

# Omniversal Liberty

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## Abstract

“Liberty,” as a word, is thrown about contemporary society as casually as a ball is on a summer’s day, and yet, does anyone have a grasp on what it is? If it is freedom from limitation, then liberty must represent nothing less than consciousness without restraint. But though this straightforward definition implies its acquisition to be equally straightforward, the full spectrum of liberty would certainly prove to be one of the most elusive concepts imaginable. As a result, what we have, and what we throw about so indifferently, is a Substitute – a poor kind of replica of the real thing. True liberty – Omniversal liberty – is much less tangible however, and represents the equilibrium that occurs when anything is possible, but where the capacity to ever allow one possibility to dominate over another becomes impossible to maintain.

## Keywords

Liberty, Omniverse, Universal, Modernity, Freedom

## Introduction: “What is Liberty anyway?”

Liberty is the battle-cry of our age, pronounced from the lips of every politician, reporter and soldier within every war of the modern era, with great and terrible civilizations rising and falling in its name. Lady Liberty thus acts as modernity’s Helen of Troy, with a thousand warships setting off to attain her at a moment’s notice. And yet, there is a question that few people ask when the call to arms is declared – what is liberty anyway?

It is often regarded as the most basic of human rights – the right of autonomy; that is, the right to choose for yourself without being influenced by outside forces. In this regard, liberty represents the freedom to define who we are or who we wish to become without restrictions being imposed upon us. As expressed in this article, both autonomy and self-determination have become critical components of the “modern attitude” and have aided in the creation of a liberal mentality in which identity is now thought to be something which is chosen and gained rather than something that is ascribed at birth. However, the idea of self-determination (i.e. the freedom to define what and who we are) is increasingly becoming manipulated for commercial ends.

As explored in the first half of this article, the autonomous agent of contemporary society is actually highly influenced by an identity market which supplies a selection of choices from which the “sovereign-self” can ultimately be constructed. But despite the fact that the outside force and influence of the market certainly opposes the original idea of self-determining liberty, there is a greater issue still to be analysed – that autonomy, and any sense of the self, is restrictive and opposes a potentially higher form of liberty.

The autonomous agent could certainly be regarded as free in one sense, because instead of the nature of reality being dictated to them as a series of given classifications and meanings, the autonomous being defines reality as he/she sees fit;

defining their own sense of self away from what may be conceived as the traditional and the given. But what is important to remember is that all definition – whether chosen or given – confines potential, as the purpose of definition is to bound and categorize reality. This means that all our free choices – all the ways in which we choose to identify ourselves and the universe around us – ultimately imprison not only the ways in which we each perceive reality, but also our own sense of being. By creating meaning through definition then, we limit possibility, and so self-determining liberty can thus only ever represent the freedom to limit the self and the universe in our own terms. Because of this, we do not have liberty, but possess only a substitute of the genuine thing, and this will be outlined in detail throughout.

Full liberty, Omniversal liberty as it is described in the latter sections of this article, goes much further than the simple right of sovereignty, and represents the only thing which liberty can be – consciousness without restraint. However, though this straightforward *definition* implies its acquisition to be equally straightforward, the full spectrum of liberty must defy its own confinement and may thus prove to be too slippery, elusive and contradictory to imagine, let alone create. But before attempting to investigate Omniversal liberty further, it is first necessary to examine the ways in which the modern concept of self-determining liberty – what I term the “Substitute” – has been developed, and how it has influenced the creation of a very modern kind of being – the autonomous and self-defining agent; a being free to choose their own path in life, though nevertheless restricted in that freedom.

### **The Substitute: The Decline of the Tradition-Defined Self**

Liberty is one of the “rights” inscribed within such founding documents as the Declaration of Independence and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen: “all men are created equal...endowed...with certain inalienable rights...among these...life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”; “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights, the aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, the ownership of property, security and the right to resist oppression.”

These documents, which are so significant when considering the construction of the modern character, do not attempt to define liberty as such, but instead imply that it is something intrinsically linked to the idea of self-determination and autonomy. It is these assumed “rights” that have become the essential fabric of what we would term “the modern attitude”; a fabric which was originally cast in the intellectual forge of the Enlightenment.

Kant (1972 [1784], 54–60) originally wrote that “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without guidance of another...The motto of Enlightenment is therefore: *Sapere Aude!* Have courage to use your own understanding.” Kant’s statement, coupled with the philosophic writings of Grotius, Kierkegaard, Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, developed the idea that the individual was autonomous and self-defining, possessing the right to construct themselves away from the controls of society. Influential in the collapse of the tradition-defined self, it is the emergence of the self-determining agent throughout the early modern period which gave credence to humanist philosophy; an essential component of the autonomous attitude.

Representative of the secular and non-religious, humanism regards human beings as the measure of all things and recognizes that human reason is all we can rely upon. As

a consequence of this, modernity's icons have tended to be rationalists—e.g. Darwin, Marx and Freud – who foregrounded the belief that it was *only* the self that held the answers. The rise of rationalism was further accompanied by concepts of social evolution (Morgan 1877; Spencer 1870, 439–440; Tylor 1871) whose universal cultural progression, regardless of time or space, argued a development from irrationality to rationality, from “primitive” religion to scientifically educated atheism (Bowman 1995, 139–149), and most importantly, from the tradition-defined self to the autonomous, self-defining agent.

However, speaking on the collapse of the tradition-defined self and the rise of the “*Sapere Aude*” inspired agent, Durkheim (1992) argued that religion was actually applicable within both “primitive” and “modern” societies, believing it to be a belief system that holds a community together around that which it holds sacred (Durkheim 1995), and defining the sacred as literally anything capable of being sacralized. As the Enlightenment's battle-cry had been “*Sapere Aude*,” Durkheim insisted that modernity had sacralized the self and instituted a religious “Cult of Man,” (Durkheim 1984, 122; 1994, 70) in which “the individual institutes for himself [or herself ] and celebrates for himself [or herself ] alone” (Durkheim 1995, 44). Together with the rise of modern rationalism, the “religious” and “sacred” expression of the self has become thoroughly embedded within the modern mind-set and has been highly influential in the collapse of the traditional-self – something which is essential if autonomous liberty is to be achieved by any individual.

But the collapse of the tradition-defined self was not just the result of growing rationalism and a sacred self-belief, for it was also greatly advanced through progressive forms of liberalism (and relativism), denoting acceptance toward divergent opinions and views. Standing against traditional principles and morals, modern liberalism has included phases such as the “Century of the Child” (Key 1909), and the sexual revolution proposed by the likes of Margaret Mead and D.H Lawrence; all of which weakened the mental framework of the tradition-informed, and helped build a liberal, self-determining mentality. Indeed, if the tradition-informed self represents the agent who thinks in terms of external loci of authority, influence and providence rather than relying on themselves like the modern-self does (Ambler 1996, 134–151; Heelas 1996, 155), then all that is regarded as “traditional” may also be considered opposed to the freedoms of autonomy originally proposed during the Enlightenment. This is especially true when considering Rousseau's notion of self-determining liberty whereby the agent is only free when he/she decides for him/herself what concerns them, rather than being shaped by external influences (Taylor 1989, 1991).

With all this in mind, we can see that modernity does not represent an era, but that it is an attitude instead; an attitude which acknowledges the right of self-assertion and has helped build a liberal-minded society in which the subjective, rationalising, sovereign individual has become foregrounded. However, though this attitude has been vital in the fall of the tradition-informed and the rise of the self-determining agent, it is also intrinsically linked to the emergence of the modern consumer within enterprise culture, and it is this consumer who now functions as the model champion of Enlightenment ideals, especially with regards to autonomous liberty.

### **The Substitute: Purchasable Liberty**

Rooted within individualistic values managed to improve productivity, the concept of an enterprise culture was advanced by Thatcherism and Reaganomics which sought to

link consumer sovereignty to the ideology of self-determining liberty (Slater 1997, 37), with the enterprising consumer utilising responsibility, inventiveness, creativity, self-autonomy, and above all he/she stands on his/her own feet rather than being dependent on others (Heelas 1991, 72–90). These values clearly attempt to ally consumers to the Enlightenment's core ideas of liberty, freedom, reason and progress through individual choice—with the market now supplying that choice.

Enterprise culture thus champions the self-motivated consumer (Keat 1991, 1–17) – a self who values his/her own identity, his/her own freedom of expression, his/her own conviction, agency, power and creativity, but above all else, this is a being which criticizes the tradition-informed. In this way, the self-determining liberty heralded during the Enlightenment has led to traditional conceptions of social identity – as something fixed in space-time, unwavering and unchangeable (Tilley 2006, 7–32) – being replaced by enterprising notions of self-identity as something intensely variable, invented, abstract, and changeable, with the “created” state of the self thought to significantly diverge from the acquired baggage of social institutions. Individuality now lies in potentiality, with identity being achieved instead of ascribed, and with the modern agent in a constant state of self-exploration, supposedly free from the assimilated information and ideals handed down to them.

This has resulted in what must be one of the greatest social changes of our time: i.e. the massive subjective turn of modern culture, which includes the progressive loss of both objectivity and the traditional definitions of the world, and thereby permitting the radical subjectivation of the self within a distinctly consumerist, enterprising and individualized context. I would contend then that with the rise of this modern attitude, Gellner's (1994, 100–104) original concept of the modern worker – the “Modular Man” – as the ever replaceable human agent has been substituted for the consumer, whose social fixation upon the self rather than the group is foregrounded. But I would also contend that although the self-searching consumer is closely linked with the original idea of liberty – the freedom to choose how to define oneself—the journey of self-definition is more often than not accompanied by a sense of incompleteness. Quite simply, this is because concepts such as “the self” are difficult to define (Rees 1985), and although this permits the consumer to define the self in their own terms, it also hints that the consumer requires help in the process of defining.

As the market within enterprise culture responds to the needs of the consumer, a world imbued with possible journeys towards self-discovery becomes essential, and so a vast catalogue of choices become available – a notion which certainly moves away from the idea of liberty as that of individual autonomy; the individual now being influenced and in turn influencing the outside force of the market. As such, this represents a general social philosophy in which the agent is still regarded as sacred but is nevertheless incomplete and so is in need of assistance. Strongly resembling modernity's fixation on perfectibility, the modern consumer thus stands incomplete and fragmentary, requiring progressivistic and constructivistic attitudes akin to the values of enterprise culture. It is here then that the original concept of self-determining liberty becomes integrated with the concept of consumer sovereignty.

Though the consumer is supposed to amalgamate distinctly modern and liberal virtues built up over the last few centuries: i.e. self-perfectibility, self-improvement, identity construction, self-esteem development, positive thinking, and “self-empowerment and transformation through the technology of the self” (Foucault 1988), all of these can be acquired from the market. The original idea of self-determining liberty has thus become amalgamated with the ideals of the marketplace. Indeed, the languages of freedom, liberty and consumerism have become entangled

and are virtually identical; freedom indicative of the individualistic freedoms provided by the market and supposedly being “free to choose,” permitting the consumer within the context of the “Cult of Man” to explore the commercial realm for their true – yet distinctly indefinable – self.

The liberty to develop our identities is thus embedded with the idea of consumer sovereignty, with consumers possessing self-autonomy over their needs, desires and wants, whilst also holding the right to formulate their own projects and identities. But the search for self-identity is nonetheless problematic in a society where the secure social networks of family and community have broken down (Langman 1992). Social deregulation within consumer society thus materializes as a crisis of identity, with identity being neither ascribed nor fixed by a stable social order. This fuels the already popular notion that identity has to be chosen and constructed by consumers, and as market competition guarantees producers react to the preferences of consumers, the full spectrum of human culture can become purchasable in the market itself. In this way, modern agents can search the commercial sphere for identity; seeking cultural merchandise that assures agent identification through possession and display. However, because everywhere there are only other replicas of our own sanctified individuality, individuals become increasingly self-constraining, and therefore difference (i.e. the essence of individuality) becomes the essential identity commodity.

In response, “cultural specialists” (Bourdieu 1984, 48) within the market scour through cultural and social traditions in order to produce fresh interpretations of meaning which can be consumed, creating an endless supply of purchasable “Otherness” – existent, fanciful and fantastical – and thereby sustaining the consumer obsession never to say “enough is enough.” Indeed, the “Other” represents a new cultural opiate ripe for capitalist plucking, and the result is a market of Otherness, with producers selling simulated traditions in a marketplace; producing countless self-help books and similar practices to support the exploitative assumption that there are always more ways in which people can construct their own identities. Individual development, fostered largely through the “buy our product and change your life” advertising, thus places human meaning on the supermarket shelf along with all other obtainable value systems (Featherstone 1991).

It would thus seem that in the process of exercising individual liberty through free-choice, the consumer actually dismisses the original aspiration of modern western citizens to be free, rational, autonomous and self-defining, and instead allow their identities to be constructed by external influences—a marketplace which fully understands the need to supply individuals with simulated difference (Baudrillard 1983). Indeed, the concept of self-determining liberty within a consumer context has maintained the gradual corrosion of large, social value systems (e.g. Christianity), and has fostered a sense of confusion in which the question, “what is it to be human?” is not only left open, but is seemingly unanswerable, and thereby providing us all with a bittersweet taste of mass nihilism.

In such a context as this, consumers can only go on searching for their own identities, ever hopeful that they will eventually gain an individual answer for themselves. But each choice made, each selection chosen from the marketplace, is a bounded cultural and social category used in an attempt to define who we are. This can only mean that within each mind of the modern consumer, an infinite number of walls are being built; different elements of our pick-and-mix culture become entangled to form what many assume to be our “character.” But each new wall, each new selection we add to ourselves, naturally conflicts or juts up against another, and

in time, they can form something akin to a labyrinth; mazes that create the illusion of a character, but which become impossible to navigate.

Indeed, the existence of an identity-market means that many agents fail in their attempt to create a solid sense of self anyway. This is because the selections and decisions we each make for ourselves naturally conflict with other choices; choices which are perpetually exposed to us from within the market. In a society of such idealized individuality, the selections we make for ourselves are also likely to conflict with the selections made by other people too, and this potentially fosters a society of aggressive and antagonistic individuals; a concept which cultivates the Hobbesian view of the individual being as a creature purely motivated by self-interest; a being ideally suited to a flourishing capitalist society, with each person channelling their supposed innate aggressiveness through an economic arena. It is no wonder then, that in noticing this, many consumers romanticize older, “better” eras, when life seemed simpler; golden ages when identity was “fixed.” But this, like almost everything else, can be exploited by the market, with consumers now able to buy nostalgia to which they can “escape.”

With the ill-defined but powerful catchall term “liberty” behind it, the ambiguous self-searching and self-perfecting (Hervieu-Leger 2001, 161–175), sovereign individual which underpins modernity is well suited to modernity’s accompanying corporate empire, within which, any banding together must be a fragile phenomenon indeed. The original concept of liberty as the freedom of self-determination has thus materialized into a state of mass disorientation regarding any unified conception of what and who we are. With regards to this sense of confusion, I refer back to what Gellner originally identified as “the cultural freak” of modernity – the “Modular Man” – the ever replaceable, and thus exploitable, human individual. I would contend that such human equivalents are actually a threat as they retain the ability to collectively identify themselves against their condition and thus preserve the capacity to identify the “human” within each other. But it is obvious that the individualistic capitalist society to which we all belong thrives under such uncertainty with regards to human meaning, and this, in turn, motivates us further towards purchasing possible meaning from the market.

All in all then, the belief that liberty represents the freedom of self-determination and the right of autonomy has played no small role in the production (and reproduction) of socially antagonistic human beings; each one provided with the idea that they are free to design their own lives, but each one actually being highly influenced by outside forces. By associating this “freedom” with what we call “liberty,” we can only ever have a substitute of the real thing, because this liberty is, in fact, highly susceptible to exploitation by others. The question is, if what we have is a Substitute, what is the real thing? The answer given at the beginning of this exploration was that it is consciousness without restraint. However, the gap between the Substitute and this liberty is enormous and would not be traversed with ease, and this is due to the existence of Universals.

### **The Universal**

Here, I use the word “Universal” to represent any single judgement which we make and which is maintained through criteria. We set Universals to everything we perceive, and they signify anything which we set a boundary around, representing all which we define or categorize. When we observe a stationary chair for example, we make the judgement that this object is a chair; a recognized object upon which we sit.

The word chair thus acts as a Universal – i.e. a judgement. Around that initial Universal, we naturally set others: for example, that this particular chair is decorative and possesses certain distinct styles, etc. Around the Universal of “chair” then, we set a congregation of other Universals, as we attempt to bind the object to a series of categorizations in our minds.

Another example is that if I were to say, “My name is Nicholas,” I am creating a Universal. Here, I inform you that I am something and around that I create a boundary that others cannot enter unless they share that same characteristic – i.e. that they are also called Nicholas. So in my mind and in yours, a boundary is created into which I place myself (and into which I am placed at birth) – I am Nicholas; you are not.

Universals are all the mental confinements such as these. There are huge, sweeping ones of course, such as gender; and there are smaller ones, such as names. Nevertheless, all of them represent the judgements we each make; they are the criteria that we fill our brains with throughout life. They don’t just apply to each of us, but also, to the ways in which we experience everything around us too. Even time, which is perhaps the most complicated and fluid facet of creation, we attempt to deconstruct and confine to categories and criteria. Indeed, even the fact that I write this in English represents a Universal act, and each word is a Universal in itself. The word “they” for example suggests a foreign group; it implies a set of people, which are then confined to that word. This word can be opposed by other Universals of course, such as “I,” which suggests independence, but both are equally bounded by the original judgements I make.

Likewise, we are each of us confined to Universals. Every individual is defined by himself and others by means of an immeasurable number of Universals, many of which are fluid from birth until death. Each one of us further belong to other, larger Universal categories (e.g. family, community, nation, species, etc), and though each larger element possesses a countless number of Universals in their own right, each one also imposes their own set of Universals and expectations on the individuals which are judged to belong to it. This demonstrates the ways in which Universals can come together to create other Universals. When we bake a cake for instance, we use multiple ingredients, each one being independent at the beginning, and we use these to create something which we regard as new and independent – the cake itself. Our original set of Universals come together to create a new Universal. However, though multiple Universals within one category may not always conflict, they inevitably can. The bringing together of those ingredients may make a good cake, but it could also make something that is wholly inedible. And it is the same with each of us.

Although each one of us remains highly elusive to any kind of solid categorization, when we meet new people, we inevitably make judgements upon them; we force them into a series of categories which we construct in our minds. Some of the Universals we create for these individuals may conflict with the ways in which we define ourselves, and some of which may not. However, it is this collection of Universals which nevertheless gives us an impression of that person. But we can never truly capture that being through the method of creating Universals, and this demonstrates the futility in attempting to confine reality to category, even though we nevertheless still attempt to do so.

An example of this futile endeavour regards love. Love is a word, and this word acts as a Universal because it attempts to capture, and thus confine, a plethora of feelings. But the full nature of love cannot be confined to that word. And yet, when in love, we make judgements and attempt to force our experience into criteria rather than simply experiencing it for the fluid and intensely complex thing that love actually is, and this

provides us with a sense of comfort and security, safe in the illusion that we know exactly what is going on. An example of this is that when we are in love, we often say that the person we are in love with is “mine,” or that you are theirs, and this is but one small way in which we attempt to bound and categorize a part of what love is.

And so, Universals, whether big or small, simply represent the boundaries we create when we make judgements on something. But behind every Universal we create, there is power. Whether the Universal seems to be a trivial or a mortal one, every Universal is imbued with power because each one confines reality into category; each Universal we create forces the scope of perceived reality into bounded mental spaces. Now, if liberty represents consciousness without restraint, then we could argue that the very existence of Universals counters this sense of liberty. With this in mind, I wish to briefly refer back to the Substitute, as noted in the last section.

I would contend that the Substitute does blur the boundaries (and thus restrictions) of certain Universals (e.g. culture, nationhood, religion), especially those regarded as absolutes or those relating to a sense of community or society. However, though the dogmatic and intensely Universal nature of modern science may require a single objective view of the world and demand of us a full understanding regarding the structure of “reality,” the tolerant and liberal attitudes espoused by the Substitute have allowed mass relativism to flourish, and this has permitted a countless number of “Other,” smaller Universals to remain in the social pot. In place of absolutes then, the Substitute provides us with a marketplace which sells as many “Other” Universals as possible; categories that can be purchased to help build our own distinctly individual identities.

Capitalist institutions thus expose and filter cultural and social Universals into the market, thus providing the self-determining individual – fearful of meaninglessness – with a multiplicity of supposedly meaningful Universals from which they can each choose, and it is this which is linked to the concept of self-determining liberty. The resulting world is not a place in which “nothing is sacred,” but is a state in which everything is portrayed as *potentially* sacred; the differing Universal elements of humanity utilized to personify the market as a “human” entity that has the potential to give meaning to the individual. And yet, the self-determining agent (the being which is supposed to represent liberty), is in fact only immersing him/herself in a collection of cultural and social Universals provided by an outside force.

A liberty of consciousness without restraint represents a life without Universals altogether, and though it may be argued that the existence of Universals demonstrates a natural requirement within us all to make judgements, they nevertheless represent the restrictions we place on ourselves, on others and on the entire cosmos that we are each immersed within. Indeed, as Rousseau so famously declared, man is born free, and is everywhere in chains. The links which make up those chains are Universals, and ultimately, we are the ones who place them on ourselves and on others. Though our capacity to remove them may obviously lie beyond the ability of our minds, as each one of us perpetually create Universals from birth until death, there is at least one story that captures how one woman broke free from her Universal bonds and attained the liberty that exists without them (i.e. the Omniverse), and that is the tale of The Fall.

### **The Fall: Perceiving the Omniverse**

Last year, whilst attending church, I heard a sermon on the tragic tale of Eve – the first woman – who was made out to be the prime antagonist of the human race. We,



the congregation, were told that Eve was the original sinner; the fallen; the weaker twin of God's last creation, and a shameful example of humanity's ravenous nature. But as the story unfolded, it became obvious that Eve symbolized nothing less than the personification of liberty itself.

As I listened, I imagined this mythical woman in the utopian Garden of Eden. Gazing up at the rotten fruit hanging beneath the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, with its blackened and crumpled skin, she realizes that this is her mortality; her death. For her, this fruit is the only temptation in the world however; it is her only restriction, and watching it in wonder, she attempts to gather the courage which liberty requires so that she can stretch out her hand to grasp it and thus be free of this single limitation. She does of course, and bringing the fruit to her lips, she sinks her teeth into its skin.

I then pictured Eve clutching at her chest as her heart took its first beat. She falls to the ground, and as mortality crashes down upon her, it takes mere seconds for her flawless skin to blemish and for the golden glint of divinity, which moments ago had shimmered across her eyes, to fade and dull. She reawakens into a wilderness. She is human; subject to all the indescribable terrors (and pleasures) that the term "mortality" can only tentatively imply.

It's a somewhat terrifying story, and whether you regard yourself as Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Atheist, or a "not really sure," it is still regarded as one the most shameful allegories that has ever been told. To many, it is the quintessential tale of weakness and sin. But I believe it's not a fable of weakness or sin at all, because subtly underlying it is a story that illustrates exactly what liberty is.

When we recount this long-told tale to ourselves, we imagine Eden to be utopia – the grand idea of perfection which we dream of (re)gaining; with Eve herself being perfect. The loss of that perfection is a result of humanity's fall from grace, and indeed, our recovering of perfection is an idea very much linked to that of the self-determining consumer expressed earlier. But what is often forgotten is that when we come to define what perfection is, we are forced to create criteria – we are forced to create Universals. This means that for perfection to exist in reality, everything outside of our selected criteria (i.e. the imperfect) must be relegated onto the heap of defective culture. In this way, our quest for perfection acts as a limewash over almost all human thought, employing Universals to bound and categorize exactly what and who we are to become. The very concept is thus imbued with a sense of singularity, restriction and power.

Although the destruction of dissidence may allow the sustainment of a constructed view of perfection, dissidence against criteria still remains within the spectrum of possibility, and it is actually the *possibility* which I believe to be fundamental to liberty, and here's why.

In the story, Eve is a woman who chooses to go into the wilderness instead of remaining in what is essentially a utopian state of perfection. But why would she make this choice? Because only in the wilderness are there no restrictions whatsoever. I think this is why liberty is so often attributed to social revolutions, because only in the total destruction of a previous system can a small sense of liberty subtly be witnessed as the blank future suddenly laid bare before the "liberators." This is true in Eve's story too, because out in the wilderness, for a very brief moment in time, anything is possible for her – there are no Universals, there is just the possibility of anything and everything.

This demonstrates exactly what liberty is: it is the possibility of every possible possibility. What this means is that it is the potential of any Universal, (i.e. a

possibility which is created), but the actual creation of none. It is the void before all judgement, and in the story of Eve, it is the wilderness itself which represents this.

The existence of all Universal possibilities in one place means that liberty is nothing less than the social Omniverse – where every possible Universal is possible, but where no one Universal is ever actually created. In this way, the Omniverse is both nothing and everything: it is all truth, every truth and at the same time, and even then it is everything outside of truth too. It is all worlds, all cultures, all visions, all sense of madness and all sense of sanity.

To our Universal-constructing minds, this abstract vision seems to be filled with contradictions and paradoxes. But the Omniverse lacks the judgement required to ever see the contradictions and conflicts between possibilities in the first place, meaning that all possibilities can exist together in harmony, each one equal and indistinguishable to the other. As soon as any Universal is created however, as soon as any judgement occurs and a boundary is made around a possibility, the Omniverse is lost, and liberty is lost along with it. For Eve, the judgement and resulting shame of her own nakedness is her first Universal, and it is then that she loses liberty.

However, Eve's story hints at an original objective for humanity, which is not to rebuild utopian Eden – the supposed enterprise of modernity; what I believe to be the restraint of minds in the quest for “self-perfection” – but is instead a mission to regain Omniversal liberty; that is, to step into the wilderness, as she does. With this in mind, we can see how this kind of liberty is not the kind which we aspire towards in our own society. The Omniverse shouldn't be confused with the Substitute and its accompanying marketplace, in which a range of Universals are brought together for purchase by identity seeking consumers. It should be remembered that the self-perfecting and autonomous individual of the Substitute exists due to the social expectations of western society, which adopts a philosophy of self-determination. In this way, the consumer is wholly bounded not only by the Universals which they use to construct their own characters, but is also restricted by the expectations of society itself, which espouses individuality – a contradiction in itself. And yet, I believe very few people (if anyone at all) could even imagine such a concept as the Omniverse anyway, let alone begin to forge it for themselves. So discovering the ways in which human beings can achieve this extremely abstract liberty are thus going to be far more difficult than discovering what liberty is.

The obvious method of achieving it would be to reject that which lies behind every Universal we create – i.e. judgement. But to ignore what must be our most basic instinct is surely impossible for any human mind to master. This suggests that the rejection of judgement may not be the answer to attaining liberty. Instead of discarding our judgements then – and thus our capability of creating Universals – the only way to achieve liberty would be to contradictorily create an infinite number of Universals within each mind. Therefore, this is a philosophy that supposes it is only an excess of judgement which can resolve the issue of judgement in the first place. Let me explain why.

In order to blur the boundaries between Universals, we would have to create as many Universals as possible. For example, imagine that I currently conclude that my name is Michael. However, in my attempt to attain Omniversal liberty, instead of rejecting the idea of “name” (which is a Universal), I would add to it, providing myself with every possible name there is, despite the conflicts that such a position would inevitably create. By doing so, this would blur not only the power of the Universal “name,” but would also distort a small part of my own individuality in the process; something that is essential if Omniversal liberty is to be achieved.

With infinite Universals on every possible subject being fostered within our minds like this, an infinite number of boundaries would be created. The inestimable amount of paradoxes produced would force the mind into a constant state of inconsistency, and as such, the original boundaries between Universals would become blurred as they would each lose their power of dominating over others. The lack of boundaries between Universals removes the ability to judge in the first place, and thus, power is void and Omniversal liberty is attained.

So instead of the individual searching for their own criteria, class and sense of belonging which the Substitute advocates as a “natural right,” Omniversal liberty goes much, much further to not only invalidate individuality – which is a concept that actually counters true liberty as it requires each person to create the Universals which they believe are right for them – but it also invalidates the very idea of society itself. In replacement is an unimaginably abstract being who holds an infinite number of Universals in their minds; each one a possibility within the human spectrum, but most importantly, each one never able to dominate over any other due to the chaos that comes to exist when all Universals are brought together. It is only by creating as many Universals as possible like this that we would then be able to witness the Omniverse – every possible possibility – without the judgement required to ever make any single possibility a solid reality – i.e. a Universal.

To our minds, which are currently bounded by innumerable Universals, this may imply liberty to be something terrifying and intensely anarchistic; afterall, we should remind ourselves that it was the devil that persuaded Eve to take liberty in the first place. Indeed, it implies liberty to be beyond all codes of morality. But it should be remembered that morals, as a form of unwritten law, are a way of harmonizing relations in society. In attempting to do this, they act as a method of reducing conflict; aspects that threaten the equilibrium of society. Yet the catalyst behind conflict is judgement; the creation of bounded ideas of something or someone, which in turn conflict with other judgements. Liberty is life without judgement however, and is thus without society, and is thus without power. So in liberty there is no need for morality because there are no judgements left for us to counter.

If this is what liberty is then, I’m forced to conclude by asking the necessary question: are we really capable of achieving such an elusive thing?

### **Conclusion: Stepping into the Wilderness**

Liberty is the Omniverse. It is nothing less than life without structure; life without Universals, but with the possibility of them all. It is fluid existence without confinement, where the profane and the sacred are indistinguishable from one another, and where the boundaries between the self and the rest of existence are utterly distorted.

Whether this is believed to be a vision of anarchy and chaos is irrelevant however. Take it or leave it, this is what liberty is. But what becomes obvious is that this is not our world. Nor is it any world before ours, and likely, any world after it either. In fact, I doubt that Omniversal liberty is even within the scope of reality. This is because, as in the story of Eve, the price of liberty is that it is momentary.

When Eve takes the forbidden fruit and walks into the wilderness, she gains liberty. But as a life on a timer is presented to her, her liberty is exchanged for the full range of restraints which permeate human existence. Likewise, with regards to every revolution in history, each one becomes a somewhat tragic tale of “today we gain

liberty, but tomorrow it will be gone”; the blank slate of infinite possibilities quickly becomes cluttered again.

This is true because liberty would require a limitless, ubiquitous mind. Indeed, instead of the human mind, it would require something akin to the divine-like mind that Eve possesses before she leaves Eden. In her story, as soon as liberty is gained, when that mortal-bearing fruit is held within her hands, her mind becomes imprisoned to the body and is opened up to all the terrors and limitations which can result from this confinement. Her liberty is then further countered by the emergence of time, with its deadly inclination towards linear decay, and this means that our bodies will gradually fail us. Above all else, it is the resulting prospect, fear and encroachment of death which forces our species into situations of “society,” and it is within these Universal-creating factions that we attempt to live as long as possible, constraining not only our own minds in the process, but other’s too. This view is, perhaps, behind the essence of power – the very rejection of liberty.

And yet, despite the terrible consequences of Eve’s momentary grasp on liberty, I believe liberty can, and should be the aspiration of all things that become aware of their own existence, despite the fact that its attainment will almost certainly remain elusive – after all, we inhabit a Universal; a single possibility created from the Omniversal potential. However, my argument here is that the power which is manifest due to the existence and limitations of that Universe must always be countered, and it can be by those who either desire it (whether consciously or unconsciously), or by those who wish to destroy it. To do the latter however, we would have to remove our own ambitions for power, and we can only do that by pursuing Omniversal liberty; that is, to throw ourselves into the wilderness, as Eve did; immersed in every possible Universal until our capacity for judgement, and thus power, is blurred and eventually nullified.

Unlike the Substitute however, Omniversal liberty cannot be placed within the market, but can only to be discovered in the wilderness, and in conclusion, I wish to assure you that it will take much more than a mere self-reliant attitude to step into that brave and boundless world of infinite possibilities.

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