

# FREEDOM AND ITS LIMITATIONS

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The topic of freedom is and has always been fascinating for most of humankind since its origins.

In our modern times, we experience that this phenomenon becomes ever more important, sophisticated, and present in our actual daily lives than in any previous time in human history. There are many discussions about the upcoming so-called “Age of Aquarius,” and the growing importance of freedom is clearly a dominant feature of the astrological sign Aquarius.

In modern times, the phrase “freedom” has a clear meaning, the shortest is probably: “freedom is the right to think, speak, and act as one wants.” Other definitions include that freedom is the ability to change, and this is truly a fascinating idea: we rarely connect freedom with the ability to change, so it may be interesting and useful to contemplate and meditate on this topic.

I was actually born on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain that once divided Europe, and grew up in communist Hungary, so the concept of basic freedom is extremely dear to me. We were naturally

free to think as we wanted, but definitely not free to talk or act as we wanted. I can still remember sitting with my parents in a room in our flat that is the furthest from the neighbors while our family was trying to listen, at a low volume, to Western European free radio stations for the real news. I can also recall crossing the border to free Austria with my heart rumbling over how we would be searched, and whether we would finally be allowed to cross the border at all, which we were allowed to do only every three years as tourists.

I am sure each of us has at least a few smaller or bigger personal stories regarding freedom.

## **A Glance at the History of Freedom**

From the very dawn of human history there were fights and wars between tribes and nations and thus there have always been winners and losers. Losers, much more often, than not, were made servants or slaves or simply considered as a group of people with less rights, thus, less freedom.

In the ancient Mediterranean there were many types of slavery, but even



*A demonstration at the national television headquarters in Budapest, Hungary, on March 15, 1989.*

free ancient Roman citizens had different degrees of freedom. In ancient Rome, women had less rights than men, and Roman citizen children had predominantly prearranged marriages.

This inequality continued further into Medieval times. It is a sad fact that even today degrees of freedom differ greatly in many countries, in many families, or within different groups of people.

Can you imagine, how a slave in antiquity felt when she or he had no rights?

A person owned by their master could be sold, or be ordered to act as demanded, or be separated from family and friends. Can you imagine that?

Or can you imagine how a young girl in a medieval city felt when she could not marry the man she loved, but had to marry somebody ordered by her father? Can you imagine that?

Unfortunately, these two examples could happen very similarly in our modern times.

Nevertheless, humankind has also achieved a lot in terms of freedom for many people. We, in the twenty-first century, are more free to think, speak, and act and more equal in our rights than in any previous era. This is because the human desire for freedom was so strong that millions of people, alone or in groups, organized activities, stood up against tyranny for their own rights, and defended other people's right to think, speak, and act freely. Many were even willing to sacrifice their lives to achieve freedom for a smaller or bigger group of people.

As a great example, just remember the French Revolution of 1789. The words: *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, or liberty, equality, and fraternity, resonate strongly in human history. This was probably a powerful introduction to the Age of Aquarius.



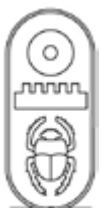
*Eleanor Roosevelt holding the English-language version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in November 1949.*

In the twentieth century, after the horror of the two World Wars, the freshly established United Nations issued, on December 10, 1948, the famous text of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” which is a milestone document in the history of human rights, laying the foundations of freedom.

In this document, the United Nations details “the common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages. The UDHR is widely recognized as having inspired, and paved the way for the adoption of more than seventy human rights treaties, applied today on a permanent basis at global and regional levels.”

It starts with very clearly stating that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.”

It states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience



and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

It then details human rights to life, security, liberty, freedom of movement, freedom to marry only with the free and full consent of the intended spouses, the right to own property, freedom of thoughts, conscience, and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, and so on.

It is a document drafted in the best spirit of humanity; I encourage you to look it up and read it, which you can do [here](#).

The new or sometimes thousands-of-years-old principles on which this document is built are the basis for why in most of our countries we can say we live in relative freedom. It is also the basis for why we met for this World Convention, and were able to talk freely and unite in the spirit of brotherhood.

### **Is Human Freedom Limitless?**

I propose a question: are there limits to our individual freedom? If we think about it for a moment, we can intuitively say this cannot be the case. Let me jokingly paraphrase a sentence from a 100-year-old issue of *Harvard Law Review*: “Your liberty to swing your fist ends where my nose begins.”

Today, 100 years later, we would probably say that my freedom starts where you do not even start to swing your fist or talk aggressively to me.

But if we are a bit more serious, we realize that even if it could seem better to have more individual freedom, for example, to be able to cross red traffic lights with our car when we are in a hurry in the morning, it simply would not be sustainable even if we manage to escape trouble. It would cause a great imbalance among humans. We have to realize that we are in the same boat, as they say.

Do you remember the hand-drawn picture from one of our monographs where individuals are depicted as lightbulbs and these lightbulbs are connected by the wire? We are essentially one, as each one of us is infused and connected by the same Cosmic Intelligence.

Just as Earth had originally only one continent, Pangea, and all our current continents – Africa, America, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, and Europe – were parts of this single original continent, or just as the various colors are parts of white light, we are essentially one. Therefore, complete freedom does not exist here on Earth.

Although, in my view, the total quantity of freedom that humanity has can grow,



any increase of individual freedom only exists to the detriment of the freedom of other individuals.

### **Freedom Comes With Responsibility**

So, we can summarize so far that individual- and society-level freedom has been growing over the last several centuries. We can also summarize that individual freedom cannot be infinite as it is limited by the freedom of other individuals.

If we study the topic of freedom further, we often meet the phenomenon of responsibility. There are several quotes confirming this common understanding, like that of George Bernard Shaw: “Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility.” Or, Carl Jung, who said: “The price of freedom is responsibility, but it is a bargain, because freedom is priceless.”

The internet is also an abundant source of such adages, and there are recent psychological studies on this subject. We can say that the overall level of freedom we can have is directly proportional with the degree of responsibility we are willing to take. In other words, they go hand in hand. We can say that freedom and responsibility are two complementary faces of the same personal developmental process.

In three very interesting studies by Kennon M. Sheldon and his colleagues at the University of Missouri, it was tested and found that psychological freedom (a.k.a. autonomy) and personal responsibility are complementary rather than conflicting; they also had the further premise that freedom causes responsibility, rather than vice versa.



While we could easily say that these concepts remain on the psychological and philosophical level, they are in fact practiced and proven in real life as well. Freedom and responsibility are, for example, connected to modern business practices, where employers found that if they gave more freedom (more autonomy or empowerment) to their managers and employees, their productivity would rise to higher levels than without this. In the most modern organizational development model, the so-called Teal organizations have reported a substantial increase of efficiency and, parallel to that, an increase of the employees' self-esteem and wellbeing. It is also a fact that supporting autonomy (i.e., freedom) promotes motivation and it is clear that the resulting trust, self-discipline, and accountability yield creativity. And creativity is very much an Aquarian property. Nurturing these qualities is, therefore,

already a best practice at a growing number of companies.

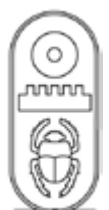
But your line of thinking can go further and you can say: hold on!

This cannot be the way forward with everyone!

You are right: giving similar amount of freedom to everyone cannot result in the same growth of responsibility in everyone.

Responsibility (i.e., the state of being accountable for something) is not necessarily a desire of everyone. Being responsible and, especially, being responsible for our own thoughts, words, and deeds is a serious concept and still many people would rather relinquish part of their freedom in exchange for not being held responsible.

Why is that so?



Freedom is power. And as with all powers, you have to learn how to master that power. Unlimited power in all cases leads to destruction on this Earth if you do not know the ways of harnessing that power. So it is with freedom: the more you learn about its action-reaction processes, the more you learn to master that power, the further you can go in using that for the welfare of yourself and others.

We are Rosicrucians, and our Order specifically promotes the freedom of thoughts, words, or deeds, but also that it comes with responsibility. Are we not encouraged to try the experiments for ourselves? Are we not encouraged to develop our own view, and not to accept any teaching simply because it is written in the monographs? Are we not working to develop our highest potential? Are we not learning how to harness those qualities of us that do not support our growth? Are we not encouraged to look deeply at the effects of our thoughts and deeds, the action-reaction process? Isn't our motto: "The greatest tolerance within the strictest independence"?

The freedom that our Order promotes comes with a significant amount of responsibility. Responsibility is actually the harness that helps us master the wild power of freedom.

To balance the promotion of freedom, in 2005 the Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC issued the "Rosicrucian



Declaration of Human Duties." It states: "In fact, even though democracy is not perfect and includes many weaknesses, democratic societies are currently those that best protect Human Rights such as they are defined in the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights.'" Then it goes on and says that rights and duties have to be balanced, and in fourteen articles it sets out human duties that are needed to be adhered to in order to reach the necessary balance. I encourage you to study this AMORC declaration together with the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

From the previous line of thinking, we could easily arrive at the topic of free will. For a moment, let's just assume that we have a significant degree of free will that we, as humans, can exercise. It was given to us by the Cosmic to be co-creators of this yet unfinished creation. What could then be the greatest use of this freedom given to us?

Let's explore this and conclude with an exercise:

Close your eyes, sit in your usual meditation position, and take a few deep breaths. Close your window to the outside world and lift the veil so that you can become connected with your deepest self.

Imagine you are in front of a huge Rosicrucian Temple that can hold all the Fratres and Sorores of our Order.

The Guardian allows you to enter, and you make the salutation to the east.

You walk to your place, and instantly, all Fratres and Sorores of our Order are sitting at their place along the northern and the southern walls of this Temple. What do you see? What does this vast Temple look like? You are sitting comfortably in your chair, and it is with great pleasure that you look around. Here and there you recognize members from your own Affiliated Body,



*Teresa of Ávila.*

or Jurisdiction, but you also exchange glimpses with members whom you have just met in this World Convention. Also, you see faces of members whom you do not know. Just enjoy looking around!

As you take a deep breath, you smell our fantastic rose incense, and you hear nice, slow, and calm meditation music.

The ritual has started and you hear the Master of the Temple presenting about freedom and responsibility but the words fade away and you wonder: What would be the best use of our free thoughts, words, and actions? You contemplate this topic, and a few ideas come to your mind, yet still, you have a feeling that these might not necessarily be the best ways of using your freedom, your free will.

At this point you realize that the Chaplain makes an invocation where he invites the presence of the Divine to this Rosicrucian Temple.

You feel that the energies are increasing substantially in this big Temple.

Then the Conductor comes to you in his rose-colored robe and escorts you to the Sanctum of the Temple.

There you close your eyes and immediately you experience a strong feeling as the divine essence permeates your entire being.

As you stand in the middle of the Sanctum, bathing in the white light, your

mind realizes how you could use your free will best: It is to search for, to discover, and then to serve the will of the Cosmic. To realize: “thy will be done.” As you stand there this thought crystallizes and becomes evident; the best way to act for the glory of the Divine and the benefit of humankind is this: to offer and dedicate yourself, with free and honest intention, to the service of the Divine. You now understand the meaning of the following idea from Teresa of Ávila: The Divine has no other hands to act with than yours.

Then you are escorted to the Western point of the Shekinah facing the East. There is an old parchment on the Shekinah. You are told to take the scroll, unroll it, and you can now read what is written there in beautiful golden ink on this old parchment scroll, either with words or a symbol: it is the next action that you need to do if you honestly and wholly offer your help to the Divine to fulfill the words: “thy will be done.”

You are escorted back to your seat and see others taken to the Sanctum and the Shekinah, to read their messages.

The ritual is finished now and you leave the Temple. When you are outside you suddenly realize how much power there is if tens of thousands of us around the world start serving the highest ideal and offer the Divine our hands. It makes you smile with hope and joy.

Now, slowly, move your legs and arms and, on an out-breath, open your eyes.

Look around the room; look to your right and left, in front and behind, and smile at anyone nearby. You have your task to fulfill now and you know that you can go back to this vast Rosicrucian Temple any time, once you have done what you received today, so that you can offer your service in the future as well.

So Mote It Be!

