption is no surprise because Christian and Cartesian streams of individualistic thought dominated the academic scene, implying a reflexive and knowing subject destined to investigate and dominate a world given by God. Early formulations in Descartes (Steel 2004) were later developed into a more general individualist perspective (Udehn 2002), which were taken over and refined by the early political economists (Hirschman 1986).

The connection with liberalism and early economic thinking is clear, and it is obvious that economics and, more generally, rational choice theory start

with the egological assumption (Olson 1971) of atomistic actors. It is, moreover, not difficult to trace an egological starting point to utilitarianism and ideas about another key libera idea, namely, contracts. Moreover, economists view actors and their preferences as essentially unaffected by others' preferences (Becker and Murphy 2000). Sociology, in contrast, is about how the environment affects the individual, and, as Duesenberry says, "economics is all about how people make choices [and] sociology is about why they don't have any choices to make" (1960, 233). Though his view is exaggerated, it is not wrong; it will also serve as a reference point for my analysis.

Early sociologists, many of whom carved out their discipline as a critique of economics, nonetheless took over the idea of atomistic actors who become social only when they interact with others or when they orient themselves toward others. This is the position of the perhaps most prominent sociologist, Max Weber, who started out as an economist. Weber assumes that man is essentially rational, existing as an atom, and only occasionally social. He says, "We shall speak of 'action' insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior—be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. However, action is 'social' insofar as its subjective meaning takes into account the behavior of others and is thereby oriented to its course" (Weber 1978, 4). Put differently, many actions are not, according to Weber, social. Several texts point at the egological-atomistic root of social science (R. Connell 2019; R.W. Connell 1997; Lepenies 1988; Aspers and Kohl 2013), which blends social constitution out.

FREEDOM IN SOCIOLOGY

The notion of freedom is not central in sociology, neither as an analytic-scientific term nor as a theme of empirical investigation. Moreover, sociologists and sociology as a discipline is not associated with liberal discussions (Klein and Stern 2006). A 1977 review concluded that "freedom is a topic more often studied in other fields than sociology" (Hillery, Dudley, and Morrow 1977, 685). In this review, 30 different definitions of freedom in both anthropology and sociology are analyzed, and out of these 13 refer to social structure and 17 to subjective factors. We learn that social scientists try to explain and understand freedom, and sometimes also measuring it indirectly. Few sociological texts published after 1977 do not offer a detailed analysis of freedom.

There are, however, a few sociologists who deserve to be mentioned in relation to liberalism. The position of Herbert Spencer and his warnings about a large state are well known. But Spencer has long been out of fashion and is rarely referred to in contemporary sociology, clearly a lot less than Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Malinowski, and Marx. Some later sociologists

have developed their ideas in direct connection to the period after the Second World War, and typically in relation to communism and fascism. Some have addressed issues of liberalism, but it has rarely been the focus of their academic work. Peter Berger is one sociologist who has shown interest in the notion of freedom, for example, religious freedom. Also worthy of mention is French sociologist Raymond Aron, who is claimed to be a social liberal by Dahrendorf (1994, 122). But Aron's writings are not directed toward liberal discourse.

The German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf (1926–2009) has written extensively on freedom. He was inspired by Popper and Hayek, among others, although he by no means supported the kind of minimal state suggested by Nozick or any other of Dahrendorf's contemporary liberals. According to Dahrendorf, people need the means to access the opportunities that exist in a free society. But society always implies a form of sociality that can be seen as constraints from which "no one is free, and which may therefore be regarded as 'data' or constants" (Dahrendorf 1968, 183). Dahrendorf goes on and lists these "constants": "man's possibly unfree will, his bodily nature and its consequences, and indeed the fact that man is a social being and as such necessarily exposed to alien control and sanctions." Accordingly, freedom is not just freedom from the state—real freedom requires means to make use of the available alternatives in a free society. To accomplish this, political interventions may be necessary, not just to make available a large set of opportunities, but also to enable actors to achieve their ends practically, such as redistribution of resources and education. Put differently, even liberal sociologists like Dahrendorf (1966) clearly identify how the market economy must be planned and controlled, at least partially. In addition to political freedom, which is based on formal institutions, this second aspect of the resources necessary to use available freedom is sometimes discussed by liberals, but, to my knowledge, it plays a relatively minor role. The rest of this text focuses on the third aspect of freedom, its social conditions, namely, the extent to which our socially conditioned—due to structure and culture—position both enables and hinders freedom.

ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING: THE SOCIALITY OF HUMAN BEINGS

The sociological project during the period after Spencer became increasingly empirical and produced studies of how human beings—intentionally and unintentionally—both construct the social fabric and are largely products of its sociality. There are many examples of sociological findings that show how human beings are socially constituted and conditioned, already in classic

sociology. Despite his inherently "non-social" starting assumption, mentioned above, Weber, for example, develops a sociological apparatus that studies values, norms, and structures. American pragmatism stressed the interactional necessity for human beings to be constituted. In other words, what one is, or rather becomes, cannot be reduced to individual capacities; it is a product of social interaction (Mead 1964). The idea of socialization is made explicit in Parsons (1977). One consequence of socialization through social interaction is that people become more like others; one learns from others, because one takes over ideas, preferences, virtues, and much more from older generations. Similar ideas are summarized and developed in the sociological classic *The Social Construction of Reality*, by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1991). One of its key ideas is that objective meaning is created out of the interaction by actors, who over time internalize it. Meaning is the basic term that captures everything that is socially codified, for example, in language, values, knowledge, virtues, and practices. In a second step this objective meaning is transferred to new members of society by means of socialization. Put differently, children learn socially constructed meanings by internalizing the objective meanings that prevail in the society of which they gradually become members. They learn these meanings in a way that makes them part of themselves, because much of the learning is done without reflection.

Pierre Bourdieu, to take a sociologist who has studied how we become social without necessarily noting it, shows how meanings are internalized also in the body of human beings. He speaks of "habitus," which refers to how the social history of a human being is inscribed in the body. This idea also means that peoples' different histories result in different "habiti," and Bourdieu also discusses class habitus (Bourdieu 1984) to capture the similarity of peoples' trajectories that can be observed in society. Bourdieu emphasizes how social structure constrains individual actions, and he has empirically investigated how these trajectories of social mobility in society function, which leads him to question the idea of free choices in forming one's own societal destiny. The main reason for this is the second aspect of freedom, resources. The notion of social capital—connections with others, seen as a resource—is an important aspect of how people can enable actions. The priming is so deeply rooted that one cannot say that there are first egos who only later become social. It is more accurate, when describing Bourdieu's analysis, to say that to be a human being is to be socially conditioned, and that such conditioning is a function of the social environment.

Bourdieu's theoretical analysis is grounded in his anthropological fieldwork. It is not surprising that the constitutive element of the social is even more observable in anthropological work investigating "traditional" societies. If we look at the work of Malinowski (1922), for example, it is clear that social relations are constitutive. Malinowski analyzes how structural positions in the

social network are even inherited. This means that actors are not only enabled and constrained by these ties, but they *are* those ties. These ties are confirmed in trade and trade again confirms actors' identities. All these activities are part of their culture. These insights later led sociologists to talk of "social constructions" (Berger 1964), a phenomenon that today has very wide scope and is largely accepted. Because human beings are inherently social they have internalized society, its values, practices, and knowledge, that is, in terms of structure and culture (Giddens 1984), which both enables and blocks their actions. But this sociological idea can be enriched by looking at it through a philosophical lens. The reason is that also philosophers have addressed how human beings internalize social values. But because some of them are critically examining this sociality, their analysis shows what sociologists look at in a different light. Thus, when the philosophical and sociological analyses of socialization are put next to one another, we get a good understanding of the sociality of human beings.

NIETZSCHE AND HEIDEGGER ON THE SOCIAL

The sociological position that human beings are inherently social is confirmed by the work of Nietzsche and Heidegger. But they also qualify this idea. Nietzsche is critical of sociology, which in his view reduces individuality by forcing it into a collectivistic framing. Having said that, Nietzsche's critique extends to most thinkers; even liberal thinkers such as Mill and Spencer are clearly not seen in a positive light (Antonio 1995). Comte and Spencer are criticized for adhering to a crowd-based sociology, which plays down the realization of the individual, especially the "overman" (Aspers 2007, 479). Sociology, Nietzsche says, denies activity and embraces reactivity (Friedrich. Nietzsche 1994, II, §12). He also claims that mechanical and organic sociological theories lack meaning and purpose, and they cannot guide man in life (Friedrich Nietzsche 1980, 11:564–565, §618). In Nietzsche's view, "individualism" is not rooted in similarity, but in man's uniqueness. Nietzsche is critical of sociology's view of what makes man social, as he is of all ideologies and ideas that equalize people, including liberal ideas.

Nietzsche argues that sociologists promote what he calls "herd virtues" ("*Heerdentugenden*") (Friedrich Nietzsche 1980, 12:357 §901). He regards the sociological focus on the mediocre man ("*mittlere Art Mensch*") as problematic. A more fundamental problem, however, is that Comte, Spencer, and others put the collective first when discussing development. Comte, according to Nietzsche, got it completely wrong: "Not Mankind, but the overman [*Übermensch*] is the goal! Misunderstanding by Comte!" (Friedrich

Nietzsche 1980, 11:210). Spencer is accused of the same mistake (Friedrich Nietzsche 1980, 12:525; 13:475 §944).

Moreover, Nietzsche says that "[o]ur entire sociology simply does not know any other instinct than that of the herd, that is, that of the sums of zeroes—where every zero has 'equal rights,' where it is virtuous to be zero" (Friedrich Nietzsche 1980, 13:238, §53). Nietzsche argues that in the end sociology becomes "a doctrine of the forms of domination" (Friedrich Nietzsche 1911, §462). He means that the morals of the majority are manifested in sociology, and that theories and "discovered" laws are simply forms of domination. It is clear from the above quotations that Nietzsche thinks that sociology represents a threat to the development, and the possibility of freedom, of the individual, and that the discipline is a theory of domination that blocks man from individual development.

Heidegger, in contrast to Nietzsche, actually goes further than sociologists in his analysis of how deeply social human beings are. Though Nietzsche's critical analysis may be useful, it is only with Heidegger that the idea of a totally enmeshed subject is analyzed ontologically. Heidegger is critical of the egologism discussed above, and the corresponding pseudo problems to which it gives rise. Heidegger's historical review of the individualistic fallacy penetrates deep into philosophy, and he is explicitly critical of those social science and philosophical approaches that stress the individual as an "ontic" assumption, namely, those that assume that the atomized individual is the natural point of departure (Aspers and Kohl 2013, 10–11). To him it is self-evident that human beings are part of a larger whole, in which other beings are essential. For Heidegger, it is our practical life and experiences that are the starting point, not a world somehow independent of us (Heidegger 2001b, 83–84). It is this "relational" system of, for example, relations to others and to tools which constitute the ontological structure (also referred to as the "care [*Sorge*] structure") by which man is both conditioned and a part. According to Heidegger (2001b, 84), this whole is more than the parts that make it up. To be in the world means that relations constitute man, to others and to things. This leaves us with the question of the other(s): who are they and what is their role in the ontological edifice?

Man is "living in the world," but it is of course the same for all; in other words, there are not different worlds for different people, but the same one. What Heidegger calls *Dasein* (being—literally, "being there"), he argues, is "always already" in the world together with other *Daseins,* who are called (under that aspect) *Mitseins* (being-with). Heidegger thereby rejects methodological individualism and sees "the social context as the ultimate foundation of intelligibility" (Dreyfus 1991, 7). Other *Daseins*—relations with whom are

designated *Mitsein*—constitute what he calls an "*existentiale*"—their existence and a particular Dasein's relations to them permeate all things.

People trade with other people, the camping ground in the forest is used by someone, and the neighbors whose voices I can overhear on my balcony are all examples of the fact that one is never alone. But the relations we have to others also constitute us more indirectly. How we read the newspaper, the ways we react to a funny story, the way we do business, and much more structure our behavior, even when one is alone. In contemporary language Heidegger is talking about institutions. One eats as one (*man . . . das Man*) eats, one behaves as one behaves, one greets others as one greets others, to take a few additional examples of institutions. These institutions—or to simplify, norms and activities—can never be excluded or isolated from how *Dasein* acts: if they were, man would no longer be man. Dasein is in-the-world (Heidegger 2001a, 138), involved in activities with others, for others, in the position of others, and with tools and knowledge generated by others (2001b, 167), even when involved in deviant behavior and oriented toward social norms. Heidegger's analysis becomes a critique of the idea of free will because he shows how deeply rooted people's socially conditioned traits are. Indeed, he argues that they constitute man ontologically.

Because of the combined effort of the social sciences and the human sciences, already at the beginning of the twentieth century we had, at least if one looks in the direction presented here, a good understanding of human beings as inherently social. Man is socially integrated, and one cannot speak of "autonomous actors." Human action is contingent not just on "external" factors, but also on factors that are inseparable from human being, because human being is social, a sociality which is played out and conditioned by publicness (Arendt 1988; Habermas 1989; Heidegger 1988, 31–33). Heidegger, like Nietzsche, analyzes the actual conditions of human beings, and both find that man is not free. If we take these general points and criticisms of how action and freedom are viewed in sociology, it is possible to explore this matter in a concrete field, and here a field is selected that thematically addresses an area that is not alien to many liberal thinkers, namely, economic sociology.

FREEDOM IN ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

The discussion so far has brought up general ideas about freedom in relation to sociology and the topics that sociology covers. I will now analyze how contemporary economic sociologists think about freedom. Their views are a continuation of the general sociological analysis conducted above. Economic sociology (Swedberg 2003) is a broad field of research, and it is

easy to identify researchers who focus primarily on structure, for example, White (2002) and those who put the emphasis on culture, such as Zelizer (2011). Neither of these two economic sociologists focus on formal property rights. In fact, property rights are assumed, and are not the focus of research, though this topic has also been discussed by sociologists (Carruthers and Ariovich 2004). In the case of Zelizer it is a study of how property rights have expanded into a domain not previously considered "economic," namely, life insurance for children.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS: ZELIZER ON LIFE INSURANCE

Cultural analysis of the economy shows how economic decision-making depends on cultural frames (Goffman 1974). Viviana Zelizer (1979) has analyzed how it took a cultural reframing to establish life insurance in the USA as something that is as "normal" as other forms of insurance, such as fire insurance. She argues that at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was still unusual to have life insurance. There was a public debate on why. The point here is that the existence of rational, free, and independent human beings is valid in some cases, but not in others. This change in the ways people perceive life insurance can be explained by gradual reinterpretation of what is accepted, and Zelizer outlines the causes of this process. Gradually, traditional religious values of life were understood in terms of risk and speculation. The companies selling life insurance, Zelizer shows, adjusted their sales strategies and advertisements to counteract resistance from potential customers. These activities promoted the reframing of life insurance. This meant that what used to be the "safety net" of friends, neighbors, and relatives was replaced by the economic bureaucracy of large insurance companies.

Zelizer's analysis clarifies how deeply rooted human beings are in cultural frames. One may say, following Zelizer, that human beings are not free to choose; or put differently, the freedom of their choices are explained by actors' culturally given framework. The argument is not that frames determine actions, or that they are fixed—Zelizer's analysis shows that they are not—but that they must be considered when analyzing what people do. Human beings are primed by cultural frames. Contractual freedom, a premise of classic liberalism, was present to only a marginal degree in early nineteenth century US society. A hundred years later this domain of life, too, could be treated as contract based. Zelizer's idea has gained support from similar studies in other contexts, for example, China (Chan 2009). What the cultural analysis of insurance shows is that human beings do not act on preset preferences; the preferences are acquired in a process. Furthermore, this is a social process. Taken together, any approach stressing free individuals

who "just" decide on whether life insurance is good or not naively represent its own presumption of the world, rather than investigating and explaining human beings' actions.

NETWORK ANALYSIS: WHITE ON MARKETS

Harrison White, like Zelizer, belongs to the first generation of economic sociologists. White studies markets, or more precisely, producer markets, which are characterized by the production of goods that are sold to consumers. A central point White makes (1981) is that these markets are emergent and self-reproducing social structures. Based on an assumption of rational actors, the social structures and identities of producers generate a stable market order. It is the mutual adjustment of actors that explains the social outcome, but once there is a social order, it conditions future actions. Added to this is a business culture that is rooted in history (White 2002, 299).

In White's view, markets are "no more inhuman than your family or than cliques or clans" (White 2002, 303). The market is one arena in which identities emerge and actors operating under the condition of "Knightian uncertainty . . . coalesced out in production markets with distinct identities" (White 2002, 302). White argues that market trade in the private sphere provided "a basis for the trust needed in commercial calculative connection" (White 2002, 303). So markets are one arena among others for social forms (White 1992), and these social structures grow over time without central planning. Rather, uncertainty and confusions are the triggers of markets (White 2008, 57).

In White's analysis of market interaction, the state is frequently absent. Contracts are not the focus, and cannot be seen as a starting point that is given by nature (White 2008, 173). The focus is on actors, who themselves are formed in the social interaction, "Persons come into existence and are formed as the result of overlaps among identities from distinct network-populations" (White 2008, 129). Hence, White acknowledges a social constructivist approach, but gives much space to agency, although within structural boundaries. The structural approach shows clearly that what some may see as "free actions" are conditioned by their position in the social structure. These structures thus enable actors to act, but also limit what they in practice can choose to do. It is worth noting that though White cannot be seen as a classical liberal, he surely stresses the social interactional side, and his work does not focus on the state and its politics. Though the state sets the basic conditions for the market economy, White does not give it a major explanatory role when it comes to markets. Whereas Zelizer puts the emphasis on the cultural embeddedness of human agency and freedom, White stresses how agents are part of social structures. These two analyses, the cultural and the structural, however, must not stand in opposition; from the perspective of this chapter, they rather complement one another and reinforce the idea that human beings are socially conditioned.

CONCLUSION

The liberal idea of freedom is primarily concerned with legal matters, to safeguard that coercion of some by others in society is not occurring more than necessary. Sociology addresses primarily not this formal aspect of freedom but the resources that enable actors to make practical use of the opportunities that a liberal society—in principle—offers. Both of these are central aspects of freedom. This chapter addresses the third aspect of freedom, namely, the social conditioning that both enables and constrains actors. Social conditioning refers to the social-structural, social-cultural, and social-cognitive aspects that underline the sociality of this conditioning. To put it differently, human beings can make a lot of decisions, and for many of these decisions they are free. The point here is twofold: the social context is partly making people free, but their idea of freedom and the conditions of freedom are also framed in social processes. This to a large extent empirical topic is not discussed by either classical or modern liberals. Even Hayek (1960, 1–20), who talks about various aspects that may limit actors' freedom, does not engage with the social conditioning of human action.

Given that social constraints and the process that leads to social conditioning are not much discussed within the liberal tradition, freedom should not be seen as given. It is here proposed, and to be further investigated in future studies, that freedom must be acquired in the process of transcendence of the self, an enterprise that must partly be directed against resistance of what one is and one's social conditioning. Knowledge to reflect on what one is and what one has become are necessary conditions of becoming free, and not inherent human capacities. Reflection can occur in contexts in which people are exposed to new ideas and to some extent also struggle against one another, and more fundamentally struggle with what they take for granted. George Herbert Mead (1934, 354–78) has discussed the notion of reflection in general, though his more behavioristic approach stresses how stimuli are challenged, such as when one fails to open a drawer made of wood (1934, 355–56). But Mead also suggests that our "social self reflective conduct" (1934, 124n) makes men free. By this he means that we become free in processes in which we, more profoundly, become social. Heidegger's notion of reflexivity is more strongly connected to the socially produced world, but he too thinks that reflection reveals itself when things do not work, when things work differently from what one expected, or when we do not know what to

do in a new situation. It is partly by reflection that, Heidegger says, one can find oneself (Aspers and Kohl 2013). One interpretation of Heidegger is that the insight that one is not free is a condition of freeing oneself (Ruin 2008). Malinowski (1922) shows how difficult it was for those participating in the complex Kula-Ring form of trade to reflect on and understand it, though they lived in it. It was only with modernity that role switching and its correlated reflexivity that switching between different roles and settings became possible outside a small elite. Durkheim ([1895] 1984) catches this transformation by describing how mechanical solidarity, defined by similarity, gave way to organic solidarity in industrial society, based on the interdependency between people who are occupying different roles. This idea has been refined and connected with switching between networks in domains (Mische and White 1998). Accordingly, education and structural conditions of role and domain switching help people to reflect. Seen in this light, knowledge of what makes us less free is a condition for making us free. To enable this reflection requires access to education in order to be(come) a free human being.

Where does this leave us? It would be naïve of liberals to neglect the mounting empirical and philosophical evidence that human beings are socially conditioned. Most liberals are aware of the social conditioning and its consequence, but a closer connection and use of empirical research would and probably should be an integrated part of a liberal research agenda. This chapter is an invitation to study the relations between liberalism and sociology to the mutual benefit of both traditions, but also to outline paths to how sociological knowledge can provide insights into the social conditioning of the self and its position in social life. A systematic analysis and coverage of the liberal tradition in sociology and a more detailed analysis of the relative absence of liberal notions in sociology could be a good starting point. In more concrete terms this entails launching research that empirically studies freedom, perception, and ideas of freedom in societies. A theoretical research agenda may address questions concerning the extent to which freedom can be combined with the fact that man is social.

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NOTES

1. The term "free" refers to "having a free throat" ("*Freihals*," in German) (Dahrendorf 1968, 183). It means that one is not fettered. Freedom thus initially meant not to be physically fettered. But today freedom is used metaphorically.