

Albert Bazala's Compatibilism

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Summary

In 1910, in the journal *Hrvatsko kolo* of Matica Hrvatska, Albert Bazala published his article “O slobodi volje” [“On the freedom of the will”], in which he argues for compatibilism between free will and determinism. In this article, I analyze Bazala's compatibilism. I show that Bazala can be categorized as a classical compatibilist and that in his thinking about free will he was probably influenced by Locke and Wundt.

Key words: Albert Bazala, free will, compatibilism, classical compatibilism, determinism, John Locke, Wilhelm Wundt

Introduction

In 1910, in Croatia's leading cultural institution Matica hrvatska's official journal *Hrvatsko kolo*, Croatian philosopher Albert Bazala (1877 – 1947) published his article “On the freedom of the will”, wherein he proposes a compatibilist theory of free will. What makes Bazala's article historically and philosophically noteworthy are the arguments and concepts Bazala uses. They enlist him into the tradition of classical compatibilism that has among its members philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and the logical positivists. In my article, I do three things: First, I present Bazala's compatibilist theory; second, I argue that Bazala should be classified as a classical compatibilist by comparing his account to that of classical compatibilists; and third, I suggest that the two main influences on Bazala's compatibilism were probably Locke and Wundt.

Albert Bazala on free will

Bazala begins his article by evaluating and describing the free will problem, the question whether or not free will exists. He explicates and evaluates the problem itself and outlines solutions to it given by other philosophers. The descriptions of the problem and the solutions are sandwiched between their evaluation, so for the sake of easier understanding, I will first talk about Bazala's description of the free will problem and its solutions, and then about his evaluation. According to Bazala, two proposed answers have emerged from philosophizing about free will: indeterminism, the thesis that free will exists, and determinism, the thesis that free will does not exist:¹

“Indeterminism claims that the will is free; this means: man is in his desire independent from causes and influences; for even if some causes and reasons are always imposed upon the will, its decision is independent from them, so that, given the same conditions, it can decide to go hither and thither. The will thus decides regardless of motives. <...> Determinism represents the opposite view. According to it, the will is bound to motives, and necessarily comes about from man's character and the special circumstances he finds himself in. Anyone who would know all motives and all circumstances, could in each individual case determine, how the will had to decide.”²

The main point of contention between the two sides, on which the truth of their respective theses depends, Bazala detects in whether a person's will is causally independent of motives she has for her actions. Indeterminists hold that a person's will can proceed in this or that direction irrespective and independently of her motives, whereas determinists hold that a person's will can only proceed in the direction set by her motives and is in no way independent from them; the person's will is completely determined by her motives. Bazala then proceeds to illustrate the arguments that indeterminists and determinists use to argue for their positions. He first illustrates the argumentation of indeterminists:

¹ The contemporary philosophical terminology for these positions is libertarianism for indeterminism and hard determinism for determinism. Bazala's choice of terms “indeterminism” and “determinism” for designating the two positions is understandable, for the solution to the free will problem, as he understood it, depends on the truth of determinism. If determinism is false, we do have free will. If it is true, we do not. One who says that we do have free will believes that determinism is false, so “indeterminism” is an appropriate term to designate her position; and one who says that we do not have free will believes that determinism is true, so “determinism” is an appropriate term for her position.

² Albert Bazala, “O slobodi volje”, *Hrvatsko kolo* 6 (1910), p. 102, translation M. Gj. The author of this article donated Albert Bazala's article to the library of the Institute of Philosophy.

“Proponents of that position appeal mostly to the feeling of freedom; without the feeling of freedom there is – they say – neither responsibility nor accountability, neither deservingness nor sin. Freedom is required, thus, by moral conscience, and the proof of it lies in ethics, as Kant said.”³

To justify their thesis that free will exists, indeterminists appeal to the existence of two widely accepted phenomena that presuppose the existence of free will understood as the ability to do otherwise. The first phenomenon is our subjective sense of personal freedom. We have the impression that at the moment immediately prior to us performing an action, we could have either refrained from performing it, or we could have performed another action instead. If this were not the case, whence the impression? The second phenomenon is moral responsibility. To be justifiably held morally responsible by others, we must be able to refrain from actions for which we are held responsible. If we are genuinely morally responsible for our actions, as we seemingly are, how is this possible without the existence of free will? Bazala then turns to the argumentation of determinists:

“The evidence that man is not <free> is derived not only from the general law of causation but also from the appeal to the social connectedness of the individual and his dependency on society, on the influence of heredity, notable especially in pathological phenomena, and also on so-called moral statistics, which show that the average number of certain crimes, omissions, and even some other acts is fairly stable, that thus the desire of humans under relatively stable conditions manifests itself fairly equally.”⁴

To justify their thesis that free will does not exist, determinists also appeal to some widely accepted assumptions. The first is that our actions are governed by causal laws. While Bazala does not elaborate this elliptic argument, it is easy to infer what he means by it. If actions are caused by the will, which is in turn caused by a motive, then for this causal sequence, as any other causal sequence, there is a corresponding law and hence it is deterministic. Every effect of the sequence is made inevitable by its cause – the action by the will, the will by the motive. This entails that the will and its actions are fully dependent on the motive. The second assumption is that a person is a product of her social environment. Once again, Bazala does not elaborate the argument, yet it could easily be made more explicit. The second argument can be seen as a follow up to the first. The first argument aims to prove that there is no free will by establishing the existence of a deterministic link between, on the one hand, motives and, on

³ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

⁴ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

the other, the person's will and her actions. The second argument aims to buttress this by stating that the deterministic chain does not begin with a motive. A motive is a causal effect of social factors over which the person has no control; it is social factors that ultimately determine how a person acts since they determine her motives. Thus, according to determinism, a person has no control over her motives or over their source, namely, her upbringing. The third assumption is that we are determined in our actions by heredity. This, Bazala says, is most obvious in pathological phenomena. Bazala is not explicit about what he means by pathological phenomena, but from the manner in which he talks about the effect of heredity on free will in another part of the article, we can reasonably conclude that what he has in mind are mental illnesses and disorders like kleptomania, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and antisocial personality disorder.⁵ A kleptomaniac who has a compelling desire to steal cannot refrain from stealing. A person suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder experiences intrusive thoughts she cannot rid herself of, which compel her to perform actions such as handwashing and counting objects repeatedly and excessively. A person suffering from antisocial personality disorder displays aggressive and impulsive behavior that cannot be curbed even with punishment and threats. In each case the sufferer's will cannot but act in accordance with the motive implanted by a disorder that has an innate basis. To say otherwise – that indeterminism is true and that the disordered person can successfully resist motives that spring from her pathological innate condition is patently wrong. The fourth and final assumption is the predictability and regularity of human behavior given the same circumstances. If indeterminism were true, then the opposite would be the case. Humans would act differently in these circumstances each time and their behavior would not exhibit a predictable pattern. That this is wrong is clear from the moral statistic that the average crime rate is stable and consistent, which would not be the case if indeterminism were true.

Bazala says that both theses have something going for them, but they also have something going against them. Indeterminism, on the one hand, derives its plausibility from the subjective feeling of freedom, but it is in conflict with the fact that humans and their behavior are governed by causal laws and that they are determined by their upbringing and heredity, which is confirmed by the statistical predictability of their behavior.⁶ Determinism, on the other hand,

⁵ Bazala writes, p. 107: “[W]e know that we can succumb to a rush of drives, momentary affects, that habit can inhibit this ability for a longer period, that heredity may at times severely limit it, and in specific cases (with madmen and so-called born criminals) even completely abolish it <...>”, translation M. Gj.

⁶ *Ibid.*

derives its plausibility from these facts, but it has difficulties explaining the subjective feeling of freedom and gives no alternative basis for moral responsibility that is compatible with determinism.⁷

Here is Bazala's evaluation of the free will problem and his suggested solutions. The free will problem, Bazala writes, has "a larger history than content."⁸ Many philosophers throughout history tackled the free will problem and offered numerous unsatisfying solutions to it. The main reason for this unfortunate state of the discussion lies in the vagueness of relevant concepts like freedom, the will, etc. Compared to this vagueness, the lengthy history of attempts at solving the free will problem is in gross disproportion.⁹ As for the debate between the two main camps, the indeterminists and the determinists, Bazala says it is a fruitless exchange that consists solely in pointing out the flaws and weaknesses of the other camp. In other words, the philosophical discussion on free will up to this point has reached an impasse. The only meaningful conclusion that can be inferred is that the free will problem is either a pseudo-problem or is wrongly formulated and its solution is to be found elsewhere.¹⁰

Bazala believes that the free will problem is wrongly formulated, i.e., the reason why it remains unsolved is that the relevant concepts are vaguely and incorrectly defined, so he goes about offering his solution by redefining the concepts. He starts with the concept of freedom:

"Schopenhauer holds that the concept of freedom is negative; this means, as he always says, that something is absent. We talk about a free fall, when a body does not fall, e.g., down a slope, that would hinder its fall, but only in the air. We talk about free development, when a being develops uninhibited, in accordance with its nature. Freedom thus always means an absence of certain conditions, freedom *from something*."¹¹

Bazala defines freedom as the absence of obstacles. This, however, is only the negative component of his understanding of freedom. The positive component is the ability to act in accordance with one's nature:

"Thus no being can act differently than in accordance with its nature, in accordance with the laws of its essence, without thereby ceasing to be free; on the contrary, the more its manifestation is derived from its nature, the more it is free – because it is not prevented by external influences. Freedom is not lawlessness

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 101, translation M. Gj.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 102–103, translation M. Gj.

or randomness but the possibility of acting in accordance with law, nature, or authorization.”¹²

When both components are merged, we get a complete conception of freedom. Freedom, according to Bazala, is the *unencumbered* ability to act in accordance with one’s nature and proclivities. One is free when one acts as one wants to act without obstacles, whereas one is not free when one cannot act as one wants to act. Bazala distinguishes between two kinds of obstacles. External obstacles come from outside the agent, whereas internal obstacles manifest themselves within the agent. He gives an illustration:

“In this sense a man is free, if he can move his limbs without constraint – even if he cannot fly; he is also free when his mental life is not burdened with sick (pathological) disorders, even if he cannot glimpse into – the fourth dimension”¹³

This kind of freedom remains causal and is not in any way contrary to causality, but is a certain way of acting within causality; and because it is such, it is a kind of freedom that is compatible with causal determinism. One can be causally determined to act unencumbered, in accordance with one’s nature and proclivities:

“But then no one will be able to object, if we do not look for freedom *beyond causality or outside of law-abiding connectedness*. Freedom will then not be a *cause* of acting, nor a force that would be able to produce something, but merely a certain *kind of acting*. Freedom cannot break the chain of causes, as it does not stand above them, but is wholly immersed within them, as a certain way of acting valuable to us, i.e., we *qualify* certain actions as free.”¹⁴

Then, in this light of understanding freedom, Bazala proceeds to establish whether or not the human will is free. Preliminarily, he notes two relevant things that affect what the answer will be. The first is the nature of the will itself. The will is not independent, Bazala explains, but a shorthand for all desires a human being has. So the question whether or not the human will is free is actually the question whether or not humans have free desires. Consequently, free will is to be understood as the ability to have a free desire.¹⁵ The second is that desires are only one element of the human mind: aside from desires, there are also reflexes, instincts, and drives.¹⁶ These mental elements are hierarchically

¹² Ibid., p. 103, translation M. Gj.

¹³ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

¹⁴ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 103–104.

ordered depending on whether humans are aware of their nature-given purpose and whether humans consciously strive to achieve that purpose. Lowest in the hierarchy are reflex movements. They occur involuntarily as a reaction to some external stimulus and serve a meaningful purpose that does not require conscious awareness.¹⁷ Above them are instincts. Like reflexes, they serve a meaningful purpose that, once again, is not raised to the level of human awareness, yet humans may nevertheless consciously decide to satisfy instincts. In the case of drives, unlike with reflexes and instincts, humans are aware of their purposes, but because they are governed by strong emotions, humans decide to achieve these purposes impulsively and irrationally.¹⁸ Highest in the hierarchy are desires themselves. Decisions on how to act are here made on the basis of judgments that express a purpose, and the achievement of that purpose is the result of deliberation and clear judgment.¹⁹ The existence of other kinds of psychological activity is relevant for the question of free will because, as Bazala explains, desires are always in potential conflict with them, and at times, e.g., when a human is overcome with strong emotions like despair or fear, they win the battle over the desires and determine how a person decides to act.²⁰

Here, in order to shed light on what he regards as the true nature of freedom, Bazala criticizes the fundamental assumption shared by indeterminists and determinists about free will – that the will is free if and only if it is independent in its action from motives. Indeterminists hold that the human will is free in the sense that it can act independently of motives. Bazala offers a two-prong criticism of indeterminism. The first prong is that it is factually false that humans act independently of motives. Our introspection tells us that there are always motives behind actions.²¹ The second prong is that freedom and moral responsibility require that our will is determined by motives. He explains:

“Not only is such ‘freedom’ nothing more than an empty word, but it does not exist; our entire experience rules against it. It tells us that some reasons have always moved our will, and the more these reasons are clear and conscious to us, the more we think of the will as our own, while conversely, we look to evade responsibility where they elude us; and when we evaluate the actions of others, we always aim to find motives of their desire, for it seems impossible to us that there are no reasons moving it. With what confidence could we expect that an honest and important man will act as one ought to act, if his desire were unmotivated, if he were truly the master of ‘de vouloir et de non vouloir pas’ [‘to want

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

or not to want'] as indeterminism claims. Who would guarantee that the most honorable man will not now trample his honorable past and walk the path of dishonesty and malice, if we did not believe that strong motives, and persistent and to him precious principles keep him on the path of virtue? In the criticism of indeterminism, it is rightly emphasized: that not only is it false, but that if it were correct, we could not conceive a worse gift from nature than this kind of will. That would be sheer arbitrariness, extreme disjointedness, and insanity."²²

Determinists hold that the human will is not free as it cannot act independently of motives. Bazala both commends and criticizes determinists. He commends them for the true part of what they claim – namely, that the human will does not act independently of motives. This is confirmed by experience, and determinists repeatedly give data to support it.²³ He criticizes them for arriving at the conclusion on this basis that the human will is not free. According to Bazala, they commit two errors when they do this. The first is sticking to the assumption, also held by indeterminists, that the freedom required for free will is freedom from motives, which is a concept without content.²⁴ The second is an overly strong requirement for freedom. If one assumes that freedom is the ability to act unencumbered in accordance with one's nature, then having free will is not about whether or not a motive is present or absent, but about the quality of the motive. It is the quality of the motive that influences the will and determines if the will is free or not free.²⁵

To elaborate on the kind of motive that makes the will free, Bazala returns to the theory of the human psychological make-up he sketched earlier. He explains that humans have two cultures within themselves. One, which is primordial and shared with other organisms, is the "culture of instincts", i.e., instincts and drives. Like other living creatures, humans are under the influence of instincts and drives when they act. And when their acts are driven by such motives, they act impulsively, since the sensual and emotional content of instincts and drives compels them to act, and they act erratically as the direction of the desire constantly changes.²⁶ The other, endemic to humans, is the "culture of the will", i.e., conscious desire. At some point in human biological development, some instincts and drives disappeared and were replaced by conscious desire. Its repeated use by humans gave it an advantage over the remaining drives and

²² *Ibid.*, translation M. Gj.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

instincts, which became unreliable due to underuse.²⁷ The consequence of this has been that humans do not satisfy their biological needs as efficiently as other organisms, but there are two benefits to this trade off. The first is that humans no longer remain under the involuntary influence of their innate dispositions and urges. They are now able to resist them and control how they act and why they act. They are now able to act rationally. Various motives for various actions appear in their consciousness, and they choose the motive and the action.²⁸ Bazala illustrates this benefit and ability with the example of a child who studies, while also hearing his friends playing, which triggers in him motives for joining them as well as motives for continuing to study:

“Imagine the following: a student takes a seat to study; at that moment, the clamor and voices of his friends playing outside reach his ears; a pleasant sensation to join them will momentarily appear in him; now two things are possible: either the sensation will overwhelm him so that he will throw the book aside and rush to them *without thinking*, or the thought that he must finish his homework will appear in his consciousness because if he does not finish it, an inconvenience will befall him that is greater than the value of merriment at this moment; there will be a conflict of motives within him.”²⁹

The second benefit is that humans can rightfully claim their actions as their own. The conscious desire behind the action is not only affected by the present motive but also by the person's knowledge, prior experience, and deliberation about the future. This is achieved by being connected to prior desires. This makes actions connected to persons in a very intimate way and makes persons the authors of their actions.³⁰ Bazala anticipates a possible criticism against the existence of the culture of will, which is that there are some people who, for a short while, or for an extended period, or even permanently due to a pathology, act impulsively.³¹ He replies that it cannot be inferred that because some people temporarily, or even permanently lack this ability, then no one has this ability. It is undeniable and indisputable that humans can be influenced by their drives and instincts when they act, and that there are people who are mentally ill and cannot ever act rationally. But it is also undeniable and indisputable that humans can and do act rationally and resist their impulsive urges and drives.³²

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

²⁹ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., pp. 106–107.

This puts Bazala in the position to determine the freedom-making motive. This motive is a rational motive, derived from rational deliberation. Hence, every action that has this kind of motivation is free action.³³ He illustrates this with an example of two murderers, one who committed murder in a drunken stupor or a fit of rage, and one who made preparations for the murder before committing it:

“A man who kills another, e.g., in a fit of rage or a drunken stupor cannot be called fully free, for the functioning of reason was prevented by strong passion or alcohol; conversely, a man who sits in ambush and kills his neighbor with whom he quarreled a month ago acted deliberately, consciously: he thought about the most convenient place for his act and about its method, and certainly to conceal it and made – according to his judgment – the necessary preparations for it; that those preparations are not sufficient, that there are people more cunning and wiser and clever than him does not diminish in any way the *freedom* of his desire.”³⁴

This rational motive-based freedom Bazala divides further into two kinds, depending on the moral property of the rational motive. If the rational motive is a non-moral motive, then it is psychological freedom. If the rational motive is a moral motive, then it is moral freedom.³⁵ The two freedoms are not completely separate since psychological freedom is moral freedom to the degree that the reason-based desire is also mental.³⁶

Bazala proceeds to talk about the distribution of freedom so understood among humans and argues that it is uneven. While every human has the potential to be free in principle, in reality people differ with regard to their level of freedom.³⁷ Some people are open to reason, whereas others are impulsive and rash and closed off to reason. Bazala identifies two causes for the uneven distribution – the natural cause of different innate predispositions that determine our characters and the social cause of the environment in which people grow up, are raised, and receive their education.³⁸ Here Bazala adds that even the most rational person can, at times, succumb to her drives and act without freedom. For this reason, people have a normative task – to nurture themselves and other people into having free will.

“Freedom thus is not a dowry with which nature would endow us, but a heritage for which we must always fight anew; *freedom is not a gift but a task*. Nature has

³³ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁴ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

not endowed everyone equally to fulfill that task; to some – they are burdened mostly by the sins of their parents or one's own in Baccho et Venere [in drinking and love] with a heavy sickness – the possibility that they rise to a life of the mind is more or less taken away, to others in line with their natural gifts and abilities it is made harder to a greater or lesser extent, and only to some is the ascent into the kingdom of the mind easy. And even upon ascending must one not stand with arms crossed, for it will elude him – but must incessantly work to keep afloat at all turns of life. No one was born free, but everyone was born for freedom – it is the goal of human striving.³⁹

Finally, Bazala enumerates the positive features of the freedom he defends. A free person's entire inner life becomes one of labor, as the amount of freedom she will have is proportional to how much of her natural energy she succeeds in directing towards rational actions.⁴⁰ This freedom does not demand from the will to intervene into a course of events like *deus ex machina* for it to be free, but instead demands that the elements of that causal chain are perfected. This freedom is neither arbitrary nor random.⁴¹ And it solves the issue of compatibility of moral responsibility and determinism without reducing humans to mere cogwheels, but instead elevating them to the level of agents that can bring about positive change.⁴² On the aggregate level, the freedom of individuals leads to the freedom of the society they inhabit and the freedom of humanity.⁴³ And since rationality is a human feature, this freedom makes it possible for humans to truly become themselves.⁴⁴

Bazala's compatibilism and classical compatibilism

The term 'classical compatibilism' refers to the tradition of compatibilist thinkers in British and analytic philosophy that lasted from the mid-17th to the mid-20th century.⁴⁵ Among its members are British empiricist philosophers Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Mill and analytic philosophers Moore, Schlick, and Ayer. Classical compatibilists share certain assumptions and endorse certain arguments, making it justified to treat them as a tradition within compatibilism. In this section, I intend to show that Bazala endorses at least some of these

³⁹ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 109.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Bernard Berofsky, "Classical Compatibilism", in: Kevin Timpe, Meghan Griffith, Neil Levy (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Free Will* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 41.

assumptions and arguments, and that, therefore, classical compatibilist is the most appropriate qualification for him.

The most important assumption shared by and specific for classical compatibilists, is the deflationary understanding of free will as freedom of action. For classical compatibilists an agent is free if she is able to do what she wants to do unencumbered. Here is how freedom is defined by Locke, Hume, and Schlick:

Locke:

“All the Actions, that we have an Idea of, reducing them, as has been said, to these two, viz. Thinking and Motion, so far as a Man has a power to think, or not to think; to move, or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own Mind, so far is a Man free. Where-ever any performance or forbearance are not equally in a Man’s power; where-ever doing or not doing, will not equally follow upon the preference of his mind directing it, there he is not Free <...>.”⁴⁶

Hume:

“By liberty, then, we can only mean *a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of will*; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may.”⁴⁷

Schlick:

“Freedom means the opposite of compulsion; a man is free if he does not act under compulsion, and he is compelled or unfree when he is hindered from without in the realization of his natural desires.”⁴⁸

This understanding of free will as nothing more than freedom of action is characterized as deflationary; according to it, it is actions that can be free, and not the will. Classical compatibilists reject the notion and deny the possibility that the will may possess the attribute of freedom.⁴⁹

Here is how Bazala defines free will:

“Freedom thus always means an absence of certain conditions, freedom from *something*. <...> Thus no being can act differently than in accordance with its nature, in accordance with the laws of its essence, without thereby ceasing to be free; on the contrary, the more its manifestation is derived from its nature, the

⁴⁶ John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 143.

⁴⁷ David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 159.

⁴⁸ Moritz Schlick, “When is a Man Responsible?”, in: Bernard Berofsky (ed.), *Free Will and Determinism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 59.

⁴⁹ For instance, see Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, p. 145.

more it is free – because it is not prevented by external influences. Freedom is not lawlessness or randomness but the possibility of acting in accordance with law, nature, or authorization.”⁵⁰

As evidenced by the quote, Bazala shares a deflationary understanding of free will. For him, freedom consists in free action, which is both in accordance with one's nature or essence and unimpeded by things external to oneself. Like classical compatibilists, he does not attribute any special property to the will. He sees it as a mere collective term for desires and not as a separate substance with powers.

Another characteristic of classical compatibilists is that they find the compatibility of free will and determinism obvious, and that they believe incompatibilism is not a serious position. The most forceful expression of this stance is given by Schlick, for whom “this pseudo problem has long since been settled by the efforts of certain sensible persons”; he finds that “it is really one of the greatest scandals of philosophy that again and again so much paper and printer's ink is devoted to this matter”.⁵¹

What was the reason for classical compatibilists not to take incompatibilism seriously? They believed that it is based on various conceptual confusions. Hume said: “From this circumstance alone, that a controversy has been long kept on foot, and remains still undecided, we may presume, that there is some ambiguity in the expression, and that the disputant affix different ideas to the terms employed in the controversy” and that “This has been the case in the long disputed question concerning liberty and necessity”.⁵² For him “the whole controversy has hitherto turned merely upon words.”⁵³ Another classical compatibilist, R. E. Hobart, sees the supposed incongruency between free will and determinism as “based upon a misapprehension” and holds “that the two assertions are entirely consistent, that one of them strictly implies the other, that they have been opposed only because of natural want of the analytical imagination”.⁵⁴

That Bazala holds the same position, namely, that the reason for why one would endorse incompatibilism, is because she got her concepts (of freedom, determinism, or both) wrong can be inferred from three relevant passages. In the first, at the very outset of his article, Bazala diagnoses why the free will

⁵⁰ Bazala, “O slobodi volje”, p. 103, translation M. Gj.

⁵¹ Schlick, “When is a Man Responsible?”, p. 54.

⁵² Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, p. 148.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ R. E. Hobart, “Free Will As Involving Determination And Inconceivable Without It”, in: Bernard Berofsky (ed.), *Free Will and Determinism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 63–64.

problem endures despite so much work having been done on it by philosophers. The relevant concepts are vaguely defined:

“I found somewhere the written sentence: that philosophical concepts have a history but no content, and it seems to me somehow that the *free will problem* has a larger history than content. There is no important system in the history of philosophy that would not attempt to solve that problem in some way, but there is also no problem so indeterminate, so vague in traversing through the history of philosophy as this one. There is none precisely because no problem is in this way turned and bent, so that many human minds have dulled their sharpness on it but could not sever it. There is none with so many failed solutions as this one, entirely because of the indeterminacy of its content. For *its* content, it obviously has an overly large history.”⁵⁵

In the second passage, he states that there are two proposed solutions to the free will problem, both of which are incompatibilist:

“Thus, is there free will or not – this is how it was mostly asked, and the answers to that question go into two opposite directions, known under the names determinism and indeterminism. Indeterminism states that the will is free; <...> Determinism represents the opposite view.”⁵⁶

Lastly, in the third passage, commenting on the discussion between the members of the two incompatibilist camps, he says:

“The hollow debating in favor or against it then ceases to end and establishes its history only in the weaknesses and flaws of the opponent. The effort spent should alone suffice to convince us that the free will problem is either illusory or wrongly formulated and that its solution is to be sought in some other direction.”⁵⁷

From the three quoted passages emerges Bazala’s thesis on the free will problem: Philosophers who worked on the problem have not been able to solve it, but they have been certain that free will and determinism are incompatible. The reason why they have not been able to solve it is because the concepts used were vaguely and poorly defined. The solution is to give the concepts a precise definition, and when this is done, it turns out that free will, contrary to the prevailing consensus of philosophers who have worked on the problem, is compatible with determinism. Like Hume, Bazala thinks that “the whole controversy has hitherto turned merely upon words.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Bazala, “O slobodi volje”, p. 101, translation M. Gj.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 101–102, translation M. Gj.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102, translation M. Gj.

⁵⁸ Hume, p. 148.

There are further similarities between Bazala and classical compatibilists. The conceptual confusion that classical compatibilists charge incompatibilists with appears in Bazala's article. This concerns the confusion between causation in general and specific instances of causation like compulsion, coercion, and manipulation. Because these kinds of causation are incompatible with freedom, incompatibilists fallaciously infer that causation itself is incompatible with freedom. Thus, for instance, Hobart writes that the "opposite of the universal validity of a formula, of the existence of a law, is the nonexistence of a law, indeterminism, acausality; while the opposite of compulsion is what in practice everyone calls "freedom"', and Ayer writes that "while it is true that being constrained to do an action entails being caused to do it, I shall try to show that the converse does not hold."⁵⁹

Nowhere in his article does Bazala accuse incompatibilists of conflating causation with constraint, compulsion, or coercion. However, he shares the assumption of that criticism that freedom is not incompatible with causation but with certain kind of causes:

"But according to our understanding that freedom is the absence of some conditions, together with simultaneous connectedness to some innate or essentially authorized conditions, free will shall not be assessed in virtue of the *presence or absence* of motives but in virtue of the *quality of present* motives. That the will bows to the stronger motive does not yet make the will unfree, before we know what *kind* of motive this stronger motive is – for the will is ascribed *value, which we designate as freedom*, in accordance with the quality of that motive. Hence, we are not concerned about whether or not the will is motivated, but about how it is motivated."⁶⁰

Another conceptual confusion that, according to classical compatibilists, incompatibilists are guilty of, concerns the concept of freedom. Indeterminists fail to distinguish between various kinds of freedoms and so incorrectly identify contra-causal freedom, which is either incoherent or impossible, as the kind needed for free will, when in actuality it is freedom of action that is the relevant kind of freedom. Hume distinguishes between what he calls the liberty of spontaneity and the liberty of indifference, between "that which is oppos'd to violence, and that which means the negation of necessity and causes."⁶¹ The

⁵⁹ Hobart, "Free Will As Involving Determination And Inconceivable Without It", p. 58 and Alfred Jules Ayer, "Freedom and necessity", in: Alfred Jules Ayer, *Philosophical Essays* (London – Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1954), p. 278.

⁶⁰ Bazala, "O slobodi volje", p. 105, translation M. Gj.

⁶¹ David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 262.

liberty of spontaneity is often conflated with the liberty of indifference, and Hume finds the latter freedom absurd and unintelligible.⁶²

Like Hume, Bazala distinguishes between two kinds of freedoms, freedom from motives, which is noncausal, and freedom of action, which is causal; and like Hume, he deems the first freedom impossible and absurd:

“By claiming that the will is independent from external influences, as well as from internal motives, indeterminism wants to have simply ‘freedom’. Not only is such ‘freedom’ nothing more than an empty word, but it does not exist; our entire experience rules against it. It tells us that some reasons have always moved our will, and the more these reasons are clear and conscious to us, the more we think of the will as our own, while conversely, we look to evade responsibility where they elude us; and when we evaluate the actions of others, we always aim to find motives of their desire, for it seems impossible to us that there are no reasons moving it.”⁶³

A further thesis of classical compatibilists and their criticism of libertarianism is that moral responsibility requires determinism. Classical compatibilism was particularly active during the period in which indeterministic causation was not considered a viable concept, so indeterminism was understood as opposing causation. Classical compatibilists argue that responsibility for an action entails that one had control over it, and one cannot have control if one has not caused it. Hume, for example, asserts that determinism is necessary for both the efficiency of laws and for personal moral responsibility. Laws regulate human behavior with the promise of rewards and punishments for their deeds – it is assumed that the motive to be rewarded and the motive to avoid punishment are causes that make people do good deeds and avoid doing bad ones. Indeterminism would break the causal connection between reward and punishment and human actions, and hence lift any relevant weight from such laws.⁶⁴ As for moral responsibility, Hume explains that we ascribe it to people because we believe their actions causally originate from their character and dispositions. If that causal link is severed, we have no valid reason to hold people accountable for their actions. This causal link between actions and character is important because actions are temporary, so they have to be connected to something more permanent in us like our character; otherwise, we have no basis for holding people accountable for what they do.⁶⁵ Another compatibilist, R. E. Hobart,

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Bazala, “O slobodi volje”, p. 104, translation M. Gj.

⁶⁴ Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, pp. 263–264.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 264.

argues for the necessity of determinism for moral responsibility from a different angle. He attacks the libertarian idea of an agent who is morally responsible because her self is undetermined by motives and character. This kind of agent cannot be considered responsible for her actions, for the agent's character is the very basis for holding her morally accountable. An action cannot be considered good if it does not originate from the agent's goodness. Thus, in actuality, the libertarian undercuts the basis of moral responsibility instead of enabling it by adding indeterminism into the mix.⁶⁶

Bazala's version of the claim that moral responsibility presupposes determinism is similar to Hobart's. Like Hobart, Bazala argues that the determination of an agent's desires by motives is needed for responsibility, the reason being that without the determination, an agent would not behave consistently, but erratically:

“With what confidence could we expect that an honest and important man will act as one ought to act, if his desire were unmotivated, if he were truly the master of “de vouloir et de non vouloir pas” as indeterminism claims. Who would guarantee that the most honorable man will not now trample his honest past and walk the path of dishonesty and malice, if we did not believe that strong motives, and persistent and to him precious principles keep him on the path of virtue? In the criticism of indeterminism it is rightly emphasized: that not only is it false, but that if it were correct, we could not conceive a worse gift from nature than this kind of will. That would be sheer arbitrariness, extreme disjointedness, and insanity.”⁶⁷

With all these shared assumptions and similarities between Bazala and classical compatibilists, we are led to the conclusion that Bazala is a classical compatibilist.

Possible influences on Bazala's compatibilism and their implications

That Bazala was a classical compatibilist can be fairly easily established. Figuring out who his philosophical and non-philosophical influences were is more difficult, and only an educated guess can be made. First, let us look at his philosophical influences. They cannot be established with certainty as Bazala does not explicitly mention them, nor does he provide any sources referring to them. His article lacks both footnotes and a bibliography. He does quote or

⁶⁶ Hobart, “Free Will As Involving Determination And Inconceivable Without It”, pp. 68–69.

⁶⁷ Bazala, “O slobodi volje”, p. 65, translation M. Gj.

mention three philosophers: Fichte, Kant, and Schopenhauer, but only to illustrate points, and he never provides the sources of their claims:

“To some it seemed that the value of human life depends on free will; as Fichte says: ‘Only a system of freedom satisfies; an opposing one kills and destroys the heart. To stand dead and cold in mere observation of changing circumstances, to be a dead reflection of fleeting characters – that is an unbearable being.’⁶⁸

“Freedom is required, thus, by the moral conscience, and the proof of it lies in ethics, as Kant says.”⁶⁹

“Let us start with the concept of freedom. Schopenhauer holds that the concept of freedom is negative.”⁷⁰

However, in the second volume of Bazala’s history of philosophy that came out in 1909, a year prior to his article on free will, he writes something that might shed light on the issue. There Bazala covers British empiricists. Here is what he says about Locke’s view on free will:

“This requirement is directed <...> at Locke’s understanding of *freedom*. The will – as it was said – is moved by sensations, and in the distance as its goal floats bliss. It therefore certainly determines the will, as it is also determined by rational motives. Thus, the will is not free, if by that we mean that it is independent from motives; that is why it is incorrect to talk about freedom of will, for in the act of the will there is no freedom, the latter lies only in whether or not man in his *actions* satisfies his will, and even that freedom only reaches within the reach of the power to carry something out (or not) . Hence, this freedom is only some greater or smaller *self-determination* of man according to how much ability we have to determine our acts through thinking and insight into what is superior. Thus, this is about aligning our mental forces while acting so that every sudden, unusual burst of irrational capacities, like passions and strong affects that do not allow for calm, healthy reasoning, is quelled or at least impeded.”⁷¹

Locke’s compatibilist account of freedom in this passage highly overlaps with Bazala’s compatibilist account. It perceives the will as being determined by motives, and it understands freedom as rationally motivated action and unfreedom as irrationally motivated action. This overlap strongly suggests that Bazala was influenced in his compatibilism by Locke. Also, if this influence is true, it cements Bazala’s connection and allegiance to classical compatibilism, for he was directly influenced in his thinking about free will by the ideas of one of its proponents.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 101, translation M. Gj.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 102, translation M. Gj.

⁷⁰ Ibid., translation M. Gj.

⁷¹ Albert Bazala, *Povijest filozofije: Svezak II* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1909), pp. 266–267.

Another author that may have had both philosophical and non-philosophical influence on Bazala was Wundt. It is generally known that Bazala was very interested in psychology. His doctoral dissertation was in psychology, he held lectures on psychological topics during his professorship at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb up until his retirement, and he spent time between 1906 and 1907 at Wundt's Institute for experimental psychology in Leipzig.⁷² This strongly suggests that we must take Wundt into consideration when talking about influences on Bazala's thinking.

We will first take a look at Wundt's philosophical influence on Bazala. Wundt wrote about free will in his book *Ethics*. It will not be necessary for us to give a detailed exposition of Wundt's thinking on free will; it should suffice to present relevant ideas to assess the level of Wundt's influence. Wundt distinguishes between two types of causality, mechanical and psychic. Mechanical causality governs the external world, while psychic causality governs the mental life of an individual.⁷³ The opposite of freedom is coercion, not causality, and the claim that causality is antithetical to freedom is a result of not being able to clearly distinguish between mechanical and psychic causality.⁷⁴ Freedom according to Wundt is the ability to be determined by self-conscious motives when acting, self-consciousness here being defined as the awareness of one's own personality and self-conscious acting as acting with awareness of the meaning that motives and purposes have for the agent's character.⁷⁵ A dreamer or a mentally ill person are not self-conscious, and thus not free, because they are either unable to reflect their character, or their character has been altered by a problematic external influence.⁷⁶ What underlies freedom is psychic causality, and coercion occurs when psychic causality is partially or completely obstructed by other causes.⁷⁷ An agent acts freely in the moral sense when, in her actions, she is following her inner causality that stems from her starting disposition and from the way her character has developed, while she is unfree if her actions are led by motives coming from a different source. In that case, she is governed by drives that are brought about by motives that momentarily appear in her consciousness.⁷⁸ A completely developed character, one that is never subjugated

⁷² Vladimir Filipović, "Filozofska misao Alberta Bazale", *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske baštine* 4 (1978), p. 14, n. 1.

⁷³ Wilhelm Wundt, *Ethik. Eine Untersuchung der Tatsachen und Gesetze des sittlichen Lebens* (Stuttgart: Verlag von Ferdinand Enke, 1886), p. 405.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

to interferences and changes, so that when it acts, it acts uniformly without deviation and it can be predicted how it will respond to a specific motive, is an unachievable ideal of freedom. It is used as an idea for evaluating the wills of others and for directing our own.⁷⁹ Our development of character starts from external factors, our heredity, our upbringing, and our life experience, and ends with self-development by means of our will. By performing a volitional act, we have created a disposition to perform a similar act in the future.⁸⁰

Like Bazala, Wundt was a determinist and a compatibilist, but this is where their similarities seem to end. Bazala adopts a basic notion of causal determinism, whereas Wundt operates on a distinction between mechanical and psychic causal determinism. Bazala defines free action as action determined by a rational motive, Wundt as action determined by a self-conscious motive. Bazala's model of agency is a single-cause model where the agent's motives via her will cause her actions; Wundt's is a double-cause model: actions are caused by both the agent's motives and the agent's character. While Bazala holds that the motive has its origin in character, he does not give it a causal role distinct from that of motives, like Wundt does.

What about Wundt's influence as a psychologist? Bazala's account of the human psyche as consisting of reflexes, drives, instincts, and desires, as well as how they interact with each other and determine human actions, is of a scholar with a background in psychology. The psychological source that Bazala consulted was probably Wundt. It is even possible that Bazala's dichotomy of the two cultures residing in humans was inspired specifically by Wundt's account of human nature contained in his compatibilist account of free will in *Ethics*. Wundt mentions drives as that which makes people behave unfree and has its origin in "the darkness of individual natural proclivity."⁸¹ Like Bazala, Wundt thinks that there is a duality of freedom and unfreedom in us. Bazala perhaps adopted this duality and expanded upon it.

If one were to accept that Bazala was influenced by Locke and Wundt, then this says something more about Bazala's compatibilism. It was not simply classical compatibilism, but a fusion of a philosophical account and empirical science. Bazala combined Locke's compatibilism with Wundt's compatibilism and psychology. His compatibilism was scientifically informed and was made more plausible as a result.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 410, translation M. Gj.

Conclusion

The analysis of Bazala's article has unearthed something of considerable historical value, namely, that there is a classical compatibilist in Croatian philosophy. Like other classical compatibilists, Bazala endorses certain theses about free will and determinism: that free will is nothing more than freedom of action, that the incompatibility of free will and determinism is based on an incorrect understanding of these concepts, that freedom is incompatible with certain kinds of causes, not causation itself, that freedom beyond causality is impossible and absurd, and that moral responsibility requires determinism. Also, the analysis suggests that Bazala was most likely influenced by a classical compatibilist – Locke. Locke held that rational motives make agents free in their actions. Bazala shares this assumption. The analysis suggests that another possible influence on Bazala was Wundt. Wundt says that there is a duality of freedom and unfreedom present in human nature, which Bazala echoes. If this is true, then it can be said that Bazala fused Locke's compatibilism and Wundt's psychological theory. He made compatibilism more tangible and hence more plausible by making it scientifically informed.

Kompatibilizam Alberta Bazale

Sažetak

Alberta Bazala objavio je 1910. godine u časopisu *Hrvatsko kolo* Matice hrvatske članak »O slobodi volje« u kojem zagovara kompatibilizam između slobode volje i determinizma. U ovom članku analiziram Bazalin kompatibilizam i pokazujem da se Bazalu može svrstati u klasične kompatibiliste te da su na njegovo razmišljanje o problemu slobode volje vjerojatno utjecali John Locke i Wilhelm Wundt.

Ključne riječi: Albert Bazala, sloboda volje, kompatibilizam, klasični kompatibilizam, determinizam, John Locke, Wilhelm Wundt

