# The Values of Freedom and Security

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Los Angeles CA May 6, 2020

When one idea meets another, the resulting intercourse can bring about the birth of new and unique concepts. This may not always be true; -some ideas can’t stand each other; some are infertile anyway. (And, -perhaps a condom is being used by either party to restrict conception.)

Yet, the dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis may be applicable to a variety of constructs. Dialectics is just another tool with which to gain understanding about ourselves and the world we live in. Words themselves objectify experience, and, as Korzybski noted, can be seen as “frozen time”. Words and thoughts are re-presentations of our past and/or imagined possibilities in some form or another. We see the world through the lens of thoughts and ideas that then shape our perceptions and actions. In previous papers I’ve noted that:

1) I perceive the world for what I think/feel/sense/imagine it is… (thesis)

2) I perceive the world as opposite of what I think/feel/sense/imagine it is… (antithesis)

3) I perceive the world as a quite different amalgamation of the above. (synthesis)

4) And the paradox is all of the above may be true in some context.

As a psychotherapist I’m often dealing with two diverse contexts of client presenting problems. There are those clients who are experiencing a degree of chaos with emotional dysregulation and obsessive intrusive imagery and ideation. Their behavior and perceptions are erratic and often appears senseless. Then there are those clients who feel stuck, static and are in a kind of perpetual stasis in their lives. Their behavior is often robotic with a dulling of emotion, creativity and motivation in general. And of course, there are those that switch from one mode to the other who seem incapable of maintaining a true balance in their lives.

**Security and Freedom**

These are the two biggest concerns in our lives. They appear to be very different dimensions.

We all want security. For some of us, that’s a partner, family, or a career or a house or perhaps just a hell of a lot more money.

Nothing wrong with wanting these things.

And when you really think about it:

**SECURITY correlates to**:

1) Stability

2) Consistency

3) Predictability

4) Safety

Again, -very good things to experience. We believe that they are things that we can “have” or “get.”

And, -in order obtain our security we have a system of values that we follow to become secure.

Do the right thing; not the wrong thing.

Do the good thing; not the bad thing.

Do the true thing; not the false thing.

Do the healthy thing; not the sick thing.

These values that are used to establish security may also be called **obligations**. These are the “have to’s” the “shoulds” and the “musts” that most all of us live by. In some ways they represent the Superego, and ways to maintain safety and belonging for ourselves and others. They also provide an internal form of “authority”, self-discipline and “making” ourselves behave. We make ourselves feel secure.

But there is a simple problem with just living this way….

For example, we all know it’s right to stop at a stop sign and a stop-light. It’s the good, true and healthy thing to do. But- if you started to bleed out in my office and I took you to my car to go to the emergency room…would I “stop” at every stop sign or stop light?

Hell no.

(Though I would be cautious-and probably terribly anxious as I did the “wrong”, “bad” and “unhealthy” thing.)

Why would I jeopardize my security in this situation?

Because there is something just as important as security. It’s called Freedom.

**FREEDOM correlates to**:

1) Change

2) Variation

3) Novelty

4) Adventure

The value set that maintains freedom has nothing to do with judging behaviors as the right thing or the wrong thing, the good or the bad…

The way we sustain freedom is quite simple.

We can be and do the same thing or you can do and be something different. We can agree to disagree without making the other wrong, bad or sick.

For example, in this country we have the freedom to vote. However, if it were ordained, “You have the right to vote, BUT- if you don’t vote you will go to jail…” This really isn’t about choice; voting becomes an obligation. So, -freedom is not about “making” ourselves, -it’s about “allowing” ourselves-and others. Freedom is the opportunity to allow yourself and others to be the same or different without sanctions. It is the basis for free speech, freedom of religion, and all of the freedoms we have. It may include agreeing with an other’s perspective or disagreeing, -without making another wrong, bad or sick for their beliefs and actions. We allow ourselves to be free. Freedom requires accountability. It is the opportunity to be responsible for your own behavior. It is also the capability to be mindful and aware of the here and now of both your internal process and the world.

At times, what individuals consider being “free” not about freedom at all.

The exception in most cultures occurs when that expression of freedom may bring harm to ourselves and others. Yelling “fire” in a crowded movie theater when there is no fire is not an example of “free speech.” Having a public gathering that supports violence or harm to other races or creeds different from your own is not considered a freedom.

We cannot be free if we are stuck in past regrets, fears or future worries. Helping others to become “free” requires a nonjudgmental approach. We cannot be secure if the behavior of others is going to cause harm. In this regard we are mandated to be judgmental.

So, we can see that these two basic human needs/rights for security and freedom appear to be in completely different dimensions. The space-time continuum also appears that way, but we know that each impacts the other. There is an integration of both, -at least according to Einstein and others. If we used a dialectical model to combine these qualities, what could we come up with?

(Thesis + Antithesis= Synthesis) This would most probably be a nonsumnative quality, as opposed to a mere additive one. For example, adding or mixing the colors of yellow and blue does not give us *more* yellow or blue, -it gives us ***green***.

So, another way to look at this would be:

## **Thesis Antithesis Synthesis**

Security Freedom Democracy

Stability Change Evolution

Structure Process Flow

Consistency Variation Differentiation

Obligation Choice Commitment

Predictability Randomness Probability

Objectification Subjectification Empathy

**Or, visually:**

**Thesis**  **Synthesis** **Antithesis**

Stability **Evolution**  Change

**Consistency Differentiation Variation**

Predictability  **Novelty** Randomness

Performance Artists

Safety **Photo Safari’s, Disneyland**  Adventure

Obligation **Commitment**  Choice

Security **Democracy**  Freedom

Security is often about the "having" of things while Freedom is more about the “being” of things:

**HAVING:**  **BEING:**

$,home, roles, Experiences,

Hierarchy Equality

Complementarity Symmetry

Authority/Subordinate Peers, I- THOU

**VALUE SET** **VALUE SET**

**Right/Wrong** **Right/Left**

**Good/ Bad** **Same/Different**

As Ben Franklin once said, **“He who sacrifices freedom for security deserves neither”.**

So, how do we find this balance, this integration between the two?

I believe that this is the journey that we all need to go through. As much as laws and commandments may be essential guides for security, they also compromise choice, -unless we also are mindful of the nuance of context. What is the context of harm to self? Harm to others? What occurs when we follow the rules for security blindly disregarding the context and our own free will?

Honoring your mother and father may be difficult if there is incest and other abuse.

Not killing may be difficult if someone is attempting to kill you, family and friends.

I would definitely lie to the Nazis if I knew my neighbor was hiding Jews in the attic.

And so on….

As a therapist I will be both judgmental and nonjudgmental. I will be judgmental if someone’s behavior is jeopardizing their own health and welfare or that of others, because here I’m dealing with the context of security. I will be nonjudgmental in facilitating the process of change.

I believe those of us completely invested in security promote stasis.

Those who are completely invested in freedom promote chaos.

The idea of being “centered” is a static construct for me. I believe the synthesis of these qualities has more of a dynamic nature. It’s like standing on a board balancing on a round barrel. You’re going to constantly be moving from one direction or another to stay balanced. As long as you don’t fall, you’re good to go. When you do, -which you will no doubt, -you’ll learn.

All of the above writing is simply based on my own experience, perceptions and opinions.

It may be different from yours.

If it is, -that doesn’t make you wrong.

Or me, for that matter.

Think about it.

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