

Spring 2022

# NASCENT STATE

*Journal of Intuition*

Magazine

## Freedom Edition



**Fate**

and the universal machine

**Freedom**

of the individual

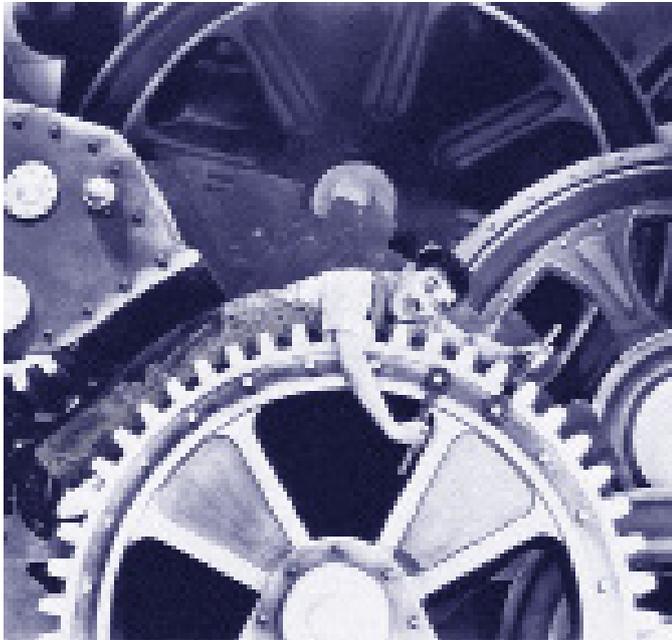
**The Intuitive Mind**

as the Hegemonikon

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# NASCENT STATE

## Magazine



Charlie Chaplin in Modern Times, 1936

From the Editor

## Freedom Issue

This edition of Nascent State magazine is dedicated to the idea of freedom. We like to think we are free. We wake and wash and dress, and work to pay the bills and we assume we do this of our own free will. This assumption of freedom, once questioned, reveals itself to be not quite as it seems.

‘There is no liberty, save wisdom and self-control. Liberty is within - not without. It is each man’s own affair.’

H. G. Wells

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The whole of the modern era is based on the notion of progress, and there can be no progress without the freedom to create a world of our choosing. In spite of this, many people still adhere to the idea of fate. Finding true love, an unexpected illness, or even the onset of war; all these are attributed to forces beyond us, and therefore to fate.

These two contradictory opposites coexist within human nature, and indeed it can be shown that they always have. Any resolution to these apparent opposites depends on what we think.

The division of freedom versus fate comes from logic. Logic polarises. Intuition, on the other hand, is holistic and inclusive. To address the question of freedom or fate requires us to move beyond logic and employ intuitive thinking. Logic cannot reconcile contradictory opposites, but intuition can.

Nascent State magazine is presented in a PDF, free-to-download format; download it and read it at your leisure. For enquiries, contributions and comments:

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and the universal machine

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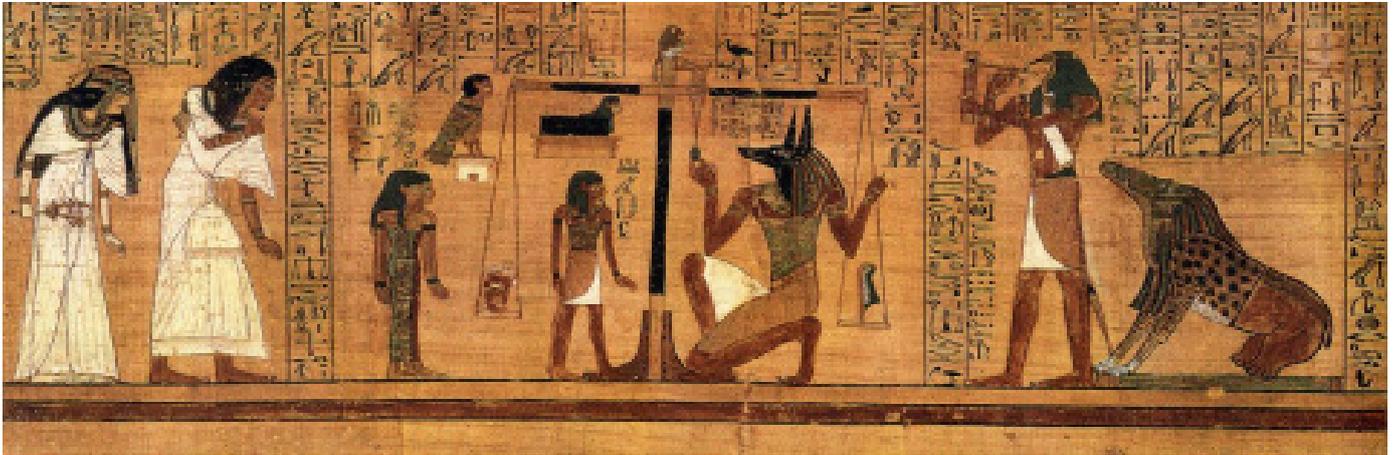
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# Fate

and the universal machine



The Egyptian god Shai, weighing a heart against a feather

‘There’s a divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough-hew them how we will’  
Hamlet

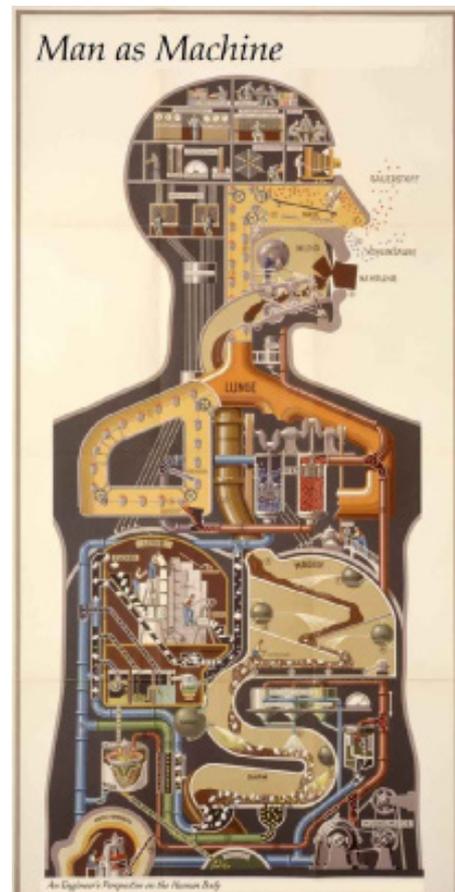
The idea of fate comes from the recognition that there are greater forces at work in the world than our own wishes and desires. Whether we ascribe this to a divinity or to blind mechanics, we accept there are things beyond our control, from world catastrophes to troublesome neighbours to the inevitability of death.

In the pre-scientific era, fate was attributed to the gods. The Egyptian god Shai determined the lifespan of the individual. In Greek mythology, the Moirai, or Fates governed the destiny of the individual. Once Paganism gave way to Monotheism, fate became the will of an all powerful deity. The same phrase can be found in Judaism, as ‘Im yirtzeh Hashem’, and in Christianity, as ‘Deo Volente’, and in Islam, as ‘Inshallah’, and they all mean ‘As God Wills’.

While the idea of fate has pre-scientific origins, it has survived well into the modern era. An all-powerful deity has been replaced by an all-powerful Mechanics, and although this constitutes a different world view, the outlook that we are governed by forces beyond our control remains intact.

Since Newton and the conception that the universe is a giant clockwork, the idea has arisen that even human nature is governed by the same mechanics. The underlying assumption is that we

are as much a product of cause and effect as the planets, and so it follows that we too must be subject to the same laws. The French philosopher Julien Offray de La Mettrie, was perhaps the first to state this fully in his book *Man a Machine* (1748). La Mettrie was an avowed atheist, and his book was written with the intention of removing all that could not be explained purely in mechanical terms from human nature.



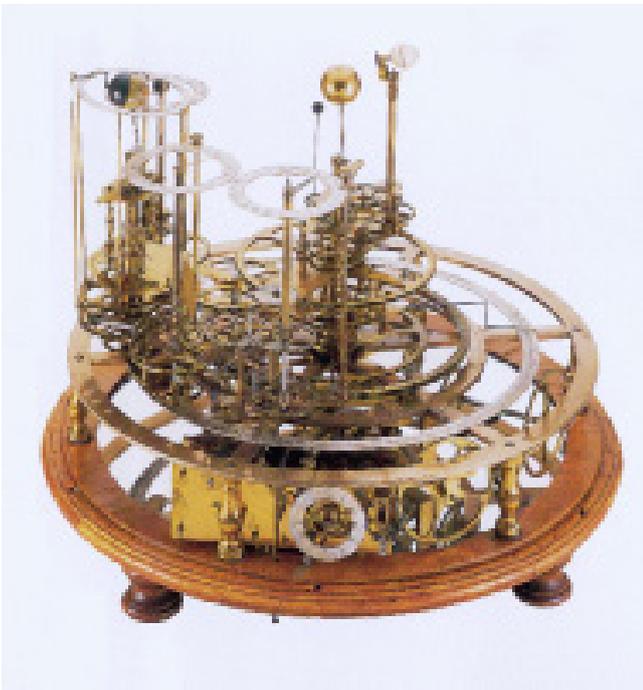
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La Mettrie wrote:

‘Man is so complicated a machine that it is impossible to get a clear idea of the machine beforehand, and hence impossible to define it. For this reason, all the investigations have been in vain, which the greatest philosophers have made à priori, that is to say, in so far as they use, as it were, the wings of the spirit.’

Once classical mechanics was applied to human affairs, it gave rise to Causal Determinism, and the assertion that cause and effect governs all things, big and small. In a universe governed by purely mechanical laws, there can be no room for ‘the wings of the spirit’ and therefore nothing to intervene on the inevitability of cause and effect. Just as cogs in a machine must turn according to their intended function, Causal Determinism states that every act or decision is the inevitable consequence of what has happened previously. This was stated, most forcibly, by Pierre Simon Laplace in his *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities* (1795):

‘All events, even those which on account of their insignificance do not seem to follow the great laws of nature, are a result of it just as necessarily as the revolutions of the sun.’



A clockwork model of the universe

For all the advances of science over religion, the fundamental idea of fate remains. Quite apart from whether people are educated or uneducated, religious or non-religious, practical

or philosophical, the notion of fate informs how we view finding true love, winning the lottery, or contracting a life-threatening illness. We may also observe that an individual prone to anger will be subject to the consequences of that anger, and that a person born with an innate mathematical ability will find employment where mathematics is applied, and that a physically strong individual will find employment as a builder or a bodyguard. Quite apart from any personal ability, we are subject to the laws of heredity and the conditions we are born into, such as wars, revolutions and plagues.

To believe we are wholly free is to turn a blind eye to life itself. Such are the multiplicity of laws governing human behaviour that any attempt to deny it is naive. If this view of life appears pessimistic, it is because the notion that all our decisions and actions are governed by pure mechanics removes not only the ability of the individual to make personal decisions and judgements, it renders much of life meaningless.



Skinner in his laboratory, 1963

The behaviourist B. F. Skinner, who wrote *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), put the final nail in the notion that we are somehow exempt from the laws governing the wider world we live in. He coined the term ‘autonomous man’ as the modern equivalent of ‘spiritual entity’ to refer to that element in human nature which might enable us to override all determining factors and so act freely:

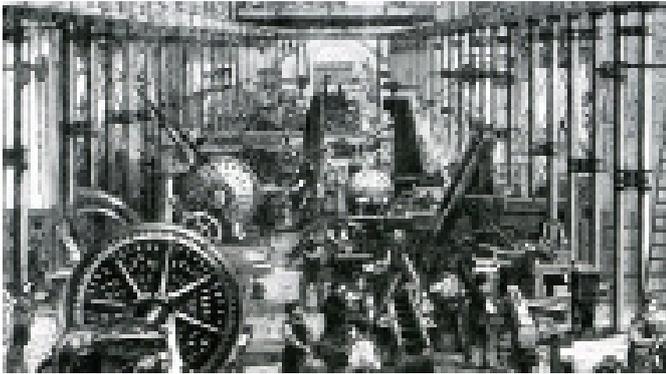
‘It is in the nature of scientific progress that the functions of autonomous man be taken over one by one as the role of the environment is better understood. A scientific conception seems demeaning because nothing is eventually left for which autonomous man can take credit.’

While this might seem like an issue for academics and philosophers, the notion that the human

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being is no more than a complex machine informs much of modern thinking. This same approach informs economics, and leads to human beings being regarded as little more than producing-consuming machines. The economist Yanis Varoufakis, who wrote *The Global Minotaur* (2011), had the following to say about the human cost of this view of economics:

‘Corporations are forced, by competition and by the fear of predators, to try to turn workers into machine-like production units; to make the hiring of a worker no different from the hiring of an electricity generator.’



Wood engraving of mid 19th century factory

For the most part we can ignore any idea that life is determined. We wake in the morning, get washed and dressed and go to work, and repeat the routine until we retire, and do not feel the need to pay any thought to the greater laws governing our actions. We make plans, marry, build houses and seek to prosper, and we would not do any of this if we didn't believe we were somehow shaping the future to our own ends. It is only when our plans are unsettled, either by unexpected illness or by social upheaval, that we are forced to contend with forces beyond our control. It was the British Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan, when asked what he feared most, answered ‘Events, dear boy, events’.



Groundhog Day, 1993

It is perhaps for this reason that the idea of fate informs much of literature and drama; from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, to the film *Groundhog Day*.



Dante, by Domenico di Michelino, 1465

The notion of fate is expressed both implicitly and directly in literature and drama because, in plotting, the author adopts the role of a governing deity, and so ensures the hero's plans are unsettled. Equally, because we can harbour fears that our own plans will not turn out as hoped for, we turn to the idea of fate as an explanation for that fear. It could even be said that the persistence of the idea of fate owes more to the unconscious mind than to rationalism. T. S. Eliot pointed to this in his poem *The Dry Salvages*:

‘To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these  
are usual

Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:  
And always will be, some of them especially  
When there is distress of nations and perplexity  
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware  
Road.’

It is because we cannot see the future that hope and fear inform our thinking. If freedom is an expression of hope, then fate is an expression of fear. While we might prefer rationalism to subjective emotion, we are as much informed by our unconscious mind as by reason. If the idea of fate persists, and can be found in all cultures, it is because we are unconsciously aware that the greater events in the world run their own course, quite apart from our own interests, hopes and plans. Perhaps fatalism is no more than the degree to which we feel this.

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# Freedom

## of the individual



'I am as free as nature first made man,  
Ere the base laws of servitude began,  
When wild in woods the noble savage ran'

John Dryden

There are few things less tangible than freedom. Freedom is an ideal, like love and truth, and as an ideal it is inspiring. And yet the ideal of freedom is not as essential to life as air and bread and water. For all of this, whole races, nations and individuals have fought and died for freedom. The ideal of freedom is so central to the modern era that it is enshrined as the opening declaration of the *UN Charter on Human Rights* (1948):

'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.'

The idea of freedom, as it has been expressed in history, is the struggle between the individual and an overbearing authority. The economist Friedrich Hayek, who wrote *The Constitution of Liberty* (1978), defined freedom in the following way:

'It meant always the possibility of a person's acting according to his own decisions and plans, in contrast to the position of one who was irrevocably subject to the will of another, who by arbitrary decision could coerce him to act or not to act in specific ways. The time-honoured phrase by which this freedom has often been described is therefore 'independence of the arbitrary will of another.'

It could be said that the whole of Western

culture, based as it is on the notion of 'progress' is the gradual emergence of this ideal. Spartacus, the second century BC gladiator, is remembered for leading the slave revolt against the Roman Republic. In the early centuries AD, freedom was expressed through the Heresies, with the word 'heretic' meaning 'one who chooses'. For the most part however, the idea of freedom did not emerge fully until the Renaissance and the scientific era, which is the expression of the right of the individual to think freely rather than to submit to the authority of the Church. The treatment of individuals such as Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei testify to that expression of freedom.



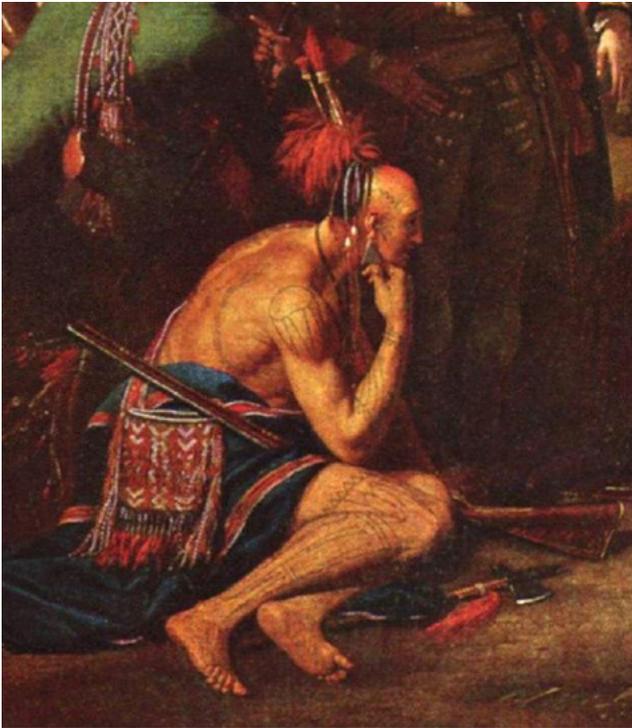
Liberty Leading the People by Eugène Delacroix, 1830

But it was in the eighteenth century, at the time of the Enlightenment, that the ideal of freedom found its full voice. The battle-cry of the French

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revolution 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité, ou la mort!', or 'Liberty, equality, fraternity, or death!' was not only the expression of freedom as an ideal, but a statement of freedom as a principle worth dying for.

Because our notion of freedom has been shaped by the tyrants and dogmas of the past, we assume that freedom is attained when all restraints are removed from the individual. It was this that led John Dryden to imagine the 'noble savage' - a person uncorrupted by social convention - as being truly free. It was the same notion that inspired one of the leading lights of the Enlightenment, Jean-Jaques Rousseau, to declare in *The Social Contract* (1762) that 'Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains'.



From *The Death of General Wolfe* by Benjamin West, 1771

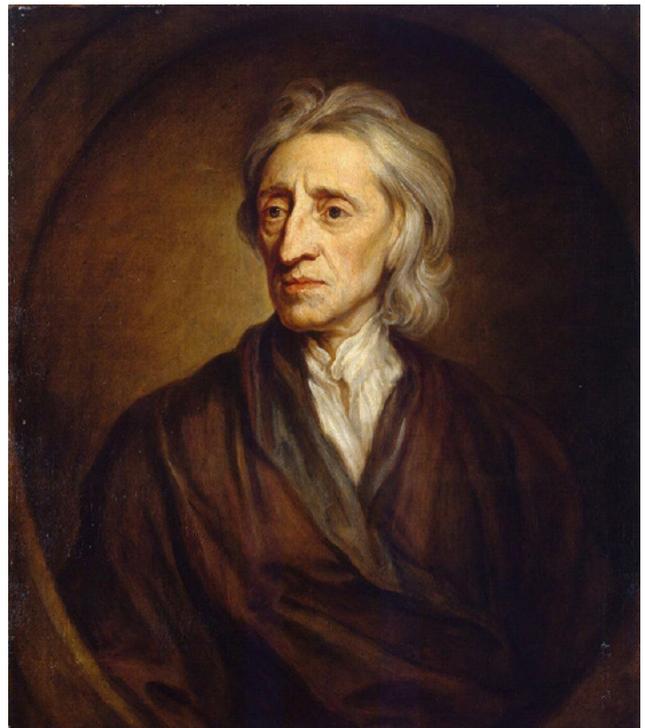
In the modern era, where economics and politics dominate social life, tyranny is represented by anything which prevents the individual from expressing their political opinions or economic choices without constraint. The emergence of Soviet Communism and its centralised economy gave rise to its counterpoint in the Neoliberalism of the West. From that moment on, freedom came to be expressed in economic terms. One of the principal advocates of Neoliberalism was Milton Friedman, and in his 1999 essay *Why Government is the Problem*, he wrote:

'The great virtue of a free-market system is that it

does not care what colour people are; it does not care what their religion is; it only cares whether they can produce something you want to buy.'

Largely owing to the notion of freedom being defined as 'independence of the arbitrary will of another', we have given little thought to its psychological aspect. It is interesting to note that John Locke, regarded as the 'Father of Liberalism' for his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), struggled with the idea of freedom from a purely psychological point of view. He could see that without reference to tyranny, the idea of freedom leads to an absurdity:

'Is it worth the name of freedom to be at liberty to play the fool, and draw shame and misery upon a man's self? If to break loose from the conduct of reason, and to want that restraint of examination and judgement which keeps us from choosing or doing the worse, be liberty, true liberty, madmen and fools are the only freemen.'



John Locke by Godfrey Kneller, 1697

As much as he shied away from the idea, Locke was not wrong. To be free we must be indifferent to the constraints placed on us, even in a fair and open society. If we live in fear of shame or mockery we will not be able to act as we see fit. It is this - the private thoughts of the individual which, if expressed openly, would render us open to the accusation of madness or immorality - which lies at the heart of our idea of freedom.

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It could be said that the first recorded act of freedom is expressed in the myth of Adam and Eve. In the myth, Adam and Eve live as children in the Garden of Eden until Eve is tempted by a serpent to take an apple from the Tree of Knowledge. Once they have tasted knowledge, they become free to choose between good and evil, and - 'Who told thee that thou wast naked?' - they can no longer live as children.



The Fall of Adam and Eve by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder, 1615

It is our ability to think quite independently of any outward circumstances that leads to the notion of freedom. It is not merely that we have thoughts, but that we can form our own thoughts and opinions and - more to the point - harbour them secretly, which gives rise to our desire to act as free individuals. It is the same ability which gives rise to invention, to question authority and to imagine a future which does not yet exist that gives rise to idealism and utopianism. As the American writer and philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, put it, 'So far as a person thinks; they are free'.

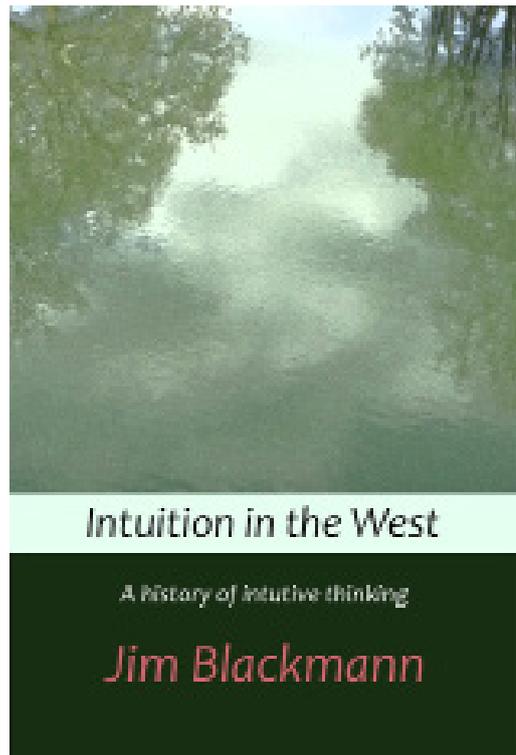
Freedom so informs the modern era that we will no longer be told what to think, who to marry, how we will live or what to believe. Freedom is

the genie that cannot be returned to its bottle. The idea of freedom, however poorly thought-out or imagined, has a persistence which defies fashion or circumstance, and shows itself to be too fundamental to human nature for any tyranny to eradicate. Freedom is one of the enduring ideals, like truth and love, to the point that, if we had truth but could not act on it, then it would be a burden and not a blessing.

It can be said that the whole of modern culture is based on the ideal of freedom. The author and historian H. G. Wells wrote *The Outline of History* (1920) with the intention, not simply of informing the masses, but of making the point that history is more than simply a series of catastrophes. In his summarising pages, he had the following to say:

'New falsities may arise and hold men in some unrighteous and fated scheme of order for a time, before they collapse amidst the misery and slaughter of generations. Yet, clumsily or smoothly, the world, it seems, progresses and will progress.'

There can be no progress without freedom, and freedom begins with the freedom to think, which is to say, to be able to monitor and govern our own thoughts. If you read this and disagree, it is because you have the freedom to do so.



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# The Intuitive Mind

as the Hegemonikon



Blind men and the Elephant by Hanabusa Itchō (1652–1724)

‘None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.’

Johann Goethe

In order to think logically, we have to define and label our experiences and then decide whether we can include that label under a general concept or not. A carrot is a vegetable and not a mineral, and it would be illogical to look for a carrot in a hardware store. Logic is highly useful - it helps us to organise our thinking - but it means we polarise all we see into either ‘is’ or ‘is not’.

The more we think logically, the more organised our view of the world becomes. This can lead to thinking becoming abstract, and so divorced from everyday life. Aristotle, who is regarded as the founder of logic, pointed to this in his 4th century BC collection of works known as *The Organon*:

‘The most universal concepts are furthest from our perception, and particulars are nearest to it;

and these are opposite to one another.’

So logic leads to a highly organised view of the world, and one which makes sense to the individual, but one which does not necessarily correspond to reality. This very organised view of the world can be mistaken for truth itself, which is why highly logical people can be intolerant of the views of others. By polarising our thinking into ‘is’ or ‘is not’, we can come to regard anything which does not conform to our view of truth as untrue. This is why much of logical argument is about fault-finding, or trying to discover a flaw in the other person’s argument, so we can label it as ‘untrue’.

It is for this reason that, when we discuss the world, whether it is the nature of the universe, the origin of life, morality or ethics, political ideology or economic systems, we polarise the subject into right and wrong, or true and untrue, and we do so without realising that this leads to

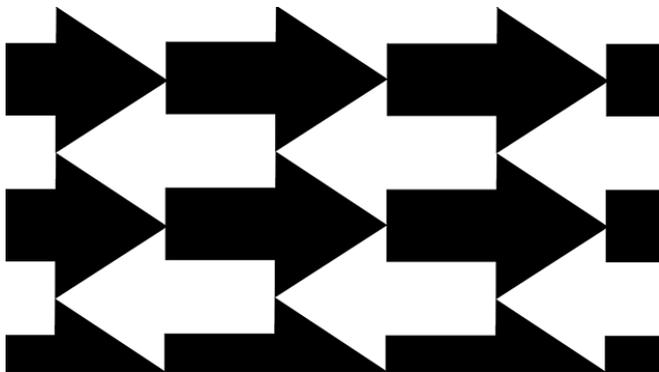
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a one-sided view of reality, rather than to reality itself.

If all of life fitted into neat boxes, logic would be fine. Much of life, however, is messy, complex, confused and ever-changing. People rarely fit into neat boxes. An enemy soldier can be a father, a son, a brother, a frightened conscript or a battle-hardened veteran. If we choose to see only an enemy soldier, we will see only an enemy soldier. If, on the other hand, we want to see a human being, we have to think intuitively.

The dominance of logic in Western culture means we discuss everything, by default, from the point of view of two competing views. It is this that gives rise to the individual versus the state, nature versus nurture, capitalism versus communism, science versus religion, and determinism versus freewill. If anyone suggests that truth is more complex and requires that we consider life from more than one point of view, they are branded a 'relativist' and regarded as a threat to truth itself. Truth is, however, more complex.

The division of freewill versus fate comes from logic. Rather than accepting both as part of the human condition, logic demands that we must choose between one of the other. What follows is an argument about which point of view is correct rather than an attempt at real understanding. This is fine for academic arguments, but little use in life. Instead of applying logic, if we begin with direct experience, and then apply intuitive thinking, we will find a way of resolving the issue of freewill versus fate.



Our most fundamental experience of life is that there is an inner life and an outer life. The inner life is the world of our thoughts and emotions, and the outer life is the world of the clock, the morning train and the daily routine. To regard one as primary and the other as secondary is to apply

logic to a complex whole.

The alternative view, based on direct experience, can be found in Stoicism. Stoicism is a philosophy based on freedom through self-governance. It accepts both the inner life and the outer world as given, and teaches that freedom comes, not from ignoring the greater reality of a world which has its own reasons, but from accepting there are certain things in our control and other things which are not. Epictetus, the great stoic philosopher of the 1st century AD, wrote:

'Some things are in our control and others not. Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions.'



Epictetus, from Edward Ivie's *Enchiridion*, 1715

Freedom, from the Stoic point of view, can only be gained by knowing how to distinguish between what is in our control and what is not. What is in our control is the inner life - or at least it can be - and that is a moot point.

In order for our inner life to be within our control, we have to be able to regulate our thoughts and emotions. If a careless remark causes us to become angry, or if the slightest hunger causes us to become ravenous, or if a drop of rain causes us to wince, we are not governors of our inner life. In order to govern our inner life, we have to observe our responses in a disinterested fashion, and that means to regard ourselves as something quite separate from our thoughts and emotions.

To do this, we have to be sufficiently aware of

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what is going on inside; this means attending to what the stoics called the 'Hegemonikon' or the ruling faculty of mind. As Epictetus put it:

'When walking, you are careful not to step on a nail or turn your foot; so likewise be careful not to hurt the ruling faculty of your mind.'

Stoicism is an example of an intuitive approach to life. The word 'intuition' has the same root as 'tuition', and for this reason it can be said that the intuitive mind is the watching or governing mind. Our intuitive mind watches over us just as a tutor watches over us as we study. This means that the intuitive mind is - at least potentially - the Hegemonikon of the Stoics.

If we are not aware of the part played by intuition in the inner life, it is because, in education and in society, intuition is neglected in favour of logic. This means that our intuitive mind does not function as it should. It also follows that in order to be free, we have to attend to and improve the working of the intuitive mind.

Life provides us with many opportunities to monitor and observe our inner life, and so to modify our responses. If someone spills our drink, we can become angry, or observe our anger and moderate our responses. If someone voices an opinion contrary to our own, we can react, or listen to them and seek to understand their point of view. To do so we have to be sufficiently aware - to watch - and to do that we have to be motivated enough to override our automatic responses.

If we attend to the intuitive mind, it will warn us when we have become over-excited, or when an enjoyment has become an indulgence, or when a slight is unintended, and if we continue to do so, we will learn to become familiar with its voice, and to hear it more surely when it speaks. Our capacity for freedom is based on this. Rudolf Steiner, in his *Philosophy of Freedom* (1894), wrote:

'Men vary greatly in their capacity for intuition. In some, ideas bubble up like a spring, others acquire them with much labour. The situations in which men live, and which are the scenes of their actions, are no less widely different. The conduct of a man will depend, therefore, on the manner in which his faculty of intuition reacts to a given situation.'



Rudolf Steiner, 1905

We can, if we so choose, live with little more thought than paying the bills and avoiding any form of hardship. If however, circumstances or natural inclinations force us to attend to our inner life, then bit by bit we will aspire to become self-governing. If we do so, then each hardship, each challenge and each unkind remark will become a prompt to attend to the governing mind. Seen from this point of view, a hardship can become a blessing. If the outer world is not to our liking, we can complain about it, resign ourselves to it, or change our inner response to it. Marcus Aurelius, the second century BC Roman emperor and Stoic, wrote:

'Remove the thought 'I am hurt' and you remove the hurt.'

The more we attend to our intuition, the more we will develop the Hegemonikon of Stoicism, and so become the governor of our actions. The poet William Ernest Henley who suffered from ill-health throughout his life to the point where his left leg was amputated when he was a young man, developed a form of Stoicism in his outlook. In his poem *Invictus* (1875) he wrote:

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.