THE CONCEPT OF THE FREE SOCIETY

The aim of the present paper is to present a logical analysis of the concept of the free society. The symbolism used will be that of the *Principia Mathematica*—a few extra-logical symbols being explained when introduced. Regarding logical symbolism, it must be stressed, that the use of artificial symbols is not to be understood as a formalization. For formalization is a procedure by which one abstracts from the meaning of terms and operates on the shapes of the (material) symbols alone—which will not be done here. The symbolism is rather used as a useful shorthand, without which it would be difficult to obtain statements of the desired precision.

1. Individual freedom

A definition of social freedom, i.e., of a free society, presupposes the concept of the politically free individual. Now an individual is politically free in a given field, iff it is not subject to any deontic authority[1] in that field. Writing "$F(x,j)$" for "x is free in j" and "$A(y,x,j)$" for "y is a deontic authority to x in j" we can put:

$$(1)\quad F(x,j) \equiv \sim(\exists y)\, A(y,x,j).$$

The use of a quantifier in (1) shows why it is not necessary to conceive individual political freedom as a ternary relation, as it has sometimes been suggested. It would seem indeed, at first, that freedom is a ternary relation: an individual is, namely, not only free *to* do something, but also free *from* obedience to somebody. But as the variable to be substituted by the name of the bearer of authority is bound in (1), it can be omitted in our *definiendum*.

There are two kinds of deontic authority, namely, the authority of sanction and authority of solidarity. In the first case, the aim of the subject is different from that of the bearer of authority and he obeys the latter only in order to avoid punishment. In the latter, the aim of both the subject and the bearer of authority are identical, the former resigning freely his right to make decisions in the given field.

Individual political freedom can be defined, so it seems, by absence of *any* authority in the field, i.e., also form authority of solidarity. But *social* freedom cannot be defined in that way. For even a radically anarchic society is one in which there are some freely accepted (solidarity-) authorities. It follows that "*A*" in the above definition (1) can be read as meaning "authority of sanction". It also follows, that the definition of *social* freedom by absence of compulsion is basically correct, contrary to that of individual political freedom.

2. Generalizations

Using our formula (1) it is possible to define the concepts of a number of different societies. It may even be said that (1) is astonishingly fruitful in that respect. This is due to the fact that (1) admits a number of different quantifications, i.e, generalizations. By listing them, we obtain a logical frame for a classification of different societies in regard to freedom.

Such a classification can only be made with the use of contemporary mathematical (Fregean) formal logic, which alone (contrary to the so called "conventional" logic) offers a theory of multiple quantification. Such quantification is needed here, because we have to operate on a matrix with two variables.

Among the extra-logical symbols "*M*" for "member" will often be used—"*M(x,y)*" being read: "*x* is a member (citizen) of the (society) *y*". Concerning the membership of a society, it may be remembered that while there always exists a class *corresponding* to a given society—namely the class of its members—the society *is not* that class. For while a society is a real object—it will be enough to recall how real its action is on us—a class is never a real thing. In the world there are no classes at all. E.g., it is true that there are cows in the real world, but nothing like the class of cows. It may be also noted marginally, that our "*M*" will be considered as a logical predicate in Lesniewski's mereology.

We shall proceed now to list the different *a priori* possible generalizations of (1). There are, first of all, two generalizations of *one* of the variables, either "*x*" or "j". If the first is bound by a general quantifier we obtain something which may be called "field-freedom":

$$(2)\ GF\ (g,j)\cdot \equiv \cdot (x)\cdot M(x,j) \supset F(x,j).$$

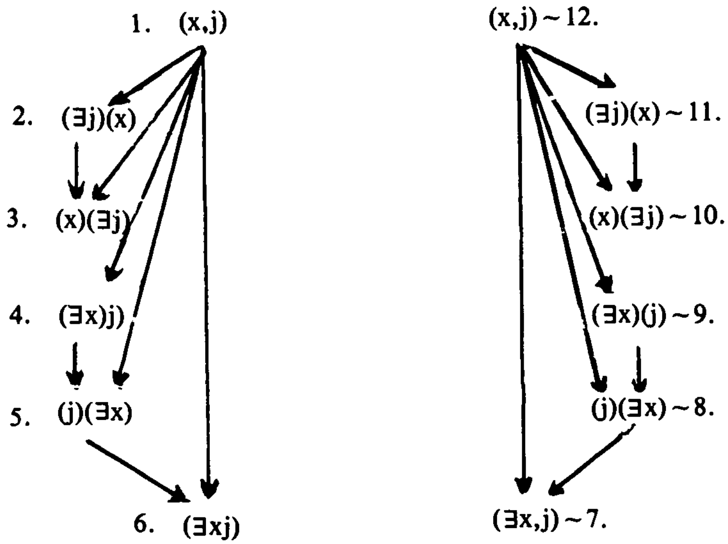
A society is field-free in j iff all its members are (individually, politically, compulsion-free. Thus Switzerland is a field-free country in respect of freedom to marry, if all Switzermen are (politically, compulsion-) free to marry.

A similar generalization can be given for the field—this seems, however, to have little interest and will not be formulated here. On the contrary generalizations of *both* the subject and the field do offer considerable interest and may be listed below.

We have here, to begin with, four different quantifications: (I) *(x,j)*, (II) *(x)(∃j)*, (III) *(∃x)(j)*, (IV) *(∃x,j)*. But as in (II) and (III) the order of the quantifiers is relevant ("*(x)(∃j)p*" does follow from "*∃j)(x)p*" but not inversely, we obtain two more relevantly different quantifications: "*∃j)(x)*" and "*(∃j)(x)*" and "*(j)(∃x)*"—i.e., six altogether. Considering that each of them can be followed by a negation, we have finally twelve *a priori* possible generalizations.

3. The twelve types of societies

Each of these generalizations describes the structure of one of the *a priori* possible simple types of societies in regard of freedom. They are represented in the following diagram, in which "*x*" ranges over the members of the given society only, and the matrix "*F(x,j)*" has been omitted for brevity.



Here are a few comments on the 6 societies represented by the formulas on the left side of the scheme:

1. Every member of the society is free in all fields—i.e., there is no authority of sanction at all. This is probably the definition of a radically anarchic society.

2. There is at least one field in which all members of the society are free. If the so called mental activities, like thinking, wishing, etc. are taken into consideration, this applies to every possible society—for even in an ex-

tremely tyranical society the members are free to perform such mental actions. But if exterior activites alone are meant, then the formula excludes only a slave-owning and, *a fortiori*, a totalitarian society.

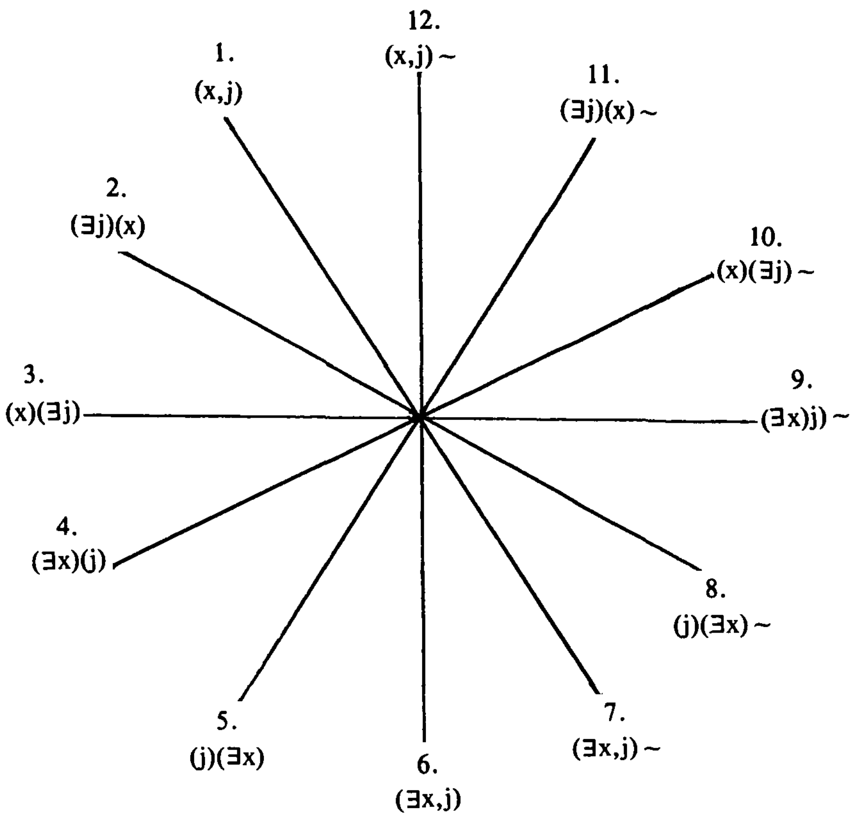
3. For each member of the society there exists at least one field, in-which it is free. This is a weaker statement than the preceding and is implied by it.

4. There is at least one member of the society which is free in all fields. This formula applies to a society with dictatorial ruler(s) who can do whatever they wish—but is not a definition of it.

5. In each field there is at least one member of the society which is free in it. This follows from statement 4, and is weaker than it.

6. There is at least one individual and one field in which it is free. This is, so-to-say, a minimum of freedom. The statement is implied by all statements above it in the diagram (1-5).

The societies represented by the formulas at the right side of the diagram will not be commented on. Each of them is the negation of one of those on the left side. The following scheme represents these contradictions:



4. The free society

Historically-known societies possess only exceptionally simple structures, which can be represented by one of the above formulas. In most cases we have to deal with logical products of such formulas. This is also the case of the free society, which is our present concern. An attempt will be made to analyse its structure in four successive steps.

Frist step. One could think at first, that such a society can be defined by our formula number 3. We would say then: a society is free if there is at least one field of external actions in which all its members are free. Writing "FS" for "is a free society" we have then:

$$(3)\quad FS(y)\cdot\supset\cdot(Ej)(x)\cdot M(x,y)\supset F(x,j).$$

(3) does formulate, indeed, a necessary condition of a free society; but it is surely not a sufficient condition of it. For (3) is satisfied also by an anarchic society, in which all members are free in all fields and, consequently, there is at least one field in which they are free. In order to approximate a correct definition of a free society we must, therefore, bring in complements to (3). This is being done in the second step.

Second step. It is postulated, that all members of the society are not only free in some field, but also not free in some (other) field. (The formula thus obtained is a logical product of our Nr.3 and Nr.10):

$$(4)\quad FS(y):\supset:(\exists j)(x)\cdot M(x,y)\supset F(x,j)\cdot(Ej)(x)\cdot M(x,y)\supset\sim F(x,j).$$

This is again clearly a necessary condition of a free society in as far as it is distinguished from the anarchic society. One interesting consequence of (4) is, that whoever rejects free society is bound, (according to the so-called De Morgan law) to assert *either* ("in each field there is at least one not free member of society") *or* our (3) ("in each field there is at least one free member of the society"). This shows that the often-made inference, that whoever rejects the free society is logically bound to accept totalitarianism, is incorrect: he has the choice between two sorts of societies, none of which can be described as totalitarian.

But even our corrected formula (4) is not satisfactory as a definition of a free society. For it is not enough that every member of it be free in any field whatsoever in order that it might be called "free". E.g., it is not enough that every member of a society is free to drink a glass of tomato-juice at breakfast, in order that that society be called "free," if at the same time he is deprived of freedom of choice of occupation, of choice of place of residence, etc. It appears, consequently, that some further complement is necessary.

Third step. This complement, it is suggested, will consist in the statement that all members of the free society must be free in all fields which are considered as being *very important*—let us call them "essential." We shall say then, that a free society is on in which all members are free in all such fields and there is at least one (other) field in which none of them is free. Denoting by "*e*" the class of essential fields, we shall have then:

$$(5)\quad FS(y): \supset :(x,j):M(x,y),jEe\cdot \supset \cdot F(x,j):(\exists j)(x)\cdot M(x,j) \supset \sim F(x,j)$$

The question will rise, of course, as to which fields are to be considered as essential. The answer is, that this will largely depend on the current social conventions. However, it seems to be plausible to admit, under present conditions, that those fields may be considered as essential that correspond to the so-called human rights.[2] If that be accepted, we can say that a free society is one in which all members are free in all fields corresponding to the so-called human rights, and where there is at least one field on which none of them is free.

Fourth step. However, even our (5) meets with a difficulty. Even in a most free society there are namely at least two classes of members who are not free—that of convicts in prisons and that of persons assigned to psychiatric hospitals. The idea that everybody should be free with exception of these two classes is, e.g., nicely expressed by the 16th century Polish law principle: "*neminem captivabimus nisi jure victum*"—"we shall imprison nobody unless he is convicted by law." An exception must be made, therefore, for the members of these two classes. Let us call the elements of their sum "Legal exceptions." We can say, then, that a free society is one in which all members, if they are not legal exceptions, are free in all essential fields and there is at least one field in which none of them is free. If we denote the said sum by "*c*" we may write:

$$(6)\quad FS(y) \equiv :(x,j):M(x,y)\cdot \sim x \in c\cdot j \in w\cdot \supset \cdot F(x,j):(\exists j)(x)\cdot M(x,j) \supset$$
$$\supset \sim F(x,j).$$

This is not a simple implication, but an equivalence, namely a definition stating the necessary *and* sufficient condition of a free society.

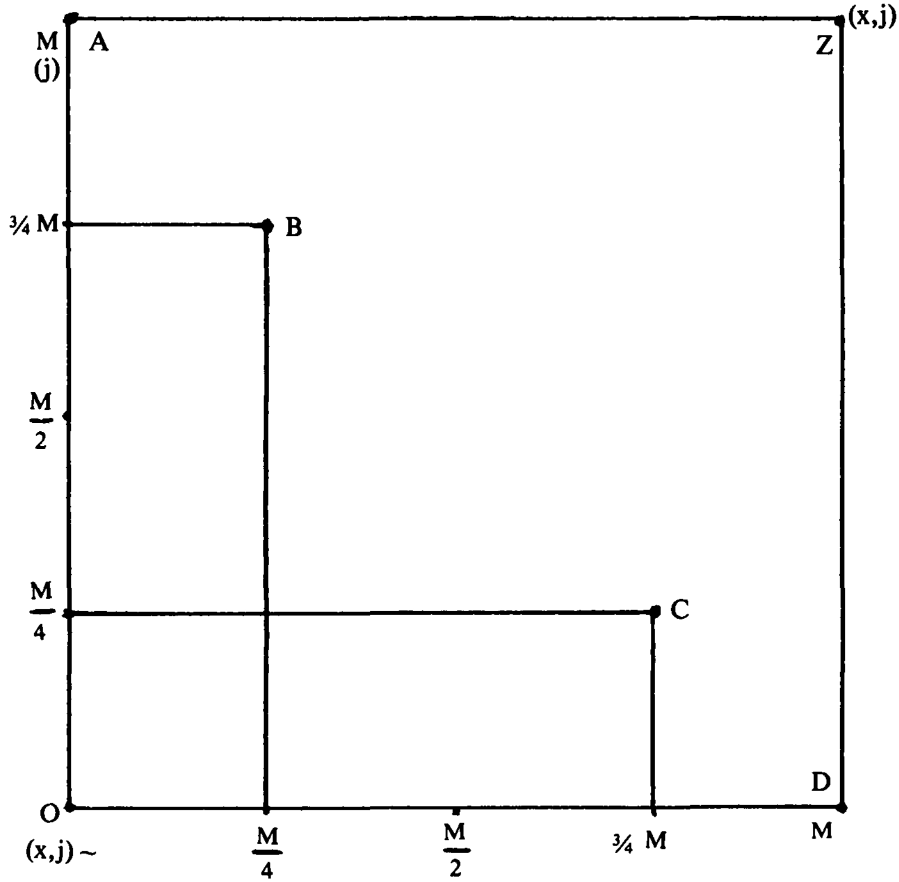
5. The degrees of freedom

It seems often to be assumed that the degree of freedom is identical in all free societies. In order to qualify as free, according to our (5), a society must grant to all its members (with the said exceptions) freedom in all essential fields. And yet it is possible to admit differences and therefore also degrees in freedom of different societies. This can happen in three ways. (1) First, the interpretation of human rights and, consequently, of the essential fields may be different in different socities. It may happen therefore, that a field is considered as essential in one country and non-essential in another; then the citizen of the first will be free in the former but not in the latter.(2) Second, the rules determining who can be assigned to an asylum, and when, may differ from one society to another. Then the number of such individuals will differ. It is said, for example, that in the Soviet Union a citizen convicted of having "wrong" ideas may be sent to a psychiatric institute, which is not the case in, say, Switzerland.(3) Finally there can be differences in respect of non-essential fields. In this case, in spite of the equality of the degree of freedom in regard to the essentials, there may be wide differences in other respects, resulting in the feeling that a society which limits too many non-essential freedoms is less free than one which does not act so. We may, therefore, conclude that there may different degrees of freedom in free societies.

Such degrees cannot be analyzed with the conventional "absolute" quantifiers "all" and "there is"; we need here *numerical* qualtifiers of the type of "there are M/n of the x's so that . . . " The question arises, of course, if such a quantification is possible. The answer is, that there should be no difficulty in so far as the individuals (citizens) are concerned, because they can be, on principle, counted. The quantification of the fields offers, it is true, a difficulty, far different fields (even essential fields) having different "weights" as those are considered as being of different importance—and thus, so it seems, cannot be simply counted. This difficulty could perhaps be avoided by the introduction of a numerical weight-factor. It may also be remarked that the quantification needed here does not require that a numerical value be ascribed to each field or group of fields—it is enough that they might be linearly arranged.

If this could be done, then the whole field of possible degrees of freedom would be represented by the space between cartesian coordinates—the fields being written on the ordinate (O-A in our diagram) and the individuals on the abscissa (O-D).

The proposed diagram will look as follows:



This diagram helps visualize the difficulty in estimating which one of the two societies is more free than the other. Is that e.g., the case of the society represented by the point B(three quarters of the fields, but only one quarter of the citizens)—or by that represented by the point C (inverse situation)?

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NOTES

1. A theory of authority has been developed by the author in *Was ist Autorität?* (Freiburg i.B. 1974.)

2. This idea is due to Professors M. Jensen and W. Meckling (unpublished paper, read at Key Biscayne, Florida, on March 30, 1985).