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Article

The Concepts of "Freedom" and "Unfreedom": A Philosophical, Linguocognitive, and Linguoculturological Analysis

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Abstract: This article analyzes the concepts of "freedom" and "unfreedom" based on philosophical, linguocognitive, and linguoculturological approaches. The study examines the ontological essence of these notions, their semantic-cognitive structure, and features of cultural representation. The concept of "freedom" is interpreted in relation to human free will, the possibility of choice, and autonomy, while "unfreedom" is viewed as a state of limitation, dependency, and coercion. The article also analyzes metaphorical modeling, linguoculturological units, and the dynamic nature of these concepts within the context of modern global processes. The results demonstrate that "freedom" and "unfreedom" represent complex structures not only in philosophical but also in cognitive and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: Freedom, Unfreedom, Concept, Linguocognitive Analysis, Linguoculturology, Free Will, Metaphor.

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1. Introduction

The problem of "human freedom" has long been one of the most controversial and relevant issues in the history of philosophy. This concept is closely related to the ontological nature of the human being, their role in society, and their moral responsibility. At the same time, the categories of "freedom" and "unfreedom" are studied as concepts within linguistics—particularly in cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology—revealing the mechanisms through which human thought is expressed through language [1].

The aim of this article is to analyze the concepts of "freedom" and "unfreedom" as multi-layered phenomena, and to identify their semantic, cognitive, and cultural characteristics [2].

The concept of "freedom" is often explained through the category of free will. This theory emphasizes that a human being possesses the ability to independently choose their actions. In ancient philosophy, Aristotle associates freedom with "conscious choice" and interprets it as a moral virtue. According to him, a person is responsible only for voluntary actions [3].

2. Method and Field Procedures

This study employs an interdisciplinary methodological approach combining philosophical, linguocognitive, and linguoculturological analysis. The research is based on the principles of systematicity, objectivity, and consistency.

The philosophical method is used to examine the ontological and axiological aspects of the concepts of "freedom" and "unfreedom." In addition, the linguocognitive approach allows for the analysis of these concepts as mental models formed in human consciousness. The study also applies linguoculturological analysis to identify how these concepts are reflected in language and national culture.

Furthermore, comparative and descriptive methods are used to reveal similarities and differences between "freedom" and "unfreedom," while metaphorical analysis is applied to interpret their cognitive representations.

3. Results and Discussion

In modern philosophy, Immanuel Kant explains freedom as the autonomy of a human being based on reason. In his view, true freedom consists in acting in accordance with the moral law, free from external influences. The existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, in turn, considers freedom as the fundamental condition of human existence. According to his famous idea, "man is condemned to be free," meaning that a person is compelled to make choices under all circumstances [4].

"Unfreedom" is a condition that arises as a result of the limitation of human activity by various factors. These constraints may be external (social, political, economic) or internal (psychological, cognitive). For example, in totalitarian systems, unfreedom manifests itself through social control and imposed ideology [5].

At the same time, in existentialism, unfreedom is often associated with an individual's avoidance of personal responsibility. In this regard, "unfreedom" is considered not only as an objective condition but also as a product of subjective consciousness. A person may deny their own possibilities and place themselves within the boundaries of "necessity [6].

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the concept of "freedom" is regarded as a complex mental model formed in human consciousness [7]. This model consists of the following components:

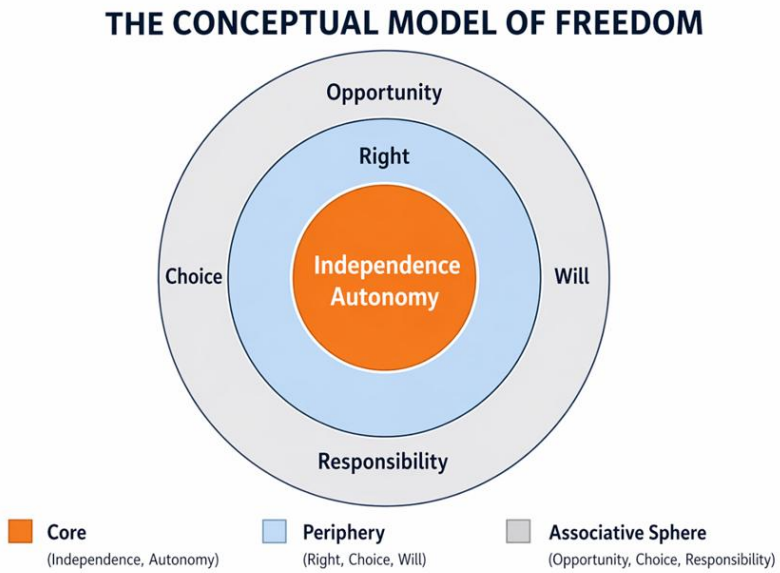

Figure 1. The conceptual model of freedom.

These components become more concrete through metaphorical modeling. According to the theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, human cognition has a

fundamentally metaphorical nature [8]. Therefore, the concept of "freedom" is often expressed through the following metaphors:

- Freedom as space ("free path," "open opportunity");
- Freedom as movement ("to act freely");
- Freedom as wings ("freedom gives wings") [9].

The concept of "unfreedom" is formed as an antonymic model of "freedom." Its main semantic components include [10]:

- Limitation;
- Obligation;
- Dependence;
- Control.

Based on this, its cognitive-metaphorical model is also formed [11].

From a cognitive perspective, "unfreedom" is often expressed through the following metaphors:

- Unfreedom as a chain;
- Unfreedom as a prison;
- Unfreedom as a barrier.

These metaphors shape unfreedom in human consciousness as a negative, restrictive, and oppressive phenomenon. However, these cognitive representations are not confined to the individual mind; they are also reflected in the cultural-linguistic system [12].

Within the framework of linguoculturology, the concepts of "freedom" and "unfreedom" are closely connected with national culture. In the Uzbek language, the concept of "freedom" is firmly established as a positive value: "Where there is freedom, there is prosperity"; "A life without freedom is a meaningless life." These expressions demonstrate the high status of freedom in society [13].

Conversely, "unfreedom" is expressed through negative lexical units such as slavery, dependence, and subordination. This indicates that in the national consciousness there exists a sharp axiological opposition between freedom and unfreedom [14].

This cultural layer is closely interconnected with modern global socio-political processes. Today, the concept of "freedom" is directly linked to human rights on a global scale. Declarations adopted by the United Nations recognize human freedom as a fundamental value [15]. However, in contemporary society, new forms of unfreedom are also emerging, such as:

- Information manipulation;
- Digital dependence;
- Control through social networks.

These phenomena indicate that the concept of freedom is becoming increasingly complex. The key differences between these two concepts are clearly demonstrated in the following comparative analysis:

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of the Concepts of Freedom and Unfreedom.

Criterion	Freedom	Unfreedom
Ontological nature	Possibility	Constraint
Axiological value	Positive	Negative
Cognitive model	Openness	Closed system
Metaphors	Path, wings	Chain, prison
Social role	Development factor	Restrictive factor

The results of this comparative analysis more clearly reveal the systemic characteristics of these concepts.

The concepts of “freedom” and “unfreedom” are among the fundamental categories of human cognition and social life. They have deep roots not only in philosophy but also in linguistic and cultural dimensions [16]. While “freedom” represents the possibility of human self-realization, “unfreedom” appears as a factor that limits this process. In the modern world, the fact that these concepts are continuously enriched with new meanings necessitates their study based on a comprehensive and integrated approach [17].

4. Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that the concepts of “freedom” and “unfreedom” are complex, multi-layered phenomena closely interconnected with human cognition, the language system, and the socio-cultural environment. Their ontological essence, axiological evaluation, and cognitive structure form a system that is both contrasting and interrelated.

The findings indicate that the concept of “freedom” represents an individual’s ability to make independent choices, their autonomy, and their capacity for self-realization. It carries a positive axiological value and serves as an important factor in social development. In contrast, the concept of “unfreedom” is associated with limitation, dependence, and control, and is regarded as a factor that restricts human activity and slows down development.

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, these concepts are formed in human consciousness through metaphorical modeling. While “freedom” is expressed through metaphors related to openness, movement, and expansiveness, “unfreedom” is represented through negative images such as chains, prisons, and barriers. This reveals deep semantic and emotional distinctions between these notions in human cognition.

The results of the linguoculturological analysis show that in the Uzbek national consciousness, “freedom” is firmly established as a high value associated with prosperity, meaning, and progress. Conversely, “unfreedom” is interpreted as a negative social phenomenon and is expressed through concepts such as slavery and dependence. This confirms the existence of a sharp axiological opposition between these concepts.

Furthermore, in the context of modern global processes, the concepts of “freedom” and “unfreedom” are becoming increasingly enriched with new meanings. Factors such as information manipulation, digital dependence, and control through social networks give rise to new forms of unfreedom. This highlights the necessity of studying these concepts through a deeper, more comprehensive, and interdisciplinary approach.

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