

„The Place of Political Freedom in the Hierarchy of Democratic Values”

While considering relations between freedom and politics, one might either stress that politics and political institutions are constraints (even if necessary) on freedom or that freedom is by definition realized through political action. This project assumes the latter perspective. Its main aim is rehabilitation of political freedom (whose importance is neglected both in contemporary political and legal philosophy as well as democratic practice) by arguing that it occupies (or rather: should occupy) a distinguished place in the hierarchy of democratic values. This overarching aim will be realized in several steps. Firstly, the project will order a debate concerning political freedom by developing its four main conceptions, viz. ‘narrow’, ‘moderate’, ‘wide’ and ‘populist’. Secondly, various justifications (philosophical, psychological, anthropological and evolutionary) of the value of political freedom will be developed. These justifications will provide an argument for two claims, viz. that the most plausible conception of political freedom is the wide one, and that political freedom should occupy a distinguished place in the hierarchy of political values. The third aim of the project is to analyze the relations of political freedom to other democratic values (equality, justice, rule of law etc.) and to discuss in what situations conflicts between these values may arise and how they can be resolved. Analyses pursued in this context will also provide additional argument for the central claim of the project, i.e., the claim about the distinguished place of political freedom in the hierarchy of democratic values. The final aim of this project is to reflect on how political freedom can be realized in contemporary democracies (and how various conceptions of political freedom ‘translate’ into theory of democracy). In this context the project will consider various methods of supporting and realizing political freedom by means of socio-political institutions.