

In the tumultuous and turbulent world in which we humans inhabit, the question of what must be compromised in the name of safety is one that has perpetually popped into and out of focus. In times of prosperity, the question is seldom asked. In times of crisis, however, entire societies mobilize to answer that question and to act upon their answer, sometimes to disastrous results. The political elite of societies, those who benefit from the expansion of the government and desire to see their influence expanded, will often assert that the common man desires not freedom, but safety. "The government," they say with their silver tongues and disarming masks of benevolence, "will take your freedoms away, but it provide you with the safety that you all so desperately desire. Doesn't that sound like a fair deal?" Too often, the masses are deceived by this clever ruse, and response to this question with an enthusiastic "Yes! It does seem like a fair deal!" The people proceed to applaud as they watch those with power and influence gobble up their freedoms and strip them of their capacity to live fulfilling lives, all while remaining ignorant to the fact that they gave will never truly received the safety that they have been promised. Safety and freedom, while almost unilaterally viewed as diametrically opposed aspects of reality, are in fact two sides of the same coin. "Safety" is freedom from unwanted disturbances and disruptions. The question that few bother to ask given this information is "Why is safety valuable in the first place?" A moment of thought reveals the truth: humans crave safety over freedom in the short term, but only in pursuit of freedom in the long term. Safety in and of itself is a means to an end, and freedom is the ultimate goal that the average person seeks to achieve. The elite of society who attempt to rob the public of their freedom in the name of safety ignore this fact, and additionally ignore the fact that there is a strong contingent of the population that will not acquiesce to their ostensibly benevolent demands. In recent years, the response of the American public to acts of tyranny and abuse from their government has proven this beyond a shadow of a doubt. Humans don't desire safety over freedom; it is freedom that they treasure above all else.

Relationship betwixt safety and freedom is one that is immutable. To be truly free in a society, as the scholars of the Enlightenment like Locke and Rousseau have stated in ages past, one must be willing to give some of that freedom up in favor of the social contract, the norms and regulations to ensure that society operates functionally and cohesively. From an initial glance, it may seem that fact supports the ideas of those who would claim that humans desire safety over their freedom. After all, human regularly and willingly relinquish their freedoms to ensure their own safety and the stability of their society. However, this is surface-level analysis of a greater truth. Humans experience freedom not only because they are free to do as they wish, but because they are protected from the malintent of others. An individual in a free society is free to make any choice and decision that they please, as long as those choices and decisions do not inhibit the rights of others to experience the same freedom. This is the beautifully operational paradox of freedom. In order to be free, one must be protected from others who would wish them harm, and therefore must relinquish some of their freedoms for their safety. This is not evidence that humans prefer safety over freedom. Contrarily, this indicates that humans desire freedom above all else, to such a high degree, in fact, that they are willing to give up their freedoms in pursuit of them. In a manner that is intentionally contradictory, seemingly nonsensical, and ostensibly impossible, humanity, when given the opportunity, always arranges itself in this manner. Those who claim that safety is valued over

freedom fail to see that the common person views safety as a tool, a means to an end. Men do not treasure their tools; rather, they treasure what comes as a result of the utilization of their tools.

The perspective expressed above is not only validated by philosophical ramblings and theoretical analysis, but by concrete behaviors observed throughout history. The most prominent of these behaviors have been exhibited by humans of the modern age, whose liberties and freedoms are constantly under threat as the forces that seek to take them away expand in influence and power. In recent years, the American government has demonstrated a rather authoritarian pattern of behavior. Starting in the early 2000's and continuing to the present day, the government has made a habit of spying unlawfully on its own citizens in the name of counter-terrorism. Over the years, there have been various pushes to increase the power and scope of the government in this arena. The expansive and invasive implications of the Patriot Act, the chilling and disturbing truths revealed by Edward Snowden regarding the power of the NSA, and information leaked to the Internet earlier this week revealing the downright terrifying and Orwellian capabilities of the CIA demonstrate this point well enough. It seems that the government thirsts for our freedoms, as a man stranded in a desert thirsts for water. However, despite the government's best efforts to keep such intentions hidden from the public, this information has been continually released to the world at large. The result has always been the same: outrage. The citizenry does not sit idly by when it is clear that the government seeks to restrict and control it. Nay, the citizens begin a campaign of open warfare against their oppressors, not by means of violence, but through the sacred and treasured avenues of democracy. Journalists write scathing articles detailing their indignation and outrage, and describing how the actions of the government clearly and demonstrably violate their rights as citizens. Activists form protests and sign petitions, forcing the responsible government agencies to change their actions. The average citizen takes his outrage to his home, to his church, to his place of work, and to his school. In these spaces of interaction, he shares his outrage with others and thereby sparks the flame of dissent in the hearts of all who are present. One does not see this fiery reaction to the violation of essential freedoms in a people that value their safety over their freedom. In a world in which freedom is under fire, the people have continually and reliably fired back, defending their rights by all means possible. Safety is not unilaterally valued more than freedom. In instances such as the ones discussed above, safety is discarded in favor of freedom. Those who actively attempt to convince the world otherwise have either never experienced the world as it truly is, or have willingly blinded themselves to the truth.

Freedom is the ultimate desire for all humans. It is the rallying cry around which young men prepare themselves to run headfirst in death's cold embrace. It is the glimmering light of hope that keeps the enslaved and disenfranchised breathing. It is the sweet promise that comforts the elderly as they lie broken and powerless, living their last moments. The desire to achieve freedom has defined and dictated nearly all human actions from the dawn of time. Towards that end, humans have created free societies in which they willingly surrender a portion of their rights so that they may be completely free from the abuses of others. While seemingly paradoxically, it is a perfect system of equilibrium, a system that ensures that you are limited by no other humans when exercising your freedoms to achieve happiness. There are some who view this system of perfect equilibric freedom as a sign that humans would rather live

in subjugation in order to preserve stability than to exercise their freedoms without restrictions. This is an utterly inaccurate assessment of reality. Safety and stability, while pursued and valued by our societies, are not what we treasure most. They are stepping stones on the path to our truest desire: freedom. Do not heed the words of those who claim that humanity desires its own enslavement. Such voices could not be further from the truth. Humans are designed to live in freedom. The greatest thinkers of Western civilization have come to this conclusion, and the actions of humans in recent years have validated that perspective. Though constantly threatened by powers above, humans continuously rebel against those who seek to strip them of their rights. Freedom is the forbidden fruit that hangs from the Tree of Life in Eden. Taking a bite from its supple flesh makes the world imperfect, but its taste and allure compels humans to disregard all else, even mandates that come from heaven itself.