



## 'Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves'

***"When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw."***

***Nelson Mandela***

Freedom is a fundamental human right that is inherent to all individuals, regardless of their race, gender, religion, or any other characteristic. It encompasses the ability to make choices, express oneself, and live a life free from oppression or discrimination. However, throughout history, there have been those who have denied freedom to others, subjugating them to various forms of exploitation, discrimination, and oppression.

Furthermore, Lincoln argues that those who deny freedom to others do not deserve to have freedom themselves. This can be seen as a form of poetic justice, where he suggests that those who engage in oppressive acts and deny others their inherent rights forfeit their own entitlement to such rights. In other words, he believes that those who perpetuate slavery or any other form of denial of freedom do not have the moral standing to claim freedom for themselves.

From a historical perspective, the denial of freedom to others has been pervasive throughout human history. Countless examples can be found of oppressive regimes, colonial powers, slave owners, and dictators who have denied basic freedoms to individuals and groups. For instance, during the era of slavery, millions of African men, women, and children were forcibly taken from their homelands, sold as property, and subjected to brutal and inhumane treatment by slave owners who denied them their fundamental rights and freedoms. Similarly, during colonialism, many nations were subjugated and exploited by foreign powers, denying them the freedom to govern themselves and determine their own destiny. These historical examples illustrate how denying freedom to others has resulted in gross injustices and violations of human rights.

**The idea of treating others as you want to be treated yourself, often referred to as the "golden rule,"** is indeed an age-old axiom that can be found in various cultures and belief systems around the world. It is based on the principle of empathy, which is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. At a basic level, human beings share common experiences and desires. Everyone yearns for freedom, the ability to express themselves and live their lives according to their own choices and values. Similarly, everyone desires to be treated with kindness, respect, and fairness, and to experience happiness and well-being.

Empathy plays a crucial role in ethical decision-making and interpersonal relationships. It involves putting oneself in the shoes of others, imagining how they might feel, and considering their perspective and needs. When we approach others with empathy, we are able to better understand their emotions, motivations, and experiences, and we are more likely to treat them in a way that aligns with the golden rule - treating them as we would want to be treated ourselves.

**Karl Popper's "Paradox of Tolerance"** is a philosophical concept that highlights the potential dangers of unlimited tolerance in a society. It argues that if a society or individuals are indiscriminately tolerant of all ideas, including those that are intolerant, it can ultimately lead to the emergence of intolerance and the erosion of a culture of tolerance.

If a society or individuals are completely tolerant of intolerant ideas or ideologies, then those intolerant ideas may gain acceptance and spread. Intolerant people may take advantage of the tolerance extended to them and use it as a means to promote their own agenda, which may be fundamentally opposed to the values of tolerance and respect for diversity. In this scenario, the intolerant may not show the same tolerance towards those who hold opposing views or values and may actively seek to silence or suppress them.

Over time, if intolerance is allowed to gain power and influence, it can gradually erode the culture of tolerance and create a society where intolerance becomes the norm. This can result in the suppression of dissent, discrimination against certain groups, and the erosion of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Popper's paradox of tolerance thus highlights the delicate balance between tolerance and intolerance in a society. While tolerance is an important value that promotes respect, diversity, and open-mindedness, it also has its limits. Tolerance should not extend to ideologies or actions that promote intolerance, discrimination, or violence against others. It is important to recognize that defending tolerance does not mean blindly accepting all ideas or ideologies without critical evaluation, but rather upholding tolerance within the framework of respecting basic human rights, equality, and non-discrimination.

In essence, the paradox of tolerance underscores the need for critical thinking, discernment, and responsible exercise of tolerance in a democratic society, while being vigilant against the spread of intolerant ideologies that may threaten the very foundations of a culture of tolerance.

Furthermore, the denial of freedom is not limited to overt forms of oppression but can also manifest in subtle and systemic ways in contemporary societies. For instance, discrimination based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other characteristics can result in the denial of equal opportunities and treatment, limiting individuals' freedom to fully participate in society. Inequities in education, employment, healthcare, and access to resources can also perpetuate cycles of poverty, limiting individuals' freedom to live fulfilling lives. Moreover, restrictions on freedom of speech, expression, and assembly can silence dissent and undermine democratic principles, denying individuals the right to voice their opinions and participate in shaping the society in which they live.

From a social perspective, denying freedom to others can have wide-ranging negative impacts on individuals, communities, and societies. Denial of freedom often results in the marginalization and disempowerment of individuals and groups, leading to social inequality, conflict, and division. For instance, discrimination against minority groups can lead to social exclusion, segregation, and the erosion of social cohesion, which can have detrimental effects on the overall well-being and stability of a society. Furthermore, denying freedom to others can perpetuate cycles of poverty, illiteracy, and disease, which can hinder social progress and development. In contrast, societies that embrace and uphold freedom for all individuals tend to be more inclusive, cohesive, and prosperous.

In addition to the historical and social perspectives, the moral implications of denying freedom to others are significant. Moral principles such as fairness, justice, and respect for human dignity dictate that individuals should be treated with equality and given the freedom to pursue their own lives and happiness, as long as it does not infringe upon the rights and freedoms of others. Denying freedom to others violates these moral principles, resulting in unethical and immoral behavior. It is hypocritical to deny freedom to others while simultaneously claiming the right to freedom for oneself. Furthermore, denying freedom to others can have a detrimental impact on one's own moral integrity and character, as it involves the suppression of empathy, compassion, and basic human decency towards others.

It is important to acknowledge that the denial of freedom to others is often rooted in deep-seated attitudes, beliefs, and systems of power and privilege. It can stem from prejudices, fear, ignorance, or a sense of superiority. In some cases, those who deny freedom to others may be driven by a desire for control, wealth, or power, at the expense of others.

By practicing empathy, we can cultivate a deeper understanding of the impact of our actions on others and strive to avoid treating them in a way that we would not want to be treated. It promotes compassion, fairness, and kindness in our interactions with others, and helps to build positive relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

In essence, empathy serves as a foundation for ethical behavior by guiding us to consider the impact of our actions on others and encouraging us to treat them with the same consideration and respect that we would expect for ourselves. It is a fundamental principle that underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing the shared human experiences and desires we all have and using that understanding to guide our interactions and relationships with others in a positive and ethical manner.

**"They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."**

**Benjamin Franklin**

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