

In Russian conceptual space the notion of *volya* combines the idea of ‘doing one’s will’ with the image of unobstructed spatial openness. The spatial connotations of the word suggest that the earliest understanding of freedom was visualized as an unlimited expanse, providing a necessary horizon for the free exercise of one’s will. *Volya* is thus understood as an inner, subjective state of the mind, being prior to and constituting the ground of any freedom in the more limited sense, e.g., political or legal freedom, which is normally indicated by another Russian term ‘*svoboda*’. Further semantic and visual associations of the term *volya* include such concepts and images as sky, flight, wind, bird, open space, light, and happiness (N. Petrovyh, 2002). ‘*Svoboda*’, on the other hand, connotes the ideas of equality, law, democracy, choice, independence (*Ibid.*). Despite being close synonyms in contemporary Russian language, on a deeper analysis the terms ‘*volya*’ and ‘*svoboda*’ still preserve a hint of the ancient semantic antagonism, where ‘*volya*’ is understood as an original ethnic feature of the specifically Russian consciousness, and ‘*svoboda*’ refers to a superimposed, or even foreign, understanding of freedom.

The fact that *volya* can be translated both as ‘freedom’ and ‘will’, the expression “freedom of will” can be reasonably seen as a platitude, and the denial of freedom of will – as an oxymoron. One suggestion is that the term thus captures the ‘folk-psychological’ conviction that questioning the freedom of human will borders on incoherence. (Andrei Zavaliy)

***Literature:***

*Petrovyh, N. M. The Concepts of ‘Volya’ and ‘Svoboda’ in Russian Linguistic Consciousness (in Russian). Петровых Н. М. Концепты воля и свобода в русском языковом сознании. Известия Уральского государственного университета. 2002, № 24, С. 207-217.*