

## Freedom

Freedom is an extremely broad subject. I could write about freedom of speech, expressing your own opinions without having to fear any persecution. I could tell you about freedom of movement, freedom as the opposite of imprisonment. In extension of this, you can consider freedom in a geopolitical sense, as independence. There is, of course, freedom in its most basic definition, the way it is perceived by small children and, which is far more dangerous, by some adults. Those people are convinced that being free means that you can do whatever you want without having to justify yourself to anyone.

All of those subjects would be fascinating to write about. However, I will write about something entirely different. The first thing that comes to my mind when I hear the word 'freedom', is a quote from the song 'Bobby McGee' by Kris Kristofferson. The first line of its chorus is '*Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose*'. And I find myself inevitably agreeing to this statement, though it is not the way I would like to think about such a beautiful concept. In our society, freedom is supposed to be something inherently positive, something anyone should be able to experience, because it is considered one of the keys to happiness. But I personally think that no one can ever be truly happy while being entirely free.

That might sound strange, but consider this for a minute: could anyone be happy if they had nothing left to lose? Imagine having nothing and no one left to care about. Imagine not having any friends, no family, no home, no passions, no job. That seems to me a pretty accurate description of *unhappiness*. So if that's freedom, how can we consider freedom a condition for happiness? The answer is simple: when you care about someone, or something, you feel responsible for them. And that is the core of the problem: everyone wants to escape that sense of responsibility at some point in their lives.

Everyone worries about their children, or partner, or friends, and most people would never think about sacrificing them for the sake of their own freedom. Some people do, though, and look where that brings them. Does a man who abandons his wife and children feel happier? Does a person who betrays their lover or friend, wanting to start anew, feel good? No, they don't! They are, indeed, free for a while, but they are never truly happy until they find another person to bind themselves to, thus resigning their freedom.

Those are quite extreme examples, but there are also other, less obvious things that inspire a sense of responsibility. When, at work, you work on something you find interesting, you feel responsible for the project being accomplished well. Evidently, there are times when you just want to give up on it, but you don't, because you know you will be unhappy if the project fails. Money is another, more materialistic example. You are responsible for taking good care of your money, because in our society, money is indeed something that can make you happier.

Most people will agree that those last examples are the ones that everyone finds annoying. Who hasn't ever thought about quitting a job, even though they found it interesting, just because they couldn't take the pressure anymore? Who wouldn't like to throw caution in the wind and stop worrying about their money? Who doesn't want to be free of responsibility once in a while?

But nobody ever does it. And we all know why that is. It is because the things we feel responsible for are what gives us a sense of accomplishment. Though that project may have been mightily difficult work, you still feel euphoric when it is a success. And you might have wanted to stop worrying about your money, but doesn't it feel so good when you've finally saved enough to make that journey you have always dreamed of? Or when you can buy your partner that special little

something that makes them smile, and just knowing they're happy makes you feel incredible inside?

That brings us to, according to me, the most important reason why freedom can never lead to true happiness. It is because freedom is incompatible with love. When you love something, or mostly someone, you are never free of them. They're always there in the back of your mind, reminding you to think of them, to take care of them. You feel responsible for them, but that's positive, because you just want to make them happy, and their happiness makes you happy.

This shows us that, in some way, we are imprisoned by love. This might seem quite an unappealing concept to people who find freedom important. But have those people ever looked at it this way? If you surrendered all the things you love, you would, indeed, be free. You would also be very unhappy.

We all agree on the fact that love is an essential condition for happiness, but loving someone also means feeling responsible for them. As the concept of responsibility is not compatible with that freedom, I can conclude that it is not possible to be entirely free and truly happy at the same time. So ask yourself this: if you had to choose between happiness and freedom, what would you pick? To me, the answer is pretty obvious.

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