

During our debate about freedom and free will, the idea of the confined prisoner seemed flawless to me. His physical freedom has been limited, but he is still able to enjoy freedom of thought. He can wish to go to Paris, but he will not be physically able to go. We, on the other hand, seem to have both freedom of will and action. That is until I got home and thought about this problem some more.

I imagined what would happen if I made up my mind to go to Paris and acted on that impulse now. First, I would miss my work on Sunday morning, and second, I would miss my finals on Monday. These consequences seem to already put some limitation to my freedom. I admit that both work and school can be considered to be self-imposed responsibilities, nonetheless do they still limit, or at least darken, my trip to Paris.

Maybe if I was diagnosed to be terminally ill, I might not care about these consequences. But, the next problem immediately arises. A plane ticket to France needs to be financed. Most of us don't carry enough change for a plane ticket in their pockets. But let's assume I was lucky enough to own a credit card. [Since I don't care about my grades, I might as well not care about my debt either...☺]

Very well, I have now freed myself of all worries and endured an 8-hour economy flight to Paris. Next, I am being denied entry to France because my passport has expired. Now, I feel like the prisoner of our discussion. My physical freedom to roam has been limited. I realize that even with a valid passport, there would still be numerous countries in the world I would not be allowed to travel to without prior permission.

Now, I am being forced to fly back to Columbus. On the way back, I happen to read the book ‘Cosmic Trigger’ by Robert Anton Wilson. A passage that describes a letter written by Timothy Leary during one of his imprisonments catches my eye:

“The prison administration is perfect. They act as a Van Allen belt protecting my privacy, screening out distractions... the people they refuse visiting privileges are exactly those who come to exploit me or whose love for me is flawed. (My gratitude toward the prison warden must not be understood. They are too possessive and jealous – terrible states to be in. Their love and dependence on me are too restricting. They are terrorized that I might leave them...”¹

This seems to somehow help me on my search for freedom. At all times am I a prisoner of some kind. My own self-imposed responsibilities, our monetary system, laws made up by the governments and tribes, and my own physical [in]-capabilities. Timothy Leary offers a solution: it’s all a matter of attitude. In fact, Robert Anton Wilson also talks about reality-tunnels in this book. This means that we create our reality similar to reading a newspaper. We filter what seems to be important to us and forget the rest. If my reality tunnel consists of focusing on all the things I cannot do, then I do indeed have a very limited freedom. However, if I focus on all the freedom that I do have, then I have created an entirely different reality.

¹ Robert Anton Wilson. “Cosmic Trigger Vol.1”.