

FREEDOM IS ONLY A HALLUCINATION

This paper is a statement of the values of liberty and of the way different people have understood this concept and applied it. It is also a warning about the way society jeopardises our freedom. I chose this subject because it concerns every single one of us, especially these days when even our private thoughts are more and more vulnerable to exterior intrusions. I am going to divide my paper into the following sections.

1.The architecture of freedom

Freedom is like a building with all sorts of rooms: freedom of expression, political freedom, social freedom, economic freedom etc and just as some people build their own houses some people work to build their freedom. On the other hand there are plenty of people who just rent they're freedom and never really own it.

2.Trouble with the furniture

The discrepancy between a) freedom and comfort and b) freedom and happiness.

3.Liberty within society

Throughout history different societies have provided people with different levels of liberty. Our society today has a wide range of levels of liberty as well. The question that remains is how much does society (with all it's institutions) interfere with our liberty and if the only solution is to obey it's rules or whether it is preferable to ignore them or indeed to try and change them.

4. The free person .The anarchist

There are various degrees of freedom. The highest degree belongs to the anarchist.

5. The future of liberty

This will address the impact of technology on liberty and will talk about the pernicious aspects of the use of technology and its good side. Do machines enslave us rather than liberate us? And how much further are such trends likely to go?

WARNING: The political incorrectness of this paper is a matter of choice. It is the freedom I took in writing it because I do not agree with the notion of 'political correctness' no more than I do with doublethink.

NOTE: the italics are used for quotations or emphasis.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF FREEDOM

Just like some people build their houses, some people build their freedom. Freedom is one of

man's constructions thus it is how people make it; it does not exist, it is being put in or out of existence by ourselves and for ourselves. Freedom, for the modern citizen, is like a building with all sorts of rooms: freedom of expression, political freedom, social freedom, economic freedom etc and just as some people build their own houses some people work to build their freedom. The trouble here is that a thing such as freedom cannot be taken in gulps, in pieces. Liberty is something that you have or you do not, no compromises here. Honestly, this idea of dividing freedom is nonsensical and a danger to the notion itself.

On the other hand there are plenty of people who just rent their freedom and never really own it due to a fear of responsibility. What I am trying to indicate here is that only a small minority of people are in fact the real architects of their freedom, as for the rest, they only take what they are given, they follow the path that other people have designed for them. We might call these persons 'conformists' – this notion must not be confused with its literary meaning: dyeing your hair purple, denying the values of society just for the sake of 'looking different' in the eyes of the rest and such, does not at all make somebody a nonconformist! To continue with the original idea, few people are real architects of their freedom because they give themselves into the hands of their parents, or spiritual leaders, or institutions, or of society, ideologies and many other kinds of mechanisms that 'protect and guide them'.

The architecture of freedom begins with the act of self-knowledge. In order to build a strong 'structure of personal freedom' one has to know who he really is, what his limits are, and what he wants to do with himself. Of course, I am not talking here about making a plan of your life, but, with the risk of sounding spiritual (which is not at all my intention), it is important that you get in touch with your real self because freedom is defined by the degree of your access to reality, to the genuine nature of things, to truth. In order to judge the exterior of things you must start with your own interior state.

Freedom is, above all, a state of the mind. But this mind needs to be in agreement with concrete, exterior matters otherwise there will be frustration and self-pity - and that is not the way of living a life. Considering that we only get one shot, not making the best of it because of what other people say or because we fear what they might think is quite senseless. This is why people need to sharpen their awareness and become really aware of what they are doing with their lives. They need to consider whether they are doing what they want to do, or just following what society and other structures require them to do.

TROUBLE WITH THE FURNITURE

Having talked about building our freedom and having made a comparison with a house, it is perhaps now time to discuss 'the furniture'. *The free spirit loves what is necessary. The necessity of things, when it is absolute, does not imply constraint* (Nietzsche). It seems that comfort is what modern people are looking for. Contrary to what they think, comfort is not a necessity. For the Germanic warriors comfort or ease, meant laziness of the spirit and of the body. That is why they kept a non-sedentary way of living and a very basic style of life. The idea I am emphasizing here is that objects imprison us. There is a limit beyond which the objects you own actually own you! This is one of our modern capitalist society's greatest issues, the fact that

it encourages consumerism, a sort of greediness people are not aware of. What consumerism really does is make you feel bad about yourself if you do not have some specific something, some new gadget. It makes you feel deprived if you do not eat that new crispy stuff or if you're clothes are not the same as the latest trend, if you do not have that new gadget etc. But the real problem is that acquiring that new gadget will never be enough because scientists will always come up with a new, better gadget so that you will feel bad if you do not own the latest version. In this world it is the things we own that have more to say about ourselves than does our character or what we do. Thus, those who choose to have less, actually, choose their freedom.

How sometimes we delude ourselves and think we are freer than we actually are

I would like to discuss this relationship between freedom and an illusion of freedom that some people have; an illusion that is entirely based upon the fact that they are rebellious. Sadly, to be rebellious is not the same as being free. I would like to refer to a group of people of which I myself am a part of - The Rockers. Rockers, whether they are Old school, Metal, Punk, Indie etc have a strong sense of who they are and are more aware than many of the ways of society. They do not fear to disagree or comment upon its unfair mechanisms. They consider themselves as rebels (and the 'conservative' part of society has the same mistaken perspective on rockers) because of the music they listen to, which indeed, in most cases is a cry for freedom and for joining the fight. But most of them stick only to listening to the music, admiring the message and this is pretty much all they do. The only way they understand their 'rebel' condition is by listening to some angry music, going to some concerts and acting in a frenetic fashion. They enjoy looking different and eccentric to the rest of society. They drink and smoke a lot. It's true, yes, rockers do look different from 'normal' people. The big shock though is that they all look exactly like one another. Thus this is just another form of conformity. The fact that we have the possibility to talk about rebellion, freedom and its violation does not make us free as long as we do not behave in accordance with our words. Just like the great Romanian thinker Mircea Eliade wrote: '*performing actions that are not liable to sanction does not mean being free*'. In most countries (the Muslim parts of the world, are an exception to the rule), listening to rock music and dressing as a rocker generally does, is not against the law. These are only the superficial aspects of the freedom of choice.

The sort of behaviour described above gives the member of this group a false sense of freedom and identity. This is how an illusion of liberty is created.

Freedom versus happiness

The choice for mankind lay between freedom and happiness and for the great bulk of mankind, happiness was preferable. (1)

As I stated before, there is a discrepancy between comfort and freedom. The incongruence between happiness and freedom is even greater. There are people (the majority that is) who would rather live a beautiful lie (like the illusion of freedom) instead of accepting the awful truth. It is again, the fear of responsibility that is important here, because people are much too comfortable in their own mess to change something about it.

Taking things to a higher level, what is freedom in connection with feelings? The people we care about, the people we love, they in some ways, bound to us to all sort of ways otherwise we

would not be bound to them at all. In a way, every single friend you make is a contribution to your self-limitation (the fact that, usually, new friends widen one's perspective, is not the issue here) because friendship is bondage, and bondages do not make a person free, on the contrary. Take the example where person A wants to go to some special place and stay there for a year but their partner(B) does not want to. A will probably have to choose between the adventure and their partner. This is how people we love can come into conflict with the things we want to do in life, with our freedom to do as we want. This is a quite mundane example of love shackling freedom. Of course, this is a wholly self-made choice, but it does not make it less of an 'attack' on one's freedom.

From this perspective, absolute freedom is perhaps not a renunciation of the people we care for but simply a lack of desire to form attachments. The hero of Sean Penn's film *'Into the Wild'* (3) is a great example for this. The film is the true story of a young man who chooses to let go his past and everyone he knows and cares about in order to conquer his freedom and get in touch with nature.

Further more, if we take happiness as satisfaction we would reach a paradox that Francis Fukuyama presents in great details in his book *'The end of history and the last man'*. (2) His book is in a way a hymn to democracy. the writer presents it as the best political option man has experienced so far. His main argument is that only democracy can fully satisfy the needs of the group and of the individual at the same time. in his novel *'Us'* (4) Evgheni Zamiatin takes a trip to the fictional future. He describes a world where perfection is the common standard and satisfaction is guaranteed. After reading this one realizes that contentment is the dead opposite of freedom. The following excerpt should give you a most eloquent idea of this discrepancy between freedom and comfort.

'But don't you consider that the society which has reached this high point is a society composed of rocks? As for happiness... well, in the end, desires torment us, don't they? So, obviously, happiness is where there are no more desires, not even one... Oh, such a terrible mistake, such an absurd misconception to always mark happiness as positive (+)! Absolute felicity, has to be negative (-).'

LIBERTY WITHIN SOCIETY

The thing about freedom is that it is only a concept. It is something one cannot touch, thus it is hard to draw clear boundaries or to define it. Philosophically speaking it is the power to exercise choice and make decisions without constraint from within or without. It is autonomy and self-determination. The overall subject I am discussing is the nature of freedom. My first point is that within society almost no one is really free because we are confined by its structures (above all by society's economic and technological structures.) These determine the way the average person lives. This is more than ever the case today, and will become more so in the future. But how did we get here?

Philosophers agree that man in his natural state was the absolute ruler of his life and property and was not confined by any authority. It is equally considered true that although he was sole master of himself he was most threatened by his fellow man. Thus people as a whole *'give up*

their rights to the general will' (as J.J. Rousseau said). This is done in the name of *security*.

This might remind us of a very delicate international problem currently in the news. Why did the Americans along with their allies bomb Iraq? They would say 'for reasons of security'. Again why did military governments (such as the Nazis) become so popular from time to time throughout history? Once more the answer given is 'for reasons of security'. Why do governments today discuss the possibility of fitting their citizens with chips RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Tags)? And why do U.S. hospitals implant their patients and their staff with RFID tags? (5) Again it is argued 'for reasons of security'--- of course.

Now let us take a look at Romania because with regards to *security* it looks like we are catching up quite quickly since our admission into the EU. Why is it that public places such as parks and the means of public transportation are under camera surveillance? Our government will tell you that this is a way of ensuring security, that indeed they have been installed to ensure my own security.

Let us change the subject a little and look at the behaviour of some families. Some parents do not allow their kids to play in the dirt or touch animals because it is not safe for their health and they will get dirty. Others allow kids to do these things because it is something that kids have always done and in their opinion there is no danger in it. The latter argue that in the first case the kid will develop a weaker immune system while their kid will have a stronger immune system precisely because of his early contact with germs. If we take this argument and apply it to the matter of security cameras, it could be sustained that what this web of cameras is doing is in fact damaging citizens' security by making them more and more dependent upon the security provided by the cameras and increasing their sense of insecurity in areas which lack these devices. In truth, the video surveillance system does not give the citizen an advantage against danger because an assailant can wear a disguise and thus the footage saved is useless. Video surveillance systems function more to protect the state's security because they aid control of its population and are a blow against the people's right to intimacy. Looking at things from a different point, the fact that we are all being held under permanent surveillance does rather look as if we are all presumed a priori to be liable to perform criminal acts.

Under the communist regime people were under surveillance all the time. Now look what new developments democracy brings – improved technological devices for old totalitarian methods. In truth this is not security, this is persecution and it is a serious attempt to curtail our personal liberty because in the presence of these cameras we cannot act naturally out of fear that someone might watch us and analyze our behaviour and then use it in some way against us. This, however, is only the beginning of the problem. Next there will be suggestions made that we *need* to have cameras inside our own houses - for our own security of course. It looks like people nowadays have forgotten about '1984' (1).

To make things less vague I will take up Max Weber's definition of the State as the agent of society that possesses the sole monopoly over legitimate violence. Today, the members of society are less accustomed to using violence or to resisting it, thus they are more likely to submit to the State's will because they do not have the necessary strength to resist it. Of course, today people still resist the system and oppose the State either by working with some specific NGOs, by taking part in underground organizations, or simply through their individual actions. However, power is with the masses and individuals that take action are only a tiny minority.

Most people hardly ever think about how their whole lives could be different or about how much they are subject to manipulation.

Further on, I will discuss the subject of democracy. To the ancient Greeks democracy meant the power of the many. Today, well, one might say that what the majority wants, the majority gets; but is it really so? The majority is a dough like mass. The will of this mass is not consciously created. As for the right to vote and people choosing their leaders, say, in a representative democracy such as the States we live in nowadays, one person's vote is simply insignificant. I will give a simple, up to date example. I think that it is quite likely that a majority of Romanians may vote for Gigi Becali as president even though I also believe that he is a man who is by no means capable of running a country. If the electorate of Romania decided in his favour how could anyone stop them? Ignorance is the strength of the masses as George Orwell majestically put it in his novel, and nothing can stop that. Obviously, ignorance is the strength of the masses against themselves...

The nineteenth century French political thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville (who was a great admirer of the American democratic system) couldn't himself help but admit that democracy meant an egalitarian society based on the principle that people were living in roughly equal conditions. But creating equal conditions for all is the main enemy of liberty because the powerful state machinery that results makes each citizen's exercise of *leberum arbitrium* (free will) less and less practicable. Citizens are thus deprived of their right to self determination. .

More important, in our society people do not satisfy their everyday needs independently of others. Rather they have to function as part of an immense social machine. Food, for example, is something most people cannot trust. They know that what they are offered is not healthy, but it is the best they can afford or simply it is easier to have a snack instead of preparing something themselves. More precisely, we are dependent on many, many institutions and firms in order to have our most basic needs satisfied. The farmer of past times was completely autonomous as regards his basic needs like food and water. They were within his reach, and under his control. Nowadays food and almost everything we need depends on transportation and on petrol, because the things we need come from far off places. If the oil price rises, all the other prices rise and food and other necessities become more expensive.

In the 19th century the British philosopher John Stuart Mill throughout his work emphasised the value of liberty. He thought that uniformity was not just one peril among many but the greatest peril of them all. The experience of former totalitarian states gave us a taste of that but globalization today is creating uniformity on an even larger scale and is doing so throughout the whole world without any political discrimination. Mill's essay 'On liberty' is a very modern-sounding plea for autonomy and independence. John Stuart Mill advocated that any constraint or social pressure is evil and paralysing. It mutilates the human personality and atrophies the social scenery.

Stuart Mill was a supporter of the principle of minimum intervention. He stated that the only circumstances in which power could be exercised with legitimacy over a member of a civilized society and against his will, was to prevent damage to others. The person's best interest, physical or moral, is not a sufficient reason for power to be exercised against one's will. A man cannot be legitimately forced to act in a specific way or another because 'it is in his own interest' – or rather because others think that this is the case. *'Over himself, over his own body and soul,*

the individual is sole sovereign and he is not held responsible for his acts as long as these affect only his personal interests and not those of others.' (6)

Further more, the Russian essayist Bakunin explains that while the state can create equality, it does so at the expense of freedom, Hemingway also writes that 'what people want is the minimum of government, always less government'(7). In connection to this one might also mention Nietzsche's famous saying: *The state, I call it, where all are poison-drinkers, the good and the bad: the state, where all lose themselves, the good and the bad: the state, where the slow suicide of all--is called "life."*(8)

I am aware that I am painting a very ugly picture of the state's role in the life of the people but what is even uglier is the role of the super-state and the super-powers. Super-powers, through the international organizations they lead, such as the U.N, N.A.T.O, I.M.F (International Monetary Fund) and others, can rule national States, and have done so throughout contemporary history. I will give only one example of pure vicious behaviour on an international scale and the one I choose is the attack on Panama by the United States of America in December 1989. The raid on Panama City was the largest since World War II. This was an illegitimate attack upon the civil population and challenged the State's autonomy. Panama and its citizens did not threaten the U.S. or any other State. They did not break any piece of international legislation or any international agreement (including those with the U.S.). This act was unique in contemporary history (that is before events in Iraq where the U.S used some 'plausible' pretexts about weapons of mass-destruction). In the case of Panama however, the U.S. invaded another sovereign country and ignored their right to rule within their own territory. (The latter represents a State's 'freedom' in effect). The president of Panama was arrested in his own country by the American military for violation of American law!!! What right did the U.S.A. have to do such a thing to the president of another country? What right did they have to kill thousands of civilians and bomb their homes? In the aftermath, about 20,000 people lost their homes and became refugees. (9) I would like to draw your attention once again to Stuart Mill's essay 'On liberty'. He advocated that no country and no community have the right to interfere in the affairs of another. It is not in the hands of any country to 'help' the citizens of another as long as they don't ask for that help. It is not the job of some super-power to play the policeman or the law enforcer within another country's territory. But this is exactly what the U.S.A. have continued to do since the end of World War II.

To conclude, I will quote the infamous Theodore Kaczynski *'freedom means being in control of the life-and-death issues of one's existence, of food, clothing, shelter and defence against whatever threats there may be in one's environment. Freedom means having power, not the power to control other people but the power to control the circumstances of one's own life. One does not have freedom if anyone else (especially a large organization) has power over one, no matter how benevolently, tolerantly and permissively that power may be exercised.'*(10) The Nobel Prize winner for economics F. A. Hayek had quite different opinion. He stated that: *'Restraint is a condition, not the opposite of freedom. The basis of freedom as well are the restraints commonly accepted by the members of the group in which the moral rule prevails. The demand for 'liberation' from these restraints is an attack on all liberty possible among human beings. Freedom is order through law.'* (11) I strongly disagree because as I stated before I believe in the natural state Rousseau depicted (I will develop this idea further on in

chapter 3), and thus I do not consider man as violent by nature, but corrupted by property and the desire to look superior to his fellow man. Further more, the law today is becoming more and more restrictive towards the citizen and more intrusive. For example in US and Romania as well, to give only two examples, there are new, specific laws that violate the right to privacy and which allow the state to intercept in certain circumstances (the interests of security once again) all means of communication: phone, mail, and email.

Lacks of democracy

There are many people today that think democracy is the best political option available It being the only one that can satisfy the majority of people's needs. But the deal is, that this society creates artificial needs (you *need* more types of shoes to fit you and a whole variety of clothes. You need that new HD television, a faster car etc) to replace your original items. However, all of this cannot satisfy one's the need for independence, autonomy, freedom or *love*.

Some would state that the citizen makes a fair and satisfactory trade of some of his freedom for rights within society. However, the concept of constitutional rights that 'guarantee our freedom and protect it', often, in practice, means very little. For example, although the constitution guarantees one the right of free movement, this right is irrelevant anyway to anyone that doesn't have the necessary money to 'freely move'. Thus, many a time the degree of one's personal freedom is more subject to the economic and technological structures of society than to the laws or form of government.

As regards democracy itself as a system, *Back in the 19th century, the Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle attacked it as an absurd social ideal, while equally condemning hereditary aristocratic leadership. The latter was deadening, the former nonsensical: as though truth could be discovered by totting up votes.* This is still a very good argument against democracy and it hits one of its most solid pillars: the right to vote. (12)

THE FREE PERSON. THE ANARCHIST.

What makes man renounce his freedom for rights is his fear of responsibility. This is a very common problem for people today. They are afraid to take their lives in their own hands because if they fail they will only have themselves to blame. That is why I see many young people going to the college their parents chose for them even though they hate it. (For example, I know girls who would like to study the arts but their parents would not let them do so because they fear it is not well paid and you never know if you are going to be successful in such a career).

Most people spend their days doing what they are told to do in the way they are told. This phenomenon is now so widespread that people nowadays have become accustomed to buy books or attend classes in which they are taught how to have sex, how to raise their children properly or how to be feminine/ masculine. These things are supposed to be instinctive, to come naturally, but these days it seems that our own basic instincts have been domesticated. *Our society is on a path which progressively narrows the sphere of human freedom. Human behaviour is modified in order to fit the needs of the system and not vice versa. This means that*

political or social ideology is irrelevant because the system is guided by technical necessity. If there's a need for technical personnel a chorus of voices will exhort kids to study science. (9) No one stops to wonder whether it is inhuman to force teenagers to spend their free time studying subjects most of them hate. And this is because 'technology presents clear-cut material advantages, whereas freedom is an abstraction that means different things to different people, and its loss is easily obscured by propaganda and fancy talk.' (10) It reminds me of those Pink Floyd lyrics '*Welcome my son, welcome to the machine. What did you dream? It's alright we told you what to dream.*' (13) We're all just cogs in a huge social machine; we're irrelevant of course, meat in the mincer, Think of those millions whose deaths are simply statistics, people caught in wars they never agreed to, victims of chance and of decisions in which they had no role. This is the sick truth no one likes to admit: *freedom is only a hallucination.*

As I stated before when I quoted Nietzsche no one can be free within a State, within the system because the system wants the individual to serve its needs and not the individual's own needs. In Ernesto Sabato's novel 'Abaddon the Exterminator' in the chapter 'Of poor people and the circus' there's this quite eloquent example of anarchist behaviour and freedom. First I must explain the term 'Lyniera' used by the narrator. This is an Argentinean term used to describe the wandering people that travelled throughout the wide pampas in Argentina, and were absolutely free, working only when they wanted to without having a contract, of course, and without taking money for their work. They were a peaceful people and usually anarchists.

Sabato's text reads as follows:

'Lyniera were free as the birds in the sky, do you understand? They came to the farm, did something or the other if they felt like it and then left in the same way that they came. I can see them still, I can see Luvi packing his stuff and putting it in one bag, ready to go. Don Busto, the farmer, had told him to stay if he wanted to: "Luvi, my friend, you have work here and you will feel just fine." But Luvi said "No, Don Busto, I thank you, but I must follow my own road."

'He needed to follow his own road? But where to?'

'Where? Where the birds go. You know where?'

'No.' (14)

Most people think that this is an idealistic, romantic vision, *the man free like a bird in the sky.* But what could be more simple than that? All you need is to look up at the sky, breath in, smile and believe in yourself because fear of other people comes from lack of self trust and this is where all frustration begins. Now you are free. Free to open your arms wide towards the sky in order to embrace its blue and thus embrace your freedom. It has been well said that as long as a man has a piece of sky above his head he is a free man. As I stated before (The Architecture of Freedom) objects imprison people; in the end all we need to have is ourselves.

Freedom is, above all, a state of the spirit. But the spirit cannot be free in abstracto. It has to have freedom of action as well as of thought. Let us consider the thousands of free spirits that died or were brutally scarred in the hands of totalitarian regimes. Free spirits in dark, dirty, narrow cells. It is not enough to think freely, you need to be able to act according to your thoughts.

Now, someone might say that if it weren't for restrictions and limitations, we would not have a context to give meaning to freedom, but take a look at a bird's flight; is the bird free just because of the context? Freedom is just like the flight of the bird. Freedom means not having to think if

what you are doing is 'right' or if it is 'wrong' or if you are likely to get punished for breaking some law. It allows you to follow your self-made laws, your own personal values. This is what anarchy is really about. Not chaos and destruction, but the power to do as you please no matter what. The Russian anarchist Bakunin said: *I am a free man only so far as I recognise the humanity and liberty of all men around me. In respecting their humanity, I respect my own*, (15) JJ Rousseau expressed similar ideas. Thus is that that man in his natural and free state does not need to impose violence upon his fellow man. This, in my opinion, is doubly so as (as I have outlined in Chapter 2) the life of a free person is often quite a solitary one. Of course, I am not trying to say freedom implies a solitary nature just that sometimes they come hand in hand because the company of others involves pleasing them and sometimes renouncing your own pleasures for the sake of others. This might be looked upon, from the common, domesticated perspective as selfishness, but why so? Just because we are expected to put the interests (family, friends, group, country etc.) of others above our own does not mean that we, deep down inside really want this. It is only what we are thought to want. Obviously, this is a quite extreme point of view, may be, because people nowadays can hardly enjoy their life in solitude. Anarchy and freedom are both about life. The principle that both submit to is LIFE. Let us compare the life of an anarchist to the life of a soldier. The soldier is under a solemn oath that implies following some strict rules, keeping secret their military activities and not being able to leave the service until a long period of time has passed. (In Romania someone who starts military school is obliged to work 10 years in the army before being able to resign) A soldier is under constant vigilant surveillance. This is a renunciation of his personal life, of his freedom. Personally, I find it hard to believe they are doing this for some obsolete patriotic ideal or out of honour because I am convinced they are doing it for power. They are the people with the guns. They are the people who specialize in combat. They are stronger than us and they are, presumably, here to protect us. Isn't it a paradox that these people who have such great power over us (the power of guns and of force and of legitimacy) have such little power over themselves? Isn't it a paradox that they are less free than we are?

The Anarchist and the Absurd

The kind of man that the existentialists portray, and I'm referring here especially at Camus' works, is condemned to the absurd because of his mortality. This is the absurd man but not in the common, negative meaning of the term. The absurd individual looks at the world the way it is, completely acknowledging life's ruthless ways and his own mortality and insignificance but choosing to defy and resist it with all his might. This absurd person, without having any illusions about anything, loves life and chooses action. I do not know if this is what Camus would have thought when he wrote about his absurd characters, but, in my opinion, it is a description that perfectly fits the anarchist type. This is because both the absurd man and the anarchist follow the same motto. This motto was expressed by Stirner and reads as follows: *What is Good? All which serves my cause. What am I allowed to do? All that I can*. Not doing all that lays in your powers is a sort of renunciation, admitting you are defeated. *'Outside this unique fatality of death, everything, joy or happiness, is freedom. All that is left is a world where man is the sole ruler. The thing that imprisoned him was the illusion of another world.'* (16) Further more, Camus' teacher, Jean Grenier observed that *'Absolute freedom is the destruction of any value*

whilst absolute value suppresses any liberty' in other words, if there is a unique and universal value, there is no reason for freedom to exist. This is why freedom consists of personal values, self-made rules and not accepting an other's prefabricated truths and rules and, at the same time, not expecting others to accept yours as universal. This means, of course, that freedom is different from man to man and is relative.

Let's get back to the definition of freedom. Most scholars say it is a negative one because it does not explain what freedom is but what it is not. I will say, yes, freedom is actually negative, but not due to its definition, but because it implies the possibility of not doing what is best for oneself (in full consciousness, of course, otherwise, it's not an act of freedom), to take risks and live without safety, to make mistakes, to ruin ones life if one pleases. Why not if that is what the person wants? But society would not allow that, society would 'help' that 'troubled' individual who they perceive as going astray. Not that society, gives a real damn about just another number, but because one single case can create precedents and set bad examples for the rest to follow.

THE FUTURE OF LIBERTY

The time and energy people invest in things is increasing. There are people who spend whole months of a year in front of the computer, or in cars or trapped in different mechanical activities. The objects in our life rule our lives. We spend more time with them rather than with people, friends, family. Maybe it is because they are so perfect, so interactive, so entertaining and ... the objects never disagree with us or ask things from us. We have technology specifically designed to occupy our free-time. I know it is just word play, 'free time', but when young people and kids 'choose' to sit on their asses the whole day in front of some screen doing God knows what mind numbing thing and ruining their health along with their IQ – something is terribly wrong. It is an addiction but the fault is with the manufacturer because they are made to be addictive. They are made to lure us and make us think we actually need these objects. We are caught by invisible wires to gadgets we don't need and our technology restricts us rather than liberating us. This will not sound scientific, but a look around you on the streets will assure you that it is a fact: what modern life with its technology makes of us is: 'comfortably numb'.

Communication is already disrupted due specifically to the wide range of long distance communication tools. People talk more using technology than through direct contact with one another. People in the bus and on the street all have earphones. Those accidental little chats with the stranger next to you are now history. People are more and more alienated. All they see is their work and career and accumulation.

In an article suggestively entitled 'Why the future doesn't need us' (17), Bill Joy, cofounder and Chief Scientist of Sun Microsystems writes about how our most powerful 21st-century technologies - robotics, genetic engineering, and nanotech - are threatening to make humans an endangered species. The whole idea of the text is that because man continues to create more intelligent machines that are capable of making things better than humans do, and because someday soon the intelligent robots and androids will replace all human work '*the human race will be at the mercy of machines*'. And not just that, but if everything is done by the robots what is left for the humans to do? Live a vegetative life?

Another perspective of the future was depicted in George Orwell's famous novel '1984'. This is not at all about the advancing technologies putting an end to human freedom but about ideologies that govern each and every aspect of one's life. It's about brainwashing and a life of complete lie where the citizen must always be ready to see black as white on command, and make 5 out of 2 plus 2.

'There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life, if you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping a human face – forever' says O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party. More so, this dystopic future does not need to have real enemies or underdogs – it manufactures them in order to maintain constant terror among its citizens *The heretic, the enemy of society, will always be there, so that he can be defeated and humiliated over again.*

(1)

Another danger, that has already drawn its shadow around us, is uniformity. This uniformity comes hand in hand with democracy and capitalism in the shape of globalization. In the past, people from different countries lived different lives in different ways. Cultural diversity was a striking fact. Today, most peoples have lost their cultural identities. Young people are embarrassed by their country's traditional customs. Romanians want to look like Americans their age do. The Japanese follow the western pattern in almost all their activities. Social habits around the world have been replaced with the western one. Homes look the same all around the world. Everybody shops at the supermarket and the mall and dresses the same. They drink Coca-Cola and eat hamburgers. This is indeed the greatest danger for freedom, uniformity. And in our modern society this danger comes in the shape of 'freedom of choice'. Yes, the market offers us a wide variety of options. If you want a soda you can choose from: Pepsi: Normal, Max, Light, Twist, and Twist light, Coca-Cola: Light, Zero, Normal, Fanta (property of the Coca cola company as well): Light, Normal, Orange, Exotic and many more! It is the same world wide. This so-called 'freedom of choice' is nothing but a slap in the face of liberty. People easily become incapable of conceiving of diversity if they have become accustomed to its lack for a while.

The whole *diversity* that capitalism has brought to the communist countries and to the rest of the world is through the market. Its name is consumerism. Its polite name is comfort. But the comfort will never be comfortable for someone who seeks something that is not on the market. And honestly, what people really need is not to buy things but to have a clear picture of themselves, to love and be loved. People need to live life to the full not to accumulate and consume endlessly.

Through the eyes of the present, and if things follow the same path they have done so far, freedom lacks a future.

Determinism

In the past the liberum arbitrium (free will) was undermined by the idea of divinity and of man having a destiny which he cannot escape from. From this point of view, the idea of sin makes no sense, since the sinner is only following a path which has been given to him and not a chosen road. In the highly technological world of the 21st century atheism is growing stronger but free will is still not a certainty for anyone, because science, just like religion in the past, seems to promote the same idea of man's lack of freedom and dependence on conditions he did not

create. For example, the Big Bang theory is a good basis for determinism because it states that the initial conditions of the explosion have formed the development of the universe until its end. In other words, the way the universe began tells how it will develop and end. We ourselves are only an insignificant part of the scheme. This sort of ideas are in way a total denial of the liberum arbitrium.

Final statement

All things considered, freedom is hard to define, and, being more of an abstract idea, people easily renounce it in favour of material benefit. I have tried to bring up the lacks of today's society, democracy and capitalism and show how these interfere with the idea of liberty, and how the first cannot offer true freedom, but only 'gulps of freedom'. Along with this idea I have criticized the greatest liberty that capitalism proclaims: *'the freedom of choice'*. I have discussed the problems that globalization and the super-states produce. Together with these aspects that limit the area of freedom I also made a short analysis of the way people should start building their own freedom. In addition I gave an up to date, concrete example based on personal experience about how people can delude themselves thinking they are more free than others are just because they listen to some other music genre. I have expressed my preference for the anarchist approach on freedom considering it to be the one that truly fits the meaning of the liberum arbitrium. In the last chapter I have presented my disbelief in a better future for liberty because I see people more and more dependent upon the objects that they use and mentioned determinism as a complete denial of the principle of free will, and thus a complete denial of the idea of liberty.

Taking a look at the actual substance of things, at the society we live in today and its various mechanisms of constraint and manipulation, as I did in each of the chapters of this paper, one cannot but draw the conclusion that freedom is only a figure of speech. A word in the dictionary. It does not exist for it is being denied to each and every one of us. Freedom is only a hallucination. But it is you own hallucination, you can still breakthrough to it if only you try. The first step is self-knowledge.

SOURCES:

Where I have quoted in English from Romanian versions as below, these are my own translations.

1. Orwell, G. (2002). *1984*. Bucuresti: Editura Polirom
2. Fukuyama, F. (2002) *Sfarsitul istoriei si ultimul om*. Bucuresti: Editura Paidea
3. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (March 2008) *Into the wild* (10 May 2008)
4. Zamiatin, E. (1991) *Noi*. Bucuresti: Humanitas
5. Fisher, Jill A. and Monahan, Torin. *Tracking the Social Dimensions of RFID Systems in Hospitals*. International Journal of Medical Informatics 77 (3): 176-183 29 April 2007
http://torinmonahan.com/papers/Fisher_Monahan_RFID_IJMI.pdf (1 May 2008)
6. Mill, J. S. (2005). *Despre libertate*. Bucuresti: Humanitas
7. Hemingway, E. (1987). *The Gambler, the Nun and the radio* from *Winner takes nothing* New York: Scribner Publisher
8. Nietzsche, F. (2005). *Asa grai-a Zarathustra*. Bucuresti: Editura Antet
9. Perkins, J. (2007) *Confesiunile unui asasin economic*. Bucuresti: Litera
10. Kaczynski, T. (1995). *Industrial society and its future*. <http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/>
11. Hayek, F.A. <http://www.fee.org/publications/the-freeman/> Ideas on Liberty - May 2006 (9 May 2008)
12. Wikipedia (January 2008) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Thomas Carlyle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Carlyle) (9 May 2008)
13. Pink Floyd (1975) album *Wish you Were Here* song *Welcome to The Machine*
14. Sabato, E. (2005) *Abbadon Exterminatorul*. Bucuresti: Humanitas
15. Bakunin, M <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/>
16. Camus, A. (2002). *Fata si reversul / Nunta / Mitul lui Sisif / Omul revoltat / Vara*. Bucuresti : Rao
17. Billy Joy, (2000) *Why the future doesn't need us* <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/> (May 2008)



