

# PHILOSOPHY

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### EDITORIAL

"MAN is born free, and everywhere he is in chains," said Rousseau. This, however, puts the cart before the horse. It is truer to say that man was born in chains, and everywhere he is struggling to be free. Notwithstanding, however, his long history, man has not yet got rid of his chains. Indeed, it would seem that nations sometimes, after having enjoyed for a period a large measure of freedom, return to their fetters when confronted with a crisis. Faith in a generous toleration and in the light of Reason is temporarily lost, and primitive forces once more rise to the surface and dominate the lives of men. Thus the tortures of Prometheus are renewed. But Reason, though exiled, cannot be slain. So long as there is life at a high conscious level, Reason cannot indefinitely be denied her proper function of guide and friend to the human soul, for without the wisdom which is her gift man cannot survive as a civilized being.

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Freedom for adventure in the realms of thought and practice would seem to be a necessity for human life. There can be no lasting satisfaction with any static order of affairs, however momentarily excellent. Life's insistent demand is for scope to advance to novel forms of achievement and expression. Its denial engenders restlessness in the soul and a deep discontent. Moreover, since living consciousness is essentially creative, it cannot be imprisoned in any permanent and unchanging form without ultimately sickening of the malaise *taedium*, and entering upon the path of decay.

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At the present time the creative soul of the world whose essence is freedom is sorely maimed. And this impairment of health is not

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wholly due to the antagonisms of man with man. These, indeed, play a sinister rôle enough in hindering the growth of freedom. But the massive habits of physical nature also contribute their quota in the frustration of human purposes. Heat and cold, birth and death, disease and famine, earthquake and storm, constitute the background to the human drama which is being played throughout the ages. Further, the growth of applied physical science in our day has brought added dangers, making us acutely aware that the more complicated civilization becomes, the more it is open to attack.

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The essence of human freedom is the power to accomplish practical purposes, to achieve ends which satisfy deep-rooted human needs. But it is just this freedom of action which is so difficult to attain. Economic forces have played no insignificant part in this frustration. Hence to-day the primary demand made in the name of freedom is for economic security and a reasonable degree of social order. But since man cannot live by bread alone, freedom also demands an environment in which certain ideal ends bearing intrinsic values can be pursued. It is this blending of ideals and economic policies which constitutes the web of human history. One of the most pressing questions of to-day is whether economic freedom for the masses can be purchased without a large sacrifice of political liberty. Herein lies the significance of those experiments which are to-day being made in certain countries.

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Since in every modern state there are many types of individuals and groups, each having its own character and its own worth, freedom for all is impossible without mutual toleration. But intolerance is the besetting sin of every society. Times without number it has defeated the pursuit of freedom and brought disaster and ruin. In the modern state there cannot be freedom without a generous toleration of diversity. What is to be aimed at is not the destruction of different groups with their specific character in the interests of a false ideal of homogeneity, but room for each to make its contribution to the common life in its own way.

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This form of social freedom is the ideal of all great statesmen. Fortunately in the wide field of human activity represented by professional institutions it has been largely attained. The modern State has come to realize that it is not within its competence to decide upon matters which fall within the province of learning, art, and even religion, but only to provide opportunities for learning and

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ability to flourish. Thereby it expresses its belief that sound knowledge can be trusted to banish error, a belief that has been increasingly justified. In many regions of human thought Reason has thus won a strong foothold, bringing as its gift a wider freedom to man.

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But beyond the ideal of social freedom, Plato teaches us there is a deeper freedom which the individual soul needs for its peace. This freedom lies beyond all temporal circumstances good or bad, being based on an intuition of the eternal order of things, and upon the conviction that human life is grounded in a realm of values changeless in the midst of change. This deeper freedom, according to Whitehead, can be enjoyed by all who, through understanding, come to learn that as individuals they are partners in the supreme adventure of the universe as a whole, an adventure which is concerned with the realization of all possible values. The possession of such an intuition is, in his words, "the reconciliation of freedom and the compulsion of the truth."

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Finally, it may be asked if the notion of freedom is justified by the constitution of Nature. In every human society there has been some liberty and some compulsion, and the values of human life have been won in an environment constituted by a synthesis of both in some compatible proportion. Is freedom as well as compulsion an operative factor in Nature as a whole? If this be the true view, then Nature is not merely the product of an inevitable causal process, but is also that which issues from the exercise of spontaneity; and if self-creativity be an ultimate metaphysical principle, we have here the ground for the conviction that the idea of freedom is not merely an idle play of the emotions, but is a belief justified by the ultimate constitution of reality.