

Chapter 1

Introduction

*L*iberty, independence, freedom — we hear these words frequently from earliest childhood, spoken often with great seriousness and intonation. Social leaders and politicians use these words at public occasions to demonstrate the fruits of cooperation in a modern society. Yet paradoxically these words, when given fullest expression, are proud, bold, resonant, even defiant: they imply an attitude that devalues and even discards cooperation as a means of fulfilment. They represent an almost ineffable feeling; being without restraint indeed strikes a unique impression on the mind. Like a free-fall, liberty is an intoxicating rush that goes to one's head. Doing exactly what one wants and not having to obey rules about what to think, what to do, what to say, where to go, what to wear — these are the things that humans innately seek. Being released from a dreary obligation creates an extraordinary moment, most potent while still in the full memory of what has transpired. Whether it is going on an extended holiday or leaving home to live on one's own or becoming the owner of a business, whatever the level of complexity, the casting off of shackles can be exhilarating. For young people about to enter full adulthood, the mind reels at the tremendous possibilities that independence finally bestows, and one is only limited by one's imagination.

Can anything challenge the potency of this concept of being free? Many would say that the only thing that equals it, indeed, that might exceed it, is being in love.

Love — a word that can conjure up great emotion, but one that quite frankly wavers when confronted with ‘emancipation’ and ‘free choice’. Love invariably involves being dependent to some extent on someone else, and that creates a challenge to the concept of independence. However, no matter how much one has basked in the glory of cutting bindings from oneself, the shadow of emotional desire, of affection, can never be left behind. Western cultures have repeatedly made it clear that we cannot experience total fulfilment in life unless there is also love. In a modern world that promotes and rewards autonomy, freedom can come cheaply, yet love then comes at a premium, because the bold concept of independence comes at the risk of injury to the most crucial dynamic in a relationship, the spirit of cooperation.

Today, society seems to have crossed the line, where there is a cost not only to individual well-being but to social stability as well. To counteract the tidal forces of instability brought on by independent minds each pulling their own way, companionship is more necessary than ever. The solidity of two in deep affectionate embrace can overcome all waves of change. But love cannot flourish where people press for self-determination; it is hard to strike a balance since, compared to love, the costs of independence are relatively inexpensive and the returns are immediate.

Are love and independence implacable foes?

From the dream-like world of childhood, autonomy rises up as one of our great primary visions. Love is usually taken for granted, unless it is withheld by guardians, relatives and others in one’s social circle. It occurs naturally as simple a concept as independence, but always strongly prone to subjective emotional forces. Quite in contrast, independence revolves around material questions and factors, which appear in various guises at different psychological phases. The desire for freedom grows out of the failure to satisfy basic personal needs. We would not need to discuss the concept of independence if we could always find easy success in our

endeavours. When we say one has obtained 'freedom' from something, that something must have made significant impositions on one's time, resources, intellect and emotions. The sequence of liberation is often the same: The first freedom is from the household of origin, the second from school and teachers, the third is from an occupation, the fourth is from community and institutions. Thus, autonomy is a relative concept, entangled in context, dependent on other questions that are pertinent, such as happiness, security, friendship, mature love, self-respect, equality, comfort and accomplishment. Love on the other hand stands alone, being dependent simply on the interaction between only two people.

It does not take long before the maturing individual discovers that life always demands a combination of freedom and service. It is not so much striking a balance between the two, but using each wisely. All people want the freedom to choose their destiny, but this does not entail having a destiny that is free. A person might choose to work in service to someone, with hardly any free time of his own. The choice to work there was entirely his, but after this free exercise of choice, the rest of life is largely given over to the decisions of his superior. This individual is indeed free if by this he is able to avoid worry, self-doubt and conceit. He might be able to achieve all the respect and appreciation he wants in this lifestyle in spite of the criticisms and ridicule of others about his 'despised' state. Hence, one can be truly free and still sacrifice for another, if that is his choice. The *context* of the situation must therefore always be borne in mind.

There is no guarantee that the individual will develop the concept of 'freedom' or 'love' as an integrated whole. Precepts about these issues might be based on only a few aspects, not one's whole existence. Yet, people often focus quite understandably on the end result. Accordingly, when asked directly, 'What is the most important goal in life?', the consensus is overwhelming: *happiness*. Autonomy however, is *not* the end result in life, but only a *means* to

achieve something that is highly important. However, we cannot easily separate happiness, family, love and freedom, as they are all interrelated concepts. Clearly, each component has its own rewards, but freedom and family can also be methods to fulfill the other two (love and happiness). In a general survey that asked people to rank a large number of life goals, family came first, then freedom. In another survey, young people put happiness ahead of freedom or love.¹ People apparently choose to focus their attention on results, such as contentment, over methods, such as bringing equality to society, democracy, and marriage. Thus, if we are properly to examine the issue of independence (or autonomy), we must accept the fact that most people see it as being of secondary importance, again only a means to an end. Love, it appears, might or might not be of greater importance than freedom as a means of securing happiness. A key question that is often asked: How much freedom can an individual give up and still be 'free'?

Let us now follow the sequence of events, which leads to love in relation to the need for independence.

The desire for affection usually arises from a realisation of the coldness and sterility of autonomy. Love develops as needs become complex, as the individual becomes vulnerable and understands he cannot go it alone. One has no problem accepting the advantages of affection, but one must initially determine the costs linked to independence. Ideally, there would be little or no cost, but this is highly unusual. More likely, love takes a significant portion of one's freedom. However, we should also see that a loss of freedom due to other reasons can be compensated for by love. People sometimes do so successfully, but as love is the superior dynamic, it does not work the other way around, that is, freedom cannot make up for a deficiency of affection. People living in countries disrupted by totalitarian systems of government or by the violence of war experience less freedom, and so are more likely to desire companionship as compensation. Perhaps this is the reason why people in some

areas of the world are more strongly in favour of marriage than in other areas.²

More than just temporary affection is needed, however, for the individual to feel fulfilled. The affection must last a lifetime, and indeed, from the individual's perspective, it must be *eternal*. There is no doubt that as all things pass in this world, and in order for love to be transcendent it must be different in some substantive way from all other artefacts of existence. This means that love between two people must never end, even though we all know that this possibility always remains. In other words, a husband and wife must have *absolute* faith that their love for one another will never end, no matter what circumstances appertain. If there is even the slightest doubt that the consideration will end, then it is *not* true love. Such statements appear harsh, but, as the objective person understands, we have no control over the rules of the real world, we can only observe and respect them.

The basis of love is the desire for good friendship. Friendships are formed naturally and easily, often without much thought behind the process. Note the causality: There must be a friendship before there can be love, but love does not necessarily arise from a friendship. The relationship which is uppermost in the minds of everyone is the unique *bond*, a genuinely mature relationship that can only exist between a man and a woman. True love, which is to say lasting love, can mutually occur between any two people, but it is most keenly felt and most extensive when it is between a man and woman, because each possesses what the other desires in order to be complete and perfect. We should not underestimate the power of this relationship. Despite of the rush of mundane business, in the midst of all the commotion and clatter of worldly matters, the allure of the opposite sex never seems to falter. Hence, no matter where a man or woman finds himself or herself, even in isolation, even where the sexes are in a great imbalance and a mate can hardly be found, the conception faithfully, perhaps irrationally,

lives on. With growing maturity, one realises the uniqueness of a male-female friendship, and one understands that it can transcend all common or conventional facets of life. Work, school, the neighbourhood, relatives, obligations to company, family, state, and church, can all be places where this relationship begins, but ultimately the relationship always grows bigger than the place where it began. Nothing can ultimately keep it from growing and nothing can ever ruin it. The only end to the true love between a man and woman must come from the inside, not the outside. And, of course, if a supposedly true love relationship ends, then it was not true love to begin with. The test of a relationship is its ability to be resistant to threats and stresses; it must be profound and long-lasting.

Friendships are founded on mutual respect, without which there is no trust and therefore no exchange of knowledge, resources and validation. *Respect* is ultimately built on the belief that the individual is in control of his or her life. This will lead to one being impressed by the cool, rational, and thoughtful manner of the other person. Further, one can learn from the other how to be in control because respect and admiration breed a desire to imitate the best characteristics of the other. Respect is a highly significant fundamental concept where the binding effects act in a recursive fashion. Thus, if a wife says 'my husband does not listen to me', we can gather a great deal from this deceptively simple statement. We know that she and he are both not in control; she is not, because the husband does not respect her, and he is not, because she has not at least learned from her husband how to be in control.

Conscious control over various areas is essential, and such control is manifested in one's traits. What traits are sought in the opposite sex? Clearly, there are many personal characteristics that are derived from one's background and personality. There are literally hundreds of such details relating to emotions, intellect, physique, career, education and habits that can be subsumed into categories. We can fortunately say, however, that aspects exist that are univer-