

Thinking with Somebody Else's Head Freedom

The greatest revolutions in human history have all had one overriding objective: freedom. Of expression, of religion, freedom from tyranny, or injustice. Personal freedom is something that many of us take for granted. Others dream and scheme and protest because freedom has been denied them. Is there anything then left to be said about freedom? Actually, yes. I'm Richard Lloyd Jones. We are going to take a crack at having a new look at freedom today on "Thinking with somebody else's head".

Dante Alighieri, like all humanity's greatest artists, weighed in rather definitively on the idea of freedom with his observations that mankind was at its best when it was most free. Adam Smith thought that if you just left people to do whatever they wanted, they would rather miraculously do beneficial things. Pretty conclusive stuff. But Shakespeare was little more careful: "The wise man knows himself to be a fool," he cautioned. And the great psychological minds of the twentieth century saw some murky stuff lying out of sight as well that could pollute our desires for freedom. Is it possible that this much sought condition could bring with it something that we haven't considered as much as we should?

Through her research and clinical practice over the past 30 years, Dr Claudia Pacheco has been investigating human psychopathology and she has found the question of freedom to be a little more complex. How would you characterize the problem as you see it, Claudia?

Claudia: We advanced in our society to the place where we see, we acknowledge, the importance to be free to choose, the freedom of choice is very important. But this acknowledgement of the importance of not censoring one's lives has not been used in a proper way, in a correct manner, because it was lacking the understanding that we suffer from an unconscious pull to choose what is bad for us. If we let ourselves to choose whatever we please, then we will kill ourselves very fast. We have this kind of pleasure from destruction. Any honest person can admit that he takes pleasure from drinking, smoking, drugging, eating too much, being lazy, being superficial, and most of all, alienating ourselves from reality. Alienation is a proof of our self destructivity.

R: You are not in any way suggesting we should not be free, aren't you?

Cl: No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that we are not using the freedom in the right way in our lives. I'm saying that freedom is very important to choose what I good, what is beautiful and what is truthful. But this means sacrifice to ourselves. This means discipline, this means not doing what pleases us. This means waking up at the right time, sleeping at the right time, eating the proper food, exercising, being altruistic, wishing the good for others, holding back bad temper, anger, envy, egotism, materialism. This means paying attention to development, to what is important to us, like studying, acknowledging new things, preserving friendships, and avoiding destructive actions. And this is present in all of us, because humanity is destroying the planet. And we know this. We know what we are doing and we don't stop.

R: I know too from my work here in Brazil, Claudia, that understanding this unconscious will we have – that's inverted, against our own success, happiness and

even our own lives – is a great leap forward in understanding human motivation. Look for me if you would at the human being through the science of Analytical Trilogy and distinguish how view human psychopathology now compared to how it has been seen.

Cl: Previously people thought that emotions were like outside ethics, that metaphysics was outside of science. For instance, you could either feel anger, hate, envy or you could express this freely with no problem, as much as you could express love, being good, being sincere. That lying or being truthful – you could choose either one. Relativity was the dominating kind of philosophy. Presently we understand that only the energies of goodness and love, tolerance, peacefulness, faith in goodness, being sincere and truthful, being idealistic, all these positive energies can heal. If you have a negative thought or negative emotion, this can kill you. If you are in an anger attack, you can die of a heart attack suddenly. So it is not that we can feel and think whatever we please, because our psychological life has its specific laws and these laws are ethical and spiritual.

R: We react strongly to this idea of there being predetermined laws, don't we, Claudia. Psychoanalyst Norberto Keppe, following on the great German psychiatrist Kraepelin's studies on the link between megalomania and mental disease, calls this theomania: the desire of the human being to be the creator of reality. How does all this reflect on human freedom?

Cl: But there is no freedom in the sense human beings think. Of course there's freedom – if you want to destroy something, you can. You can destroy you can destroy your life, you can be nasty, you can be isolated, you can push people away from your life, you can be dishonest. You can be lazy, you can be unbalanced in your senses, you can be ignorant – not studying, not dedicating yourself to anything – but the results will follow. So you have no complaints then. If you become psychotic or if you have a very serious disease or if you are seen as a loser in society - these are the results of the misuse of freedom in our lives.

R. Well, when I began this program today Cláudia, I said it would be a new look at freedom and maybe an unpopular one, too. But the situation on this planet begs this discussion. If we misuse freedom, what happens then?

Cl: I have an HIV-positive patient, and he was saying that he is realizing that the style of life he lives is a style of life of total destruction – not sexually speaking – but mostly the way he destroys his talents. And the way he is using AIDS-sickness to destroy all his values. He is an incredible artist, and he doesn't commit to what he has to do. So he is always late in submitting to work, and he's always going backwards and he sees that he takes pleasure in destroying his artistic capacity, his philosophical capacity, because he is a philosopher. He is destroying his friendships. So now this AIDS patient is perceiving that aids is just a manifestation of his suicidal attitude, of the pleasure he gets in saying NO to life.

R: Cláudia, there has to be an upside to all of this because as we begin to see that we use this freedom to diminish or even destroy our experience, this presumably will make some difference to us. Is there any hope? What's the upside to all of this?

Cl: Our potential is much bigger than we imagine – not because we still need to develop it because we have it since we are born. And unfortunately we just use 5% of our capacities and this has been a study but the psychologists that work with experimental psychology. And they got to this conclusion that we just use around 5% at maximum of our capacities. But we could go much further in activity, in plain activity, in realization, if we would use our energies and capacities in a good and positive way.

R: Voltaire advised us that the safest course is to do nothing against one's conscience. Wise words. But seeing our attitudes against our conscience is the first step. I'm Richard Lloyd Jones, this is "Thinking with somebody else's head", thanks for listening.