

What is Freedom?

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free·dom, noun: The power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint. Absence of subjection to foreign domination or despotic government.

My intellectual comrade Sam Bowman from the Adam Smith Institute recently (2011) wrote a blog discussing two different versions of the word freedom. Sam tends to use the definition I use, but regardless of the fact, Sam and I regard freedom as high in value, in order to discuss the pro and cons of freedom, we must agree on the definition.

Using the dictionary definition of freedom, we can then start looking at freedom not from a philosophical perspective, but from an objective scientific perspective. Regardless of one's moral view, we can all agree that someone in chains does not have freedom. Meaning that there is an object in their way restricting their movement. The hard part is what happens when they are released from their chains. If the newly freed individual is hungry and has no money to purchase food, are they free?

Objectively, yes. Being poor does not mean you do not have freedom. People are still free to earn wealth. In a system of forced wealth redistribution the poor will never be free as they are hindered by the welfare trap. The only true way to free is to be self reliant.

Does this mean people with wealth should not give to charity? No. Charity is useful to yourself personally, as it makes you look over your personal finances and become more frugal. Giving to charities for children especially helps you guarantee a peaceful environment in the future.

As I have said, freedom, like most words in a serious debate, should always be kept as a strict technical term to avoid confusion and manipulation. Freedom should be viewed in an objective manner as *friction* is viewed scientifically.

The question should be, "Do we or do we not benefit from freedom?"