

# Ethics of human freedom philosophy essay



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Throughout human history, freedom has been the most important and challenging aspiration to reach. Our forefathers fought for political freedom from the tyranny of occupiers, slaves fought for freedom and equality and women fought for freedom from their stereotypical “ household duties” and their right to vote... When asked to define what does freedom mean, people usually have a difficult time coming up with a concrete definition. The common answer of “ freedom means doing whatever I want, whenever I want” generates many conflicting questions. What if one’s “ free” actions are harmful to others? Should he then still have the freedom to keep acting that way? Freedom is too abstract of an idea to be defined accurately and precisely. The notion that someone can be absolutely free is absurd. Most of the time, one person’s freedom is another person’s restriction.

In western culture, philosophers have staked out two basic ways of thinking about freedom.

The older kind, associated with what is called “ liberal” thinking focuses on the political issues (of which property rights are a subset). In this view, you are free for expressing unpopular opinions, or criticizing government officials, or trying to take part in government yourself, or engaging in commerce, or pretty much doing as you please, so long as you don’t hurt anyone.

Many influential social thinkers in the 19th and 20th centuries thought that political freedom was not enough and therefore created the so called “ progressive” idea of freedom. They advocated freedom from the “ tyranny of necessity.” In this view, a person too hungry to work, or too poor to feed his

or her family, is not really free. A rich person, in contrast, seems “ free” to do many things that a poor person is unable to do. Freedom from hunger, freedom from disease, etc. necessitate a positive right to certain important things, such as food, shelter, and health care.

Freedom is the absence of restraints according to the most common usage of the word worldwide. It actually encloses the four following types:

1. Physical freedom: the possibility for a person to go where he/she wants and do what he/she wants
2. Spiritual freedom: the privilege of being able to express one’s thoughts or to live according to one’s outlook
3. Natural freedom: the authority which enables a person to identify and to live with others of his/her people
4. State freedom: the ability of a person to live under a government of his/her choosing. Therefore, it’s undeniable that these types help clarifying the idea and the concept of freedom.

Freedom is a magnificent word; not only because it covers all the abovementioned subdefinitions, but also because it represents the ultimate target of all human actions and sciences. According to Albert Einstein: “ All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man’s life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom”.

Because of its wide range of notions, freedom, thus, is a relative experience. Few people think of freedom in very similar terms. To some, it is about political rights: the right to assemble, to free speech, to participate in government (vote, run for office), etc. To others, it's all about property rights: to do with one's land and possessions. To others, freedom means freedom from hunger, or health fears, or other woes. To a few, freedom means total freedom to do anything – in some cases limited only by other people's freedom – and in other cases limited only by the individual's will and ability to exercise power. Let's take for instance the American political life, the relativism is often described in terms of “ Economic Freedoms” (issues like taxation, free trade and free enterprise) and

“ Personal Freedoms” (issues like drug legalization, abortion and draft); republicans support economic freedom more than personal freedom while democrats support personal freedom more than economic freedom.

Freedom is no laughing matter since it can be really dangerous if not combined with the right kind of knowledge and with consciousness. For most of us, money is a means to freedom; if I have money, I have more freedom to do what I like. But in the pursuit of this freedom, I might forget the basic principles and limits predesigned b my conscious and get distracted by the glittering features of the means itself.

At the present time, the struggle for freedom has turned into a sinister and melancholic path.

Herein the question concerning the relativity of freedom is no longer questionable.

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In fact, the international political and social arena can provide us with some of the most suitable and expressive examples. For the Qaeda, freedom from the American imperialism can only be taken by force and by undertaking terrorist attacks against civilians.

Unfortunately, the use of the word “ freedom” has been nowadays over abused due to the lack of a deep and thorough comprehension of its true meaning. For instance the only meanings of freedom for teenagers is to go out freely, have a “ cool” life and experience all the things that may seem ambiguous for them (drink alcohol, experience sex, try marijuana, etc...)

Many people claim to support freedom but the problem is that so few of them understand the true meaning of the word. Freedom is almost like everything else in this world; it is what we make of it. Hereafter, the true meaning of freedom for C. Wright Mills: “ Freedom is not merely the opportunity to do as one pleases; neither is it merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them and then, the opportunity to choose”.