

Freedom: A Symposium

Note: The idea of freedom has been a vital motivation for speculation, deliberation, and action throughout all time. In its wake lie both assurance and confusion. Its backward glance falls upon olive branches, some still wet with blood, for freedom ranges from divine heights to satanic depths in man's definition and application. What and how we think of freedom is important to these times, the beginnings of our future. The four essays in this collection are attempts to reach a definition of freedom. We hope they may lead to individual considerations of this problem.

Editor.

FREEDOM

By William Harper

Freedom is confined to the ability of man to carry out his inclinations. Freedom is a manifestation of many relative associations in the minds of different people. We associate freedom with such things as speech, press, religion, fear and want. We call it the absence of restraints that lets us do as we please as long as we endanger no one else.

Freedom can be enslaved or can be bound against its will—free will. Jacques Rousseau said that "Man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains." Each one of us is a link in society's chain, and we are held in place by others. Our actions can be controlled, but our free will may only be tampered with.

Freedom, when not considered as physical restraints imposed by fellow men, may be abstractly thought of as a state of being granted to us by God. Again, speaking of free will which enables us to be individuals, we can think of ourselves as guardians of a power within us—call it our soul if you wish—which allows us to have freedom and independence of thought. This independence of thought is the basic freedom of life upon which man has had to place restrictions where thoughts determine actions. Hence, freedom in this sense might be considered as being granted by God but controlled by man.

When we define freedom as being granted by God, we are faced with a controversial issue. Is there a will which may or may not be free in its actions?

If we have free-will, then we have freedom of choice. The choice, however, will be subject to restrictions inherent in the circum-

stance under which that choice can be made. If our life moves in line with "must," how can there be any significance to right and wrong or "should" and "should not?" If man is really free, then it appears that God can not have fore-knowledge of our actions. If we are not free, then our wealth and well-being must be governed by more than justice alone.

Is there any freedom in the world if there is no free-will? In physical governmental environments, men have rights and privileges. They may exercise them freely as long as they are not restricted from doing so by other men who may have so tied up their environmental society that the freedom of thoughts within is the only safe thing to exercise.

FREEDOM: WHAT IS IT?

By Earl Murphy

Freedom in the absolute is the essence of unrestrained, uninhibited liberty, consisting of that natural right to do all desired without mental or physical limitations. When this concept of absolute freedom is applied by an evolving society to their problems, however, it must of necessity appear in its two aspects: freedom as an attitude and freedom as a condition; for what the concept of freedom seems to grant in theory, the aspects of this concept of freedom may withhold in application. This subdivision of freedom as an absolute into its aspects in application is admittedly arbitrary, but even the scientific method first requires a theory to be supported with facts.

Freedom considered solely in its aspect as an attitude appertains to that which is variously called the mind, the spirit, or the soul. As such it leads inevitably to that Lovelaceian conclusion that firm belief in the existence of freedom creates freedom even though this belief in freedom be held by the inmates of a prison, since freedom exists only in the personal mind, having no relationship to the body supporting that mind. An epigrammatic summary of this position would be: **I am solely what I believe I am.** This to the ultra-materialist is as weird as the faith of Canute's courtiers, but can the ultra-materialist, knowing of history's social evolution, reject freedom in its aspect as an attitude as wholly false and without any element of truth in it? Was not the Negro slave or the medieval serf—each all unaware that he might, with justice, hold another position in society—as free, spiritually speaking, as some wild animal that is bound only by the realm of its experience? Has not a belief in spiritual freedom been

maintained by some even in prison under the burden of extreme privation, anguish, and torture. Social and penal history will never permit these facts to be disputed; but, on the other side of the problem, belief in man's right to some dignity of person will never permit to be denied the fact that freedom in this aspect alone is, at the very least, generally inadequate, because, since freedom as an attitude rests either on a suspension or an ignoring of hurtful thoughts and surroundings or on a complete lack of knowledge that such thoughts and surroundings are hurtful, it is an illusion, an unawareness and nothing more.

Freedom when thought of in its aspect as a condition is related mainly to the status of the physical circumstances of man. In practice, it consists of the lack of those physical and legal restraints that would tend to reduce the individual to the level of slavery, serfdom, or peonage and an absence of those restraints that seek to deny to individuals equality in their society or culture. These together constitute the freedom of the physical. Alone, this freedom would be sufficient, for as buds precede blossoms, freedom as a condition must precede or attend freedom as an attitude, and those who are free under it must, of necessity, be free under both.

Freedom as an attitude and freedom as a condition are therefore the dual aspects shown by the practical application of the idea of freedom. Either freedom may exist alone, or in some one of its own parts, but unless the two aspects of freedom coexist in all of their several parts, then it cannot be said that the concept of freedom has been applied; and it is only in the application of it by society that establishes the correct interpretive meaning of the term freedom.

FREEDOM'S FALLACIES

By David E. Barnhart

Looking at freedom from a distance, we are inclined to think of it as merely something vague but wonderful. It brings to our minds other vague things such as liberty, the American way of life, or indeed America standing by itself.

As we approach closer however, we see that it is not vague because of the distance but because of its gigantic proportions. Nearly every one has his idea of what freedom is, but no one can satisfactorily prove what it is to anyone but himself, if he is able to do even that.

Some say that freedom is absence of restraints. Others say that it is a condition in which man is able to assume his rights, or his privi-

leges; or that freedom is man's license on earth. It seems that for every definition of freedom that is given, we find it is also necessary that a definition of the definition be given, and so on until we are all so completely confounded that some of us begin to suspect that freedom is after all, perhaps the scourge of mankind.

What is the correlation, if any, between man's rights and his privileges?

Man's rights are those liberties with which he is endowed by his creator, or assuming that there was no creator, those rights which are mutually respected and shared by all mankind, being made a part of him from birth.

Privileges are liberties granted by society to man.

It is manifest that when we speak of freedom we are talking of many things which, when grouped into rough categories may be called The Four Freedoms. These being Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear, Freedom of Speech, and Freedom of Thought.

If we are to imagine that to have freedom there must be an absence of restraints, then we must conclude that no where in the world is there freedom of speech.

It would be far better to say that freedom of speech is limited to the speaking of the truth .

Freedom from fear can be achieved only through truth, because it is the haunting fear of the unknown that is the real fear. Fear of physical forces can be offset in any number of ways, but there is no remedy for the fear of that which is not known except the truth. When the truth is known there can be only one of two feelings to displace fear: either resignation or relief.

Freedom of thought without restraints means nothing. This is the freedom under which religion is included. The truth in this case has never been known, but at least religion respects the truth, at least as much as it dares. If the truth is ever known, religion will either die or it will flourish, and which ever happens a new road into the world of thought will be paved. Any kind of fanaticism should be restrained, but the rub is the question of where to draw the line.

The last of the freedoms to be covered in this essay is the world of want. It is not a beautiful world and there is little truth in it. Yet it is not desirable to have total freedom from want in the world, or rather freedom from fear of wanting. If fear from want were overcome, from what would man derive his ambition to do work, and to accomplish things?

The definition of freedom to the effect that it is man's license while on earth is indeed vague. The question of from whom, and license to what, is again brought up?

It is enough to say that men being individuals have certain rights that are held in common with all men. Perhaps after all, full freedom is attainable only in the hereafter.

FREEDOM

By Fred McNanny

Freedom is the complete absence of obligation. It is a state of being, but where is it found?

A fact is obliged to present a truth; it is not obliged not to present one. The sun is obliged to shed heat and light. Is light free? It is obliged to fall apart under a spectrum.

We have freedoms from, freedoms for, and freedoms to. It is a word of our time and should have a timely definition, one limited to freedom and man.

Man is a limited creature. He must tolerate sickness, pain, and death. The free man then is obliged to tolerate only those things his physical stature limits him to control.

Is this license? Yes. But license and freedom are not the same. Today, freedom imposes an obligation. It is the obligation to do good. Freedom is the obligation of the man, who is not obligated to fear for his physical and mental comfort, beyond those forces he himself can control, to exercise goodness toward other men. And freedom must be exercised. If not, it will become "freedom was," not "freedom is . . ."

