

# *An Order of Freedom*

*The Dialectic of Reason and Freedom  
as a central problem of European Modernity  
(lecture)*

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## *Abstract:*

In relation to the topic "3 - Rationality, justice and spirituality in our school of thought" I speak as a philosopher about the problem of the dialectical relation between our ideas of "reason" and "freedom" which determines the western idea of (political, spiritual, scientific, ethical, personal etc.) „order“. In the history of ideas there are three rational orders, which must be seen as related to each other: the natural order of the cosmos, the divine order of god, and the intellectual, scientific, or political orders of the human beings. All orders have their own rationality. In modern times, any order is acceptable only when (as long as) it is the result of rational considerations and free decision. The dialectic of freedom and reason is considered as the origin of any order, which is acceptable, rationally and morally justifiable (like the order of the state, the order of science, the order of economy, the order of law, etc). In other words: according to the intellectual development of Western thought, every order must be a rational order of freedom.

I try to explain which philosophical developments lead to this result in form of a short history of ideas. In addition, I hope the contemporary self-conception and the identity of the Western people can be better understood in front of this historical background.

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## 1 The problem: the relation between order and freedom

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### 1.1 The anthropological starting point: The human need for orientation

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The peaceful coexistence of people can only be successful (if it is carried by) on a foundation of basic common orientations. Such orientations that ensure a common order of coexistence are naturally not given to human beings - like to the animals in form of instincts and impulses that ensure the functional fit in the respective environment. First of all human beings have to find a common order of their coexistence and accept it as valuable. That man is not oriented by nature, but has to seek and to find guidance by deciding to accept an order on the background of free choice and rational insight, an order, which will be decisive for his thoughts and actions, this is the anthropological core of the human constitution how the modern philosophical anthropology teaches. Human beings have no choice: by nature, they are not orientated, they have to look for an order by themselves, which then works like a "second" nature they must build and form by themselves. This we can learn already from Aristotle.

Lacking a natural guidance for thinking and acting for the human there is a kind of "compensation" for this "natural" disadvantage: the faculty of "reason" and the ability of reasoning, which are essential to the self-image of man, his ability for orientation in the world and as well for the execution of his freedom. As the will needs rational insight to find the right decisions. But who wants to follow the reason in thoughts and actions

- is called to change perspective by orientation on a sorted reconstructable context,
- he is called to enter into a common sphere of intersubjective understanding,
- he is called to justify knowledge and action not by authority or tradition but in relation to inescapable references which are reconstructable for everyone;
- moreover, by doing so he is called to save and maintain his autonomy and self-determination, finally his dignity as free and at the same time rational being in the process of finding reasonable orientations, which make the peaceful coexistence between men possible.

However, how do we find such reasonable and rational orientations? When we look into the history of thoughts we can conclude: reasons are everywhere where we assume an order or a rational structure with well-formed relations: we speak of a rational order of thought, a reasonable order of nature, a reasonable order of society, of cultures and cultural communities, an order of language, of institutions, an order of state, of moral systems, we speak of a legal order, an order of economy, of science or an order of religions etc. An order is a real order, works like

an order and can be called an order only if it is reasonable and coherent, that means: it consists of comprehensible internal relations, which form a completely connected system of reasons and consequences, causes and effects, principles and derivations. Every order must be dominated by an internal coherent structure, which can be explained rationally. In addition it seems that on a long run the stability and solidity of societies, nations, and cultures, which follow certain existing orders of coexistence depend on their reasonable coherence or rational justification, which helps the people to follow the given orders.

For the human individual the orientation on such orders is his own task, power, and responsibility. We can speak of responsibility only if something happens not only freely but rationally too. Therefore everyone is responsible not only for his thinking and acting but also for the choice of the orders he follows as general orientation for his thinking and acting. That means in a strict sense and in consequence: when we praise or blame someone that he follows or does not follow a given order (the order of the law, of the religion, of moral), it is presupposed that his orientation on this order was the result of a free and rational choice or acceptance, because responsibility presupposes freedom and rational insight. Not only the orientation on a given order must be justified in this way, the fundamental order that orientates the concrete orders must be justified rationally and chosen freely, too. This is the only possibility to take in account and respect the moral subjectivity of the individual. As a moral responsible subject the man looks for orders from a position of freedom and rationality, he looks for orders which are reasonable and respect his basic claim on freedom; and if the given orders fulfil this condition he decides himself to follow them. That means: The decision to follow an order must be seen as a free choice and a result of a rational insight. This respects not only the typical human condition of which the modern anthropology speaks but is necessary according to the human ability of freedom and rationality, which constitutes the dignity of man.

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## 1.2 In question: Which order – which freedom - which priority?

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The real and concrete orders of societies, of states and constitutions, of economic and scientific systems etc. in one culture or civilisation are not monolithic orders, which stand for themselves or are justified only by themselves. It is a claim of our understanding that they must be connected one to another to work together harmonically and without problems in a long run. The claim of rational coherence forced us to look for a higher order from which the real orders get their ultimate justification. Only the relation of all real orders to a higher order guarantees the rational coherence of our orientations. This higher order must be an order in a

deeper sense. Such an order must work like an ultimate justification or normative orientation for all our trials to establish concrete or real orders. This metaphysical order must be able to explain the correctness and the legitimacy of existing human orders. These must be in rational coherence with it. And this order has to be asked how it is able to integrate the rational constitution of human beings and the claim to freedom.

The Western philosophy is since its origins “logo-centric” by nature. In this history, we can find three big ideas of such founding orders which are concerted like three rational systems which justify and orientate the concrete human orders. These three orders which we can identify as a natural, a divine, and a human order have their own rationality and coherence which works in an objective given way like the natural order, or works in an absolute way like the divine order, or in a subjective finite way like the human order. Therefore, we can speak about three kinds of reasons, which dominate these three orders: the absolute reason, the objective reason, and the subjective reason. I will shortly explain those three orders of reason:

- First, there is the idea of a cosmic order of the world. Its manifestation is the reasonable and coherent order of nature. We can speak of the objective given rational order of nature. If the life of man should succeed, it must be orientated on this natural order. The objective order is the internal order, which is always already in the world. We can understand it because the structure of this objective given rational order of the world coincides with the intelligible and comprehensible forms of our mind or intellect. The task of the human intellect is only to read intuitively in this objective given intelligible word-structures.
- Secondly, there is the idea of a divine, absolute coherent order, which dominates the being: it springs from the absolute reason of God. Only the coherence with the divine rational order legitimizes every human order because order is only possible and legitimated when it is founded in God. According to the Judeo-Christian idea of creation out of nothing the divine reason and its order is the origin of the natural order of the world, too: the objective given reasonable structure of the world is thought not to be eternal, therefore it must have a rational origin. The world was created from a divine reason and every order which works can be seen as originated and in accordance with by God's divine reason. That means: Only the absolute coherent divine reason-structure is responsible for the stability and fitness of the natural order. In consequence, the divine mind must be seen at least as the normative source of all human orders, too.
- There is – thirdly - the idea of an order made by man in accordance to the finite abilities of his subjective reason: every order can be accepted only if it arises from and is justified by the finite subjective reason of man or is

compatible with the rational insights of human beings. Orders are justifiable only by human insight. That presupposes the confidence that the reason of finite human beings is really competent to create justifiable and working orders for all human beings. These orders made by subjective reason will be neither absolutely right and definitely true nor simply arbitrary or incoherent. They will be fallible and in their historical development needy of a constant renewal or reformation to reflect the respective historical requirements.

In short: Throughout the history of philosophy there are three last orders known, which give orientation for man:

1. An order given by an absolute reason,
2. An order, which is objectively given in the reasonable coherent structure of the nature and
3. The order, which arises from the subjective, finite human reason. In the various epochs of the history of philosophy in ancient, medieval and modern times one of these three rational orders or reasons takes the guidance and is seen as normative orientation with respect to the other: in antiquity, this is the objective reason of the cosmos, in the Middle Ages, this is the absolute reason of God, and in modern times this is the subjective reason of man. For the history of the self-constitution of subjective reason in the thinking of the West, the disempowerment of both, the objective and the absolute reason, in modern times is crucial. However the fact is that the human reason is depotentiated at the end of the modern era, too, as we see in the post-modern idea of "anything goes" which is guided by the idea of the destruction of all great narrations and traditional orders in favour of freedom. This is the actual problem the western societies have to deal with.

Indeed, a look at the history of philosophy shows that there was always a kind of natural tension between the idea of rational order and human freedom. It is easy to explain this tension:

- Every system of thought that sets an order as absolutely given must necessarily negate any real human freedom; the man is degraded to a kind of marionette of the existing absolute order, which works like a kind of metaphysical dictatorship. Human freedom in a substantial understanding would be senseless. Freedom can only be understood as a kind of disturbance or disorder which is significant for the finiteness of human beings, a kind of metaphysical accident in an at all intelligent designed world. In relation to the dignity of given metaphysical, natural or divine order the human individual seems to be worthless.

- And otherwise every system of thought that misunderstands human freedom as an absolute freedom which is not connected to reason and therefore disordered in the sense that its choices are totally unbounded, arbitrary and lack of any rational orientation, must negate necessarily and apriorily any order which must lead to a permanent chaotic situation. Under this disordered conditions human cooperation and coexistence are impossible. But in relation to the absolute willing of the individual not only any metaphysical, natural or divine order but also any human given order is seen as worthless, as superstitious and in consequence as dangerous for the real basic needs of the individual.

Neither an order without real freedom nor freedom without any order is helpful and useful for the life and the self-understanding of man. Instead, the relation between order and freedom must be constructed and can be understood as a dialectical one. In respect to the history and the logical development of the Western Philosophy the starting point of this dialectical construction cannot be the idea of order (which is more an static ideal) but must be the idea of a well understood freedom (which has an intrinsic dynamic structure and is fit for a reasonable dialectical movement). This can be demonstrated as evident on all levels of the idea of freedom, which cannot be seen as real freedom without relation to a reasonable order:

- On the level of the external political, social or the simply so-called “real” freedom (which is reflected already in ancient times), freedom without relation to any order would produce a real chaos or anarchy. But otherwise a strongly forced and strict political order or an absolutely ordered real life without any personal freedom or libertarian elements must be in consequence an inhuman dictatorship, which leads to terroristic systems and seems not to be tolerable any more under condition of modern times. For this judgement it is not important where the strict order comes from or whether the order is given by God, a religion, a group of men, an ideology etc. A strict given order is not only not understandable in the perspective of reasoning, but it does not respect the human claim of freedom which becomes dominant more and more in history. This is the reason the acceptance of the independence and real freedom of the individual stands on the basic of Human Rights. Nevertheless the real or political freedom of Man cannot be absolute. It must respect the claim of freedom of other individuals. Therefore, they must come together and find a common order, which makes possible freedom and order at the same time. To explain how this can happen and work is in modern times the topic of contractualistic theories that were developed by philosophers like John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Hegel or John Rawls. Human freedom is not infinite and absolute, but any restriction of freedom

must be rational justified and must follow the intention to save the freedom as well of the individual as of the society. Modern states want to establish an order of freedom as reaction onto the permanent tension between freedom and order.

- The same dialectic is present on the level of the practical freedom, that means: on the level of internal freedom, the freedom of choice and decision. (The concept of free will comes into our view beginning within the philosophy of Stoicism and the Christian inspired thinking starting with Saint Paul.). On the level of free will the choices and decisions of the will without orientation on a reasonable value-system would produce completely baseless and arbitrary decisions. Our acting would be dominated of arbitrariness; it presupposes a strict value-relativism and all our choices are made groundless and decisionistic. To avoid any connection of decisions to any rational order, even to simple reasons and rational motives the Spain Luis de Molina called this idea of a total freedom of the will “libertas indifferentiae”. The opposite view would be a strict deterministic interpretation of all decisions of our will and that is the end of any freedom. (By the way: all determinism of modern times can be seen as a reaction to the problems of the concept of an absolutely free will. Already Baruch de Spinoza has argued that a deterministic position is philosophically better than any concept of an absolute free and in consequence arbitrary will, because in this way decisions are not rationally explainable and as a consequence not justifiable at all).
- And finally: On the level of transcendental freedom, that means on the level of the last internal conditions of freedom at all, which come into our view in the late period of the Middle Ages and strongly in modern times, freedom would be absolutely meaningless without reference to a rational order or a law of reason: following Kant’s understanding freedom must be “autonomy”, that means self-determination, determination by the moral law of reason. In this sense freedom is the “ratio essendi” of the moral law, and the moral law the “ratio cognoscendi” of freedom. Freedom as "autonomy" in the sense of recognizing a rational moral order which is given by the reason itself, means the freely connection of the subject to an order of reason.

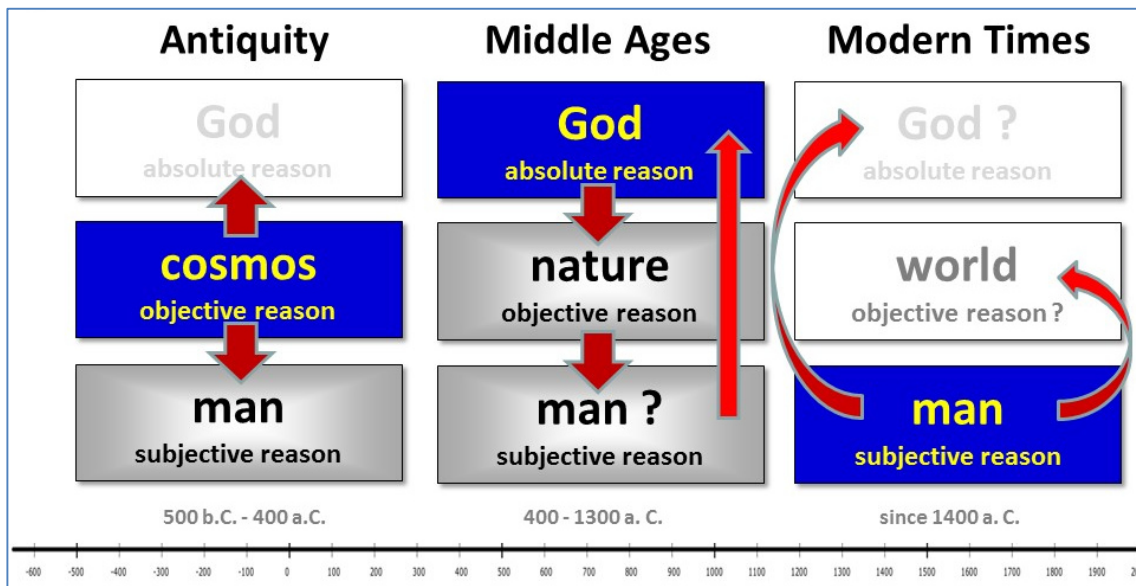
### 1.3 The perspective: an order of freedom?

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In short, freedom and rational order seem not to get simply along without each other and are mutually dependent. At the same time, they are within a certain tension. How the modern problem of this tension between order and freedom was

generated needs a view into the history of Western thought. In the following I will try to reconstruct the genealogy of the problem, and I will argue that on the background of this history legitimate and justifiable order can only be understood as coming from freedom. Therefore the intention of orders always has to preserve the original freedom of man.

## 2 A short history of the problem: The struggle for the primacy of freedom or order



### 2.1 The objective reason of the cosmos and the primacy of the cosmic order

The pre-Christian antiquity saw the world dominated by a beginningless eternal order. As this order was ever sincelike the cosmos itself, it needed no origin for its explanation, because the world had no beginning and no end. Its rationality is manifested in the harmony and regularity of natural processes and in the well orderliness of the state. While the specific individual things are transient, their rise and fall is regulated and guided by eternal ideas, by the eternal “logos” of the world which works like an internal law of the cosmos. These laws are static and not dynamic. These forms remain stable in all superficial change. The subjective-human reason, which participates at the logos of the world, can – however - recognize this order, which is reflected in the individual things as their universal or essence and therefore. Epistemology and metaphysics, knowledge and ontology fall together because both take measure at the nature of things. The appropriate reference to this metaphysical order guarantees truth and certainty of knowledge as well as the success of life.



In short: The eternal order, which manifests itself in the structures of the world and in the nature of the state can be described as objective reason. It enables orientation and knowledge of the world for subjective human reasons. The order of the world did not need a divine reason as a creator of its order because it was eternal and the law, the well-formed structure, the nature of the world has always been in the world. That the world has a beginning and an end, was as unimaginable as that there may be something historically new. Only in this context, it can be understood that history in ancient times is imagined as the steady recurrence of the same.

The subjective reason of man was called the “*nous*” or intellect. His task was to recognize this given order of the world by a kind of intuition, called “*theoria*” of the ultimate principles of this order. The “*dianoia*” had only the task to deal with this connecting them to the experience. Whereas the will had only the task to follow the insights of the human mind under the guidance of the intellect whose primacy was grounded in the connection with the eternal order. Everyone who could not follow the insights of the intellect in his acting was either stupid, weak-willed, or simply evil. The freedom of the will was not even a question. Freedom only was discussed primarily as liberty in a political sense. Therefore, the question of the primacy of order or freedom could not arise. The parallelism of objective and subjective reason was simply accepted as a normative standard in antiquity. The rationality of the world and the human being needed no relation to a third party from which they received their rational standards.

This situation changes with the Stoic philosophy and finally the philosophy of Neo-Platonism, especially the philosophy of Plotinus, whose interpretation of the *logos* as an transcendent principle of all forms of rationality and the later identification of this idea with the Christian God allows to speak now of God as an “absolute reason” which is seen as the origin of all reasonable orders.

## 2.2 The medieval “*ordo*”-thinking: human freedom under the primacy of an absolute order

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### 2.2.1 From immanent to transcendent principle of order: God as an absolute reason

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The Stoic philosophy thought it to be possible to call the “*logos*” as God and to identify both. In accordance to the Hellenistic philosophy, it was not forgotten that Plato had called the “*nous*” as God and that for Aristotle the first unmoved mover

is seen as “noesis noeseos”. The first unmoved mover as eternal “nous” is imagined like a permanent self-thinking and eternal self-recognizing thinking, therefore, determined as an absolute rational, absolute coherent intellectual activity without any mistake or failure. On this background, the “logos”-idea is also gaining entrance into the philosophy and theology of medieval Christianity – and later in the philosophy of the Islamic world. On this way the “logos” changes from an immanent principle of world-events (as yet in the Stoa), to a transcendent, absolute principle especially in the Neoplatonism. This happened more powerful already in the Prologue of John’s Gospel, where God is introduced as pre-existent Christ who is determined as the incarnate “logos”, as *logos creator* of the world: "In the beginning was the logos, and the logos was with God and the Word was God. In the beginning it was with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing happened." All what exists therefore must be seen as grounded in God’s reason, as mentioned by the Christian early theologian Tertullian.

With the emergence of the idea of an "absolute reason" which was reinforced by the neoplatonic philosophy of Plotinus the “logos” changed from a static to a genetic-dynamic principle. God’s original acting which was determined as a “creation out of nothing” was now interpreted as a process guided by his absolute reason. The world was seen as the product of the absolute reason. And as creation of an absolute reason it had to be rational, harmonious and coherent, too - despite its phenomenal multiplicity and diversity and despite its oppositions in the visible foreground. In the background of the visible individual things there is an order which is visible only for the human intellect. Only the intellect can see in a special kind of intuition or contemplation that behind the visible world there is an order, which guides all single things and guarantees the harmony of the world, an “objective order” given by the absolute reason of God and therefore participating at the absolute order of him. Plotinus explained this by the fact that the cosmos must be understood as an emanation of the supreme principle. As the “objective reason” of the world is grounded in the “absolute reason” the human mind as a created “subjective reason” can find orientation by following the “objective reason”. He can find the “absolute reason” indirectly by recognizing the “objective reason”. That is possible because “logos” is also the essence of the human soul and coincides with the ego. However, as a “subjective reason” it is a discursive faculty, which mediates between the pure knowledge of the intellect and of sense experience.

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### 2.2.2 Christian Thinking and rational understanding: divine order and human freedom – a relation of obedience

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This Christian Platonism remained the dominant philosophy of the Middle Ages until the reception of Aristotle in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Platonic ideas are consistently understood as in the mind of God. These ideas in the intellect of God are the principles by which God firstly in the act of creation brings order, meaning and direction in the shapeless mass of matter. This divine rational order of the world is now seen as standard of knowledge and action for the finite human reason. The real point of reference of human knowledge were the overruling universals behind the particular things, the divine, first of all order-giving ideas, the divine cosmos, finally the divine intellect (*intellectus divinus*), in which human reason objectively finds orientation and guidance. However, the human possibility of this relecture of the nature with the help of the ideas in the mind of God requires a certain parallelism between divine and human reason. This certain parallelism was guaranteed by the biblical doctrine of the divine-likeness of man as “*imago Dei*”. It manifests itself - so the Greek Fathers of the Church - in the possession of reason and freedom. To be awarded both, makes the special human dignity, how in particular the Greek church father Gregory of Nyssa, highlighted forcefully. (Here I must make an important annotation which explains something very important and decisive for the difference of the Christian and the Islamic view of man: in opposite to the Christian Thinkers the Islamic-arab Thinkers like al-Kindi, ar-Razi, al-Farabi or Ibn Sina (called in Latin “*Avicenna*”), which all share the neoplatonic view of the relation between God, world and man, the idea of the man as “*imago dei*” which in Christian tradition is used to explain the strong rational abilities of man despite of his freedom and which grounds the dignity of every man independent of his religion, plays a less important or even role in Islamic-Arab philosophy and theology. Sometimes it is thought as suspicious or is simply not accepted because seen as heretic. In consequence there is less confidence into the abilities of the human reason as we can see for example in the related philosophy of al-Ghazali: truth and insight is possible for man only if it is given by an divine revelation and needs authorities like prophets who receive the truth exclusively and communicate it to the people in form of a book. Therefore, it is only consequent that Muslim people must believe not only in God but in the prophet, too. There is less confidence in the power of subjective reason and the abilities of human freedom. Every finite order which is the result of a dialectic of reason and freedom therefore must be seen as suspicious).

My task now is to explain mainly the role of freedom in the mediaeval-neoplatonic view: The mutual reference of divine and human reason to the objective reason of the natural order was the grounding reason, why order and freedom were seen as compatible with each other in the Middle Ages – but with a priority for order.

At this point we have to remember that in antiquity freedom was mentioned primarily in terms of outer, political freedom. In the Christian Middle Ages the idea

of an "inner freedom" of the will or a real freedom of choice arises. In the letters of Saint Paul and in withdrawal from the Mosaic Law, the question of the inner freedom of man is a focal point of his preaching under the title "law of liberty". Saint Augustine characterizes the Christian tradition through his doctrine of "liberum arbitrium", the freedom of choice, for almost a millennium. This freedom did not seem proper destructive, and so it had to be made compatible with the medieval idea of "ordo".

But under neoplatonic conditions freedom can only mean to be in accordance to the order established by God. To act in opposite to this divine order is seen as a deficit of freedom, finally because God reacts and fights back to maintain the order given by himself: the consequences are illness, suffering, and death. All disorders caused by pure instincts, inclinations, desires, etc. violate the divine order. They are rejected as sin. Finally, the medieval man could not imagine that finite man could break the order of the infinite God by his own finite power. Therefore, superhuman, quasi semi-divine forces were adopted, demons, ghosts, devils, semi-spirits etc. were adopted as the underlying cause of such non-compliance. The physical body, which was identified as the principle of disorder, was a gateway of their work.

The freedom of God was conceived according to this topos and therefore formed no particular theme. God acts always and necessarily according to its nature that means in consequence: order and freedom are always identical in God and His work like reason and will, wisdom and power. The very fact that God acts always according to his pure wisdom and goodness, constitutes the divine freedom. Freedom and omnipotence of God cannot be understood otherwise than as an *ordinate action*, which means: according to the eternal order of creation, understood. It is simply not conceivable that God acts except the eternal order. The divine and eternal order of idea, one might say, is the higher-ranking representation of the essence of God than freedom. Based on the assumed ability to God's reason we could say: The divine mind or intellect dominates the divine will. This intellectualism is the base of the priority of reason and order in the Middle Ages.

For human reason thus guarantees the order of the world because God was not a chaotic arbitrary God; he created the world not arbitrary but in accordance to the laws he have given as absolute reason. But the relation of divine order and human freedom has to be seen as a relation of obedience. Only this obedience and compliance guaranteed human reason that it gets a stable and successful orientation for its thinking and acting.

### 2.3 Order under the primacy of absolute freedom

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This relation of order between absolute, objective, and subjective reasons breaks down at the end of the Middle Ages. This collapse was caused by the reception of Aristotle in the 12th century, a reception which was initiated by the Spanish-Muslim thinker Ibn Rushd, in Latin called “Averroes” (By the way: the Aristotelian philosophy of Averroes had great effects in the Christian world but was more or less ignored totally in the Muslim-Arab world whose philosophical thinking remained orientated on the neoplatonic metaphysics. Indeed, the way of thinking of the oriental and the occidental world begins to divorce at this historical point). However: With the reception of the original and not neoplatonic reinterpreted Aristotle the relation of order and freedom becomes a problem in the Western Philosophy.

This development has to do with the change in the consciousness of freedom in the late Middle Ages. The reasons for this development are originally theological. The relationship between the absolute reason of God, the objective reason of the world, and the finite subjective reason of man, which guaranteed the unity of order and freedom, at the end of the 13th century was made dubious by the *concept of absolute freedom of God*. The absolute freedom of God has already been discussed since the 10th century: the question was whether a God could be called free and omnipotent, whose will was determined and forced to follow always his own intellect. Ultimately there were religious-theological reasons, which led to a resolution of the unity of order and freedom as to the end of the medieval “ordo”-thinking. A God who has delivered the people, who granted forgiveness to the sinners, and is able to do miracles, acts ultimately not according to the measure of an eternal order, but his almighty actions must be thought as coming from divine freedom at all.

It was in particular William of Ockham, who developed the concept of freedom of God in a strong consequence, by distinguishing in God two powers in his acting: there is a divine acting with absolute power (*facere de potentia absoluta*) and otherwise there is a divine acting with ordained power (*facere de potentia ordinata*). I must explain these two forms of power a little bit:

*Potentia absoluta* means that the action of God must be thought as independent of any given order. His will and action is not given an order or must follow a law, but they are “above” any order in the sense of logical priority. Any order, even an eternal order, must be thought as intended by God’s will. Any order, even the eternal, can be logically reduced to an act of will.

The will is the origin of any order. But God’s absolute acting and order-setting is not “*inordinate*”, that means, without order or even against the order. Rather, his will is an order-producing will. And he acts then according to his self-given

order. He determines the actions corresponding to the desired order by himself. It is therefore one and the same will and one and the same action, which is free in one respect and order-related in another respect. In the perspective of God an act of absolute power (*facere de potentia absoluta*) always includes an act of order-related and order-setting power (*facere de potentia ordinate*) therefore not sufficient. And vice versa any *facere de potentia ordinata* includes a *facere de potentia absoluta*. Therefore freedom has the priority against order. There is no "absolute" order anymore. With this construct it is the first time in the Greco-Christian tradition that a real "new" order as anything "new" at all is conceivable and legitimate.

This simultaneity of "facere absolute" and "facere ordinate" was transmitted even by the theologians of the 14th century to the doctrine of human freedom, so that the freedom of man is thinkable in analogy to the double structure of the freedom of God - a transfer which was justified with the well-known "imago dei"-doctrine. An acting according to an order - if it is to be free action - must be established in an original act of pure freedom; but this free action is realized not "absolutistic", but as the production of order. Freedom is therefore, one might say, the legitimacy of order. The sense of order is the arranging and realizing freedom. This applies not only to the acting of God but to the acting of man, too.

#### 2.4 The universalization of the primacy of freedom in modernity

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What are the consequences of this doctrine of freedom for the development and the course of Modern Times? First of all, Ockham's doctrine is nominalistic and voluntaristic, because it is now thinkable that God produces merely single things, too, when he wants it. But in the view of the man: when there is the danger that there are purely single things without connection to ontological universals then it seems possible that the divine order and in consequence the objective order of the world is lack of coherence. The subjective reason of man encouraged by the doctrine of "imago dei" must for himself finally give himself an order. The function of God for science and the knowledge of man must be reinterpreted. We know the result: in modern time, we should make science "etsi deus non daretur", as if there would be no God. And we make all orders under the perspective: "etsi deus non daretur".

In the process of secularization of modern times, there happens a universalization of the primacy of freedom with respect to any order. In this process, human reason took the vacant place of God as the absolute reason. It sees itself as freedom and thus the secular heritage of the former theologically understood *facere*

*de potentia absoluta*. The human reason is the new origin and the sovereign author of any order and any legitimate law. Only the human reason gives law and order.

Ockham's nominalism dominated in the 14th and 15th centuries almost all European universities and influenced all areas of life and science. It was crucial for modernity that in the process of secularization the dominance of the question of God was restricted as unimportant. The theology had to give its leading position among the *scientiae* to the philosophy and the emerging sciences. The divine reason and in consequence the natural order of the world were no longer able to offer a reliable knowledge for the orientation of man. In this way the way was open to a universalization of the idea of freedom.

We can conclude: The man entered the former position of God and gave an order to the world. Every acceptable order must be an order of freedom. The man claims authority for any order setting in the course of modern times - regardless of divine and natural orders. The human reason is the new origin and the sovereign author of any order and legitimate law – in the field of science, education, politics, economics, art, society or in the field of morals.

In general, the human reason sees itself as the new lawgiver who has taken over the legislative competence from the old instances, namely theology and metaphysics. These releases rarely have the tendency to despotism, they are not chaotic or anarchic as we can see in several fields:

- For example, the modern understanding of market: the economic market is understood as a dynamic structure, organized by offer and ask, and regulated by freedom.
- For example, the modern state: the ruler is no longer seen as the earthly presence of God's rule, he must justify himself by contract theories. As all human beings are seen as reasonable they have the natural right to control the ruler who is not in possession of a higher form of reason. Democracy is the logical consequence. If the problem of freedom and order is abolished unilaterally in absolutism, then freedom provokes a whole new phenomenon: the revolution.
- For example, the modern science: the science of reason is not a "divine science" but a science "*etsi deus non daretur*". The problem of method is decisive for it, not the problem of an ultimate truth. Its object is not the being, but are the laws. Their motive is not the knowledge of God, but the curiosity ("*curiositas*"). But when it is no longer certain that God has created a reasonable order of the world, then the relation of human knowledge to God is no longer necessary in order to understand the world-structures. The human reason therefore must develop methods to find the structures of reality in a self-responsible manner.

- finally our understanding of history: the history is made by man and is the place of his freedom. It can be understood neither as fate nor as Providence, but as the self-representation of rational freedom in time. The story is simply the history of freedom, and the meaning of history is freedom. Hegel says in the introduction to the *“Lectures about the Philosophy of History”*: the “final end of the world” is “the reality of freedom”.

## 2.5 The misunderstanding of freedom and the depotentiation of reason and order

However, the primacy of freedom is not only a story of success. It also causes problems if freedom is set absolutely: If Freedom is not understood as transcendental as the primary condition of order but historically, it follows, that the reason must produce successively new laws, regulations, and orders to demonstrate its essence as absolute freedom. Freedom then is not understood as the unity of absolute and ordinate action, rather than making new things, as modernity of facts. “Change” becomes a value in itself, and historically valid can be only the New, again and again, how claims the postmodern philosophy. This infinite progressiveness of the New does not have a goal; it is due to a misunderstood absoluteness of freedom in the perspective of a negative freedom, which means an orderless independence of all and which forgets that freedom as autonomy is freedom, only if it produces real and concrete orders. Otherwise, freedom is a source of disorientation, as is impressively demonstrated in postmodernism. Therefore, the German philosopher Hermann Krings can speak of a “self-misunderstanding of reason as an absolute freedom”.

## 3 An order of freedom: “sapientis est ordinare”

We have seen that in modern times the model of absolute freedom, originally connected with the *potestas Dei*, is claimed by the human reason. This transformation is ambivalent. The man is not like God, also not if he sees himself as absolutely free. Man is a finite being; and though he claims his freedom as essential to order, it is nevertheless finite freedom. As such, the human reason needs the insight that freedom is always related to order. The problem of an unconditional, but finite freedom is the problem of Western modernity. These problems will only be avoided if freedom and law, freedom and order remain dialectically related to each other: For freedom without reference to a rational order is anarchy, chaos, and arbitrariness. Nevertheless, as a result of our history we cannot accept the reverse perspective any longer, an order without freedom.



The claim of freedom is unconditioned. This claim would remain general, formal, and empty without the attempt to realize it in practical systems of freedom, in the real and concrete orders made by man and which guide the real life of people. Freedom can only be realized by putting systems or orders as the condition of its existence. Nevertheless, there remains a tension between freedom and order that cannot be resolved: the concept of order means in principle a "totality of necessary rational relationships". That contradicts with the concept of freedom as "an absolute beginning ability". Order and freedom remain therefore in a permanent contradiction; this means that freedom is by its nature in opposite to all its realization in form of orders: the order of work, of law, of state. Freedom must contradict them necessarily. But this aporetic structure is the presupposition of its finite realization. That means: we can reach always only finite freedom in finite orders. The orders we found therefore have to be reformed continuously. Such finite orders are suitable for the realization of freedom only, if they reflect the basic contradiction of freedom and order in itself. It follows that neither human orders are unconditional perfect orders, nor that human freedom is realized totally in any kind of order. The pitfalls of this dilemma are the absolute reduction of freedom at the cost of the order, or vice versa, the absolute reduction of the order at the expense of freedom. To avoid these pitfalls, the relationship between order and freedom or system and freedom have to be determined dialectically.

The "deal of freedom" („*commercium libertatis*“), which is a dialectical one of finite freedom in finite orders, therefore, is always a very challenging, even exhausting business which has to deal continuously with certain dilemmas, aporias and problems. But sophisticated transactions require the wisdom and the wise. Thomas Aquinas mentioned: "*Sapientis est ordinare*": It is the task of wise man to establish or create order. When we read the sentence from the other way around then every emergence of finite order may be understood as a manifestation of wisdom. Wisdom is not an autonomous producer of order. But the wise man moderates the free forces in this game so that they can cooperate together freely and find an reasonable order of freedom.

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