

Freedom from What?!

by Timothy ©

Now's the perfect time to understand as deeply as possible not only what the word freedom really means, but also what it feels like to be truly free or self-actualized. As a human being, you need to know the true nature of the ideal that people throughout the world freely call upon to justify every kind of activity from seeking God (as religious organizations are supposed to help you do) to spreading hatred. Unfortunately, the word freedom is extremely hard to grasp because it's so abstract. In fact, freedom gets defined in so many unrelated ways that in a sense it has become practically meaningless.

Freedom has nothing whatsoever to do with the human ego or personality as we know it. Therefore, if you leave it to the rational mind to unravel the mystery of freedom, you'll fall hopelessly short in your understanding unless you discuss the concept in terms of autonomy. Autonomy is a measure of our ability to make choices and is a close relative of true freedom.

Three Levels of Freedom

As a human, you're designed to function consciously on the body, mind and spirit planes of existence. Whereas only relative freedom (autonomy) is available to you on the body and mind planes, true freedom is the norm on the spirit level.

Body -- On the physical level, Freedom of Action is the primary manifestation.

Freedom of action is a relative state referring simply to "the right to live as we wish," or the ability to perform actions without having to submit to restrictions imposed by societal or institutional rules. In other words, freedom of action is the ability to pursue a wide range of action goals without having to seek permission from others. This form of freedom, when exercised intelligently, leads to the building of thriving communities and institutions.

The flip side of being able to do whatever you wish, however, is that anarchy, chaos, and/or poor health will eventually result when you insist on acting freely in ways that can harm yourself or others. Murder, torture, carjacking, mugging, burglary, embezzlement, extortion, money laundering, rioting, vandalism, and looting are some examples of anarchistic acts that strain the fabric of our society's social relationships. The perpetrators of these types of acts do whatever they wish, thereby imposing their will on others (often indiscriminately). The negative consequences of these kinds of freely performed actions are obvious. Unfortunately, the use of artificial stimulants such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and the excessive consumption of unhealthy foods also represent the flip side of freedom of action, as do overindulgence in sex, work, recreation, or in just about anything else. These activities, while they may or may not directly victimize others, result in all kinds of health problems. Generally, you choose these actions out of mere habit or based on powerful impulses to gratify your senses instead of first gaining a clear understanding of what your body really needs in order to function most effectively.

The laws of every nation are designed to minimize the negative effects of freedom of action by regulating individual decision-making authority. A system or institution that gives its members a high degree of flexibility in deciding their group or individual actions

can be classified as highly decentralized or autonomous. But the degree of centralization within a system or institution doesn't necessarily provide an accurate view of how much freedom certain individuals and/or groups may have within that system. For instance, distinctions in the social, economic, and political treatment of different groups (categorized by ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, etc.) can create severe restrictions in the freedom of action enjoyed by members of relatively low status groups. This, of course, is as true in the United States as it is anywhere else, even if the ways of controlling citizens' actions are not always as overtly repressive as they sometimes are in more authoritarian political systems. Psychological oppression, although subtler and sometimes harder to detect than physical abuse, can be more devastating in the long run.

Mind -- *On the level of mind, Freedom of Thought is the dominant manifestation.*

Freedom of thought is the idea that your freedom can be measured by the degree to which you can think whatever you want without fear of being punished or of having your privacy invaded by prying authority figures. Like freedom of action, freedom of thought can be tremendously creative when properly directed, or highly destructive when misdirected toward limiting and selfish goals.

We humans are creatures of habit. This is an especially important statement in relation to freedom of thought because all habits are developed through a process of mental repetition. Any thought or feeling that you repeat consistently enough eventually works its way into your everyday actions. Also, the habit formation process is the same for all habits, regardless of whether they are beneficial or harmful. Therefore, if you insist on exercising your autonomy to think unhealthy or harmful thoughts, you'll unknowingly limit or destroy your own life. Whenever your thoughts add unnecessary

limits to your life rather than eliminating those limits, the unfortunate result is mental slavery, which I define as an addiction to counterproductive impulses and urges that lead to self-destructive and hurtful life choices.

Sometimes we mistake freedom of thought for freedom of the spirit, because thoughts are the secret initiators of actions and most people can't imagine a state of being beyond thought. When you err in that way, you inhibit your own vision of what it would take to fulfill your human potential. This in turn stifles your ability to know your true self, which naturally causes you to misperceive the powerful impact of your thoughts on your life circumstances.

Spirit -- *On the level of spirit, Freedom of the Spirit is the only reality. It's also the only true freedom.*

Freedoms of action and of thought are recognizable by the double-edged fruits that they bear. Specifically, they're double-edged because on the positive side, they can help create conditions that support the pursuit of spiritual freedom. But they can also help create a false sense of contentment for those who embrace freedom to act and to think as the ultimate freedoms.

Freedom of the spirit, however, has no disadvantages. While this true form of freedom is actually beyond words, we can still define it as the **total acceptance of (surrender to) life as it is, without any obligation to identify with concepts produced by the mind.** In fact, this is the only authentic form of freedom because in this state your previously unshakable thought, speech, and behavior habits cease to dominate your life. Additionally, the awakened state of consciousness that I call freedom of the spirit is both the process and the result of self-knowing (finding your true identity). Self-knowing is

the total awareness of and attention to the total contents of your own consciousness without attachment to or rejection of those contents. In other words, self-knowing is seeing and understanding yourself as you are -- **self-love** in its most profound sense. In order to see (love) yourself in this way, you mustn't be discouraged by the fear of any ugliness that may occupy a part of your character, or by the fear of giving up cherished but destructive thought patterns and ideals. Instead, you must learn to forgive yourself first, and then others, for not being perfect.

By successfully releasing these fears, your reality will reflect a sense of newness and vastness that'll instill in you an indescribable feeling of connectedness to yourself and to your surroundings. As you'll recognize if you observe your thoughts regularly, such a high level of self-awareness and attention is tricky to discuss but even trickier to experience. Nevertheless, this message is dedicated to helping you overcome the seemingly endless list of barriers between you and your spiritual freedom. After all, only from such a posture of spiritual freedom can you discover your true worth in the bank of life.

Q: What role does happiness play in all of this?

A: Any attempt to discuss the meaning of freedom would be incomplete without a related discussion of happiness. After all, why seek freedom unless its achievement will satisfy you? Every living creature on this earth, from an ameba to a human being, carries within it the inborn desires to live and to be aware at all waking moments that it's alive. But simply living and knowing we're alive aren't nearly enough for humans. We also want -- in fact; we need -- to be happy, to feel bliss.

Unfortunately, just like with the word freedom, a lot of confusion seems to center around the meaning of the word happy. For some of us, happiness means sharing loving moments with friends and family. For others, it means participating in a favorite activity, such as making pottery or playing in a band. For still others, happiness comes from achieving a dearly held goal, such as winning a championship, passing an important exam, or closing a big sale. There are even some people for whom happiness isn't a fleeting emotional high but instead is a consistent state of mind resulting from long practice in the art of positive thinking and balanced living.

Dictionary definitions of the word happy include all of these perspectives. But no matter how you choose to define happiness, there's one quality common to all: happiness always involves an experience of contentment, serenity, or pleasure. In fact, every person living on this planet is interested in experiencing different kinds of enjoyment while simultaneously trying to avoid pain in its endless forms. That's because seeking pleasure and avoiding pain are inescapable parts of the human mind/body's nature, as are breathing, eating, and eliminating waste materials from our bodies. Feeling good is simply something that we must do.

The problem is that when you reduce your essential expression of happiness to an endless search for physical and emotional pleasure, you create all kinds of misery and mischief for yourself and others. Only when you understand the connection between your root nature and how it expresses itself on the mental and physical levels, can you permanently free yourself from enslavement to an endless range of subtle but devastating desires for sense gratification.

The Source of all creation is eternally pure joy. Accordingly, all beings and objects exist as an incredibly vast dream or thought projection of this nameless, incomprehensible Source. The Kybalion, a commentary on seven of the basic universal principles underlying the creation process, summarizes this idea in the statement, "the universe is mental."

Even a fundamental examination of Planet Earth shows you that the elements (earth, water, air, fire, and ether) out of which all matter is formed are themselves made of atoms (energy). Atoms come together to form molecules. These, in turn, form objects and bodies (matter). Meanwhile, the force that holds matter/energy together is consciousness itself. Besides Lightworkers and other spiritual healers, quantum physicists are learning more and more about this information regarding the properties and activities of atoms. Slowly but surely (actually, with increasing speed), the human family is piecing together the puzzle that explains why the entire material creation, with its countless heavenly and earthly bodies, operates according to intricate, intelligent patterns that can be represented by mathematical models.

If you put these basic scientific facts together, you can clearly see why "the universe is mental." After all, if consciousness is the force of attraction which holds atoms together to form the molecules that form matter, then obviously all matter -- at its root -- must actually be consciousness that takes specific forms for specific purposes. This simple yet revolutionary idea also applies to living beings at all levels of the chain of life. The inescapable conclusion in all of this is that an intelligence (no matter what name we call it) vaster than the ego consciousness of humanity is responsible in the most intimate way for the design, building, operation, and maintenance of the entire physical

creation. The relationship between spirit and matter is made intimate by the following fact: This infinite intelligence (pure consciousness) is the root substance out of which everything and everyone is made! In other words, we ARE consciousness in a materialized form.

The importance of this knowledge is that it enables you to unravel the mystery of your relationship to the Source by helping you realize that the entire creation is actually made of the substance referred to as spirit. Just as countless tiny drops of water together form the great oceans on this planet, humans and all other created phenomena appear and disappear like waves on the vast ocean of spirit/consciousness. That ocean sustains us because it is our foundation and our essence. True freedom is living in the constant awareness of that ocean as your home. And this is your heart's happiness!