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RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AND FREEDOM

1. The Problem

The human soul is ever thrilled by the prospects of freedom. When Rousseau wrote, in *The Social Contract*,¹ that "man is born free; and everywhere he is in Chains," he became a champion of human freedom. A little over a century ago, communists came up with their version of the ideal of freedom, a freedom in the economic sphere. The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* declares: "here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within its slavery..."² "Let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."³

Is freedom a human reality to be achieved by a kind of communistic revolution envisaged by Marx and Engels? Or is man an incarnation of freedom itself as Paul Sartre would have it? Herbert Marcuse in his criticism of *Being and Nothingness* of Sartre, from a Marxian point of view endeavours to show that the Existentialist concept of freedom as a reality located entirely in the individual consciousness is in conflict with the materialistic interpretation of freedom as a product of social-historical development which could be augmented through a more rational organization of the relationships of production in the society. Hence he concludes: "In the concrete historical reality, the freedom of the *pour-soi*, to whose glorification Sartre devotes his entire book, is thus nothing but one of the preconditions for the possibility of freedom - it is not freedom itself."⁴ We shall return to this point once again at a later stage in our discussion.

1. J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, (London: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1952), p.3.
2. *Manifesto*, Progress Publishers, 1977, p.48.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
4. George Novack (ed.), *Existentialism Versus Marxism*, (New York Dell Pub. Co., 1966,) p. 166.

Here the materialist seems to shift the definition of human freedom from the sphere of consciousness to that of material satisfaction, from toil to enjoyment, from the moral to the pleasure principle.⁵ These two alternative positions as regards freedom itself is a challenge to one's freedom, for it implies a call to commit oneself to one of these positions. Can men escape all commitments, intellectual as well as emotional? What would be the validity or authenticity of a life uncommitted to any position? Can commitment and freedom co-exist in all its spheres? These are a few issues this article proposes to discuss.

2. The Phenomenon of Commitment

i) *Presence of freedom in the commitment*: The mystery of human existence becomes all the more mysterious when one realizes that the pattern of behaviour of a man changes in relation to the shaping and undoing of his faith, belief, conviction, vision or commitment. From an epistemological point of view, we can easily notice that there is a difference in the degree of intensity with which one is related to various forms of one's own awareness. Faith is a form of knowledge which by its very nature shuts all avenues to any form of challenge. Belief can be conceived as a propositional expression of the content of faith. Since every attempt to express a faith-content could naturally fall short in its aim, the certitude with which one attaches himself to a belief would be less intensive in comparison with faith. Something on which a person has a vision or intuition or conviction would exert an unimaginable influence on the life of that person and the commitment of the whole person to what he has intuited or discerned could be its natural consequence.

In the presence of unassailable evidences, a piece of information grows into a strong conviction resulting in a commitment. The state of mind changes in proportion to the evidence it receives. Man becomes aware of objects through senses. Mere awareness about something is only information. We make an opinion about what we are informed, when we get more acquaintance with the object. With the addition of more evidence, opinion becomes certain knowledge and conviction. Through deeper experience what we have known for certain becomes an intuitive experience or a vision. To that which is seen clearly we firmly commit ourselves. The foundation of this commitment is the understanding of truth. Committed life begets

5. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

stable attitudes which enable one to live his convictions without conscious effort. Here the question of freedom becomes problematic, for a 'stable attitude' seems to imply a necessity.

People often live with an unarticulated vision of life or the world (*Weltanschung*) in which value-judgements concerning the realities in their life, including God, world and man himself are neatly synthesized. This vision stands as the hard core of one's personality and therefore his behaviour would be conditioned by the attitude he has developed based on his world-vision. As a person develops a different understanding and views about the three basic realities, namely God, the world and man, his world/life vision and, consequently, the behavioural attitude, also will change. This points to the fact, that even in the commitment to an intuition or vision of reality, one is basically free, although he may not directly experience it at the time of active commitment.

ii) *Plurality of Spheres in Commitment*

It is a matter of experience that all commitments, intellectual, religious, secular or emotional, are based on a discernment. For example, it would be contrary to experience to suppose that we ourselves are 'gross bodies'. There is a belief in the immortality based on the awareness that we are more than the sum total of our empirical experiences. Psychologists and spiritual writers designate cognitive process implied here as discernment. A discernment is the prelude of a commitment. Without the perception of a 'depth' which is unseen no religion will be possible.

On further analysis, it is possible to discover distinctive kinds of discernments as commitment themselves are diverse. Why a youth falls in love with a girl or enters a specific line of study or career over against the other possibilities? Why a man subscribes to a particular religion or a philosophy? It is our experience that even untrained personal conscience sometimes receives a sudden flash of light which would make a radical change in the life of a person. It could result in a strong commitment to a deeper spiritual life, or to a life of service to the poor, or to a noble task in the field of science or art. We cannot, however, easily answer the question why a person at a critical moment in his life adopts a course of action which would shape the rest of his life. What we can possibly trace is the accompanying existential anchorage of each discernment and commitment.

Let us take the case of a man taking Marcuse's or the Sartrean view of freedom. It could form a cornerstone of a whole philosophical vision. According to the former position, nothing short of a revolutionary change in the social structure can restore the development of man's liberty; but on the contrary Sartre insists that the revolutionary solution presupposes man's freedom to seize this solution, in other words, that man must be free 'prior' to his liberation.⁶ A person who accepts the former view of freedom will be vehemently dedicated to the programme of the overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat. In the latter case the zeal for causing revolutionary change in the structure of the society will be minimal and that an existentialist may find his joy in a certain internal liberty which man can preserve in any situation whatsoever. We can trace different existential moorings as the cause of these attitudinal changes in a communist and an existentialist.

An existentialist starts from consciousness, which comes into existence as consciousness of something with awareness of this consciousness. This starting point itself is very problematic for an existentialist because he confronts an individual with all his personal needs, tension, passion, anxiety, fear of death, fear of nothingness along with the reality of freedom. He takes freedom as his unproved and undefined primary presupposition. According to him, we find ourselves in this world confronted with the bare fact of existence. The world we live in is a wasteland that makes no sense. We look around and see that most people live an animal life that is listless and unhappy, some almost a vegetable life that is barren and empty. The few who reflect on this meaningless existence become uneasy, then restless, and finally desperate. Life fills them with a sense of futility and despair, of anguish and nausea.⁷ Is there a way out? For Jean Paul Sartre, the world is not only meaningless, but absurd. It is utterly arbitrary with no sense to it at all. Yet we cannot avoid the necessity of choice. The absurd world must be confronted and accepted for what it is, i.e., absurd. By our decision taken in absolute freedom, we become authentic individuals. In this understanding of the phenomenon of man, interpretation of freedom as an internal quality of consciousness makes conviction or sense because the existential anchorage of this philosophical exercise is the individual in the midst of his intellectual and emotional fears.

6. George Novack (ed.), *op.cit*, p 166.

7. cf. A. Fagothey, *Right and Reason* (St. Louis : C.V. Morby Co. 1963), p. 119

The Communists, on the other hand, concentrated on class struggles. For Marx and Engels "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". "The theoretical conclusions of the communists express, in general terms, actual relations, springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes."⁸

"Free man and slave, patrician and plebeian
 Lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman,
 in a word, oppressor and oppressed,
 stood in constant opposition to one another,
 carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight,
 a fight that each time ended, either in a
 revolutionary re-constitution of society
 at large, or in the common ruin of the
 contending classes."⁹

It was the modern bourgeoisie the communists had as their existential situation when they reflected upon the concept of freedom. In such a context one can easily be forced to think of freedom as the unfettered satisfaction of the human faculties and desires and a firm intellectual assent to such a view of freedom can also be equally justified.

iii) *Discernment*

The attempt to give a comprehensive account of all the factors involved in taking an intellectual stand on any issue may ever remain an academic puzzle for we could find people living in the same intellectual, religious and cultural milieu firmly holding opposing views. The questions why one takes a theistic or atheistic view, idealistic or positivistic philosophy, or accepts a particular religion, or falls in love with a person, or accepts a task, profession or career cannot easily find a satisfactory answer. There are thinkers who hold that both believing and disbelieving in the existence of God are intellectual standpoints equally agonizing. There seems to be a blind spot at the terminal point in the discussive reasoning, and at the apex of swelling emotion, over which the mind goes to make its commitment. This psychic reality is sometimes identified as 'discernment'. It is something more than the virtue of prudence!

8. *Manifesto*, p. 50.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

The clerical or religious vocation in Christian Churches also takes shape in such moments of discernments. The causes which concur to produce a religious discernment also cannot be isolated because it grows along with other forces which produce several discrete moments of non-religious discernments in the life of a human being. Let us take two situations, one that produces a kind of "moral discernment", and the other "a religious discernment". A man is upset by the problems he faces in his family such as the illness of his wife, loss of job, or rebellious attitude of children. At one moment he suddenly remembers the sufferings of Job in the Old Testament and the consolation he found at the end of his trails. These help him in a moment of discernment to understand the meaning and purposefulness of suffering in his own family. It is certainly a religious discernment.

For an instance of 'moral discernment', let me take the case of a man who happens to see a child sinking in a river at a great distance from the bank.¹⁰ Even though the probability of rescue is very slight, for the man is no expert in swimming, he may jump into the river to save the child. What helps him to commit himself to the action is a moral discernment, based on the perception of an event of 'great consequence'. The man tries to save the child because he perceives the death of the child as an event of 'great consequence'. It seems, therefore, that if the perception of some event with 'great consequence' can be induced, a discernment also can be elicited. Though we admit a theoretical possibility of eliciting a discernment, we do not know how it can be effected. One may wonder why a particular member of a large Christian family adopts a committed life in a religious community. The channels of religious instruction and sanctification, and institutions of education and the milieu of cultural formation might have been same for all the members of the family. It only shows that the whole reason for the act of religious commitment cannot be totally attributed to favourable situations alone. Situations can only make a favourable tendency grow into fruition.

Are all discernments truth-bearing? Even while acting on the strength of a discernment one may go wrong. The psychological reality of discernment in itself is no guarantee for truth. Yet it points to a basic freedom existing in the centre of knowing activity in man. Let us now, therefore, examine this basic centre of man himself.

10. Cf. Ian T. Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases* (London: SCM Press, 1957), pp. 16-17.

3. Search for Identity

Man is said to be a 'God' in becoming. Process or becoming is a sure phenomenon in the life of a human being. It is also more or less recognized that in every one there is a hard core which is destined to reach some goals, intermediary as well as final. With the dawn of scientific psychology, a new awareness of the structure of man in relation to his world is emerging. The developmental psychology of Erik Erikson focuses its attention on the stages of growth in the human organism on the basis of its "epigenetic principle" which holds that "anything that grows has a ground plan, and out of this ground plan, the parts arise, each having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole."¹¹ Two factors seem to have been taken for granted in this principle, namely, a ground plan for a personality and the stages in its development. They are not of any one's free choice. According to Erikson, "To have the courage of one's diversity (identity) is a sign of wholeness in individuals and civilizations."¹² In other words what is given, i.e., one's own identity or distinctness from others, has to be accepted and maintained. Erikson describes the struggle to find, preserve and transcend one's identity during adolescence and early adulthood in terms of Identity versus Identity Diffusion and Intimacy versus Isolation.¹³ The awareness about one's inviolable dignity and rights becomes the focal point of a youth's commitment in adolescence. This affirmation is counteracted by "identity diffusion" which is again balanced and counter-balanced by the psychic needs of Intimacy and Isolation".

The picture of man that emerges from this Neo-Freudian account of human growth is that of a being endowed with a 'ground plan' and a limited freedom to work out his wholeness by setting definite boundaries for his being and at the same time broadening it as the need arises. Here man enjoys a freedom in his committedness. There is a parallel in what happens within a growing human organism and in his membership in an ethnic group or a civilization. All the tensions within a group to keep its identity and to open its portals to other cultures will be reflected in the members of that group and so the freedom he would experience within a group would be a conditioned freedom.

11. Erik H. Erikson, "Identity and the Life Cycle", *Psychological Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1959), p. 52.
12. Erikson, *Identity; Youth and Crisis* (London: Faber, 1971) p. 90.
13. Erikson, "Identity and the Life Cycle", p. 120.

The 'epigenetic principle' that the parts arise from the ground plan, each at its own time need not be taken in a deterministic sense for these stages are artificial constructs. "Each stage is not so easily defined; it does not actually begin at its time of ascendancy in complete isolation from the other previous stages. On the contrary, each stage in some sense begins in the beginning. Each stage is a part of and depends upon previous growth, and each stage in some sense lasts a lifetime. The stages are an integral part of a larger ensemble."¹⁴

4. Commitment in Love

Christ summarizes the whole 'Law and Prophets' into a single precept of love of God and love of neighbour. We find God-intoxicated men dedicating their whole life for the love and service of God and men. No amount of discomfort, opposition from others, arguments and opinions could shake them from their commitment. Are they taking consciously some irrational stand? Do they enjoy freedom to open themselves to new truth which will challenge their previous commitment? History is the witness to the fact that men have in the post changed even their one-time firm conviction and commitment. Even in the vehement attachment to an object of love or vision man does not lose his basic freedom. But in many cases it may be psychologically imperative.

The story of the conversion of Thomas Merton, an American Cistercian writer, could be taken for a case study in his context¹⁵ He had entered the Cistercian Monastery in Louisville, Kentucky, after his conversion to Roman Catholicism during World War II. He became popular overnight when his autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, appeared in America among the spiritual biographies. Will ever man succeed in tracing out the cross-roads and bypaths in Merton's journey from that tumultuous confusing and noisy world to the stillness and unbroken silence of the Cistercian abbey? The stormy shifts and turns in his life were such that he himself would not have been a reliable guide for us in this voyage. Spiritual writers extol his option or commitment to silence. He wanted a complete change, a life that "least resembled the life men lead in the towns and cities of the world."¹⁶

14. Arthur J. De Jong, *Making it to Adulthood: Emerging Self* (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1972), p. 11.

15. I am indebted for the account of the evolution of Merton's thought to an article by Jose S. Arcilla S.J. "Through Silence to the Self according to Merton", *Landas* Vol. I, 1987, pp. 91-111. References to Merton's work are based on this article.

16. *The Waters of Siloe* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), p. xviii.

He sought solitude in order that he could be lost to created things, to "die to them and to the knowledge of them". In other words he wanted to escape from the clutches of the created things.¹⁷ He had come in search of quiet and peace, but the monastery buildings could not provide them to him. He even thought to transfer himself from Cistercian to the Carthusian order to find more opportunity for silence and solitude. But, at a later stage this love for silence and solitude also became insignificant for him and he realized "that nothing else in the world is important except to love God and Serve Him with simplicity and joy".¹⁸ He found a new meaning to his solitary life. "Now after my ordination, I discovered that the essence of a solitary vocation is that it is a vocation to fear, to helplessness, to isolation in the invisible God"¹⁹ and that it is not an "atmosphere or a setting for a special and exalted spirituality." Each man must perforce live his life alone.

The solitary man plumbs the depths of his own life and comes face to face with God. He cannot escape Him. Thus in solitary life one really achieves an affirmation of one's identity. When interior solitude empties the heart of desires and cares, "we see that our "reality" is not a firmly established ego-self already attained that has merely to be perfected but rather we are nothing a "possibility" in which the *gift of creative freedom* can realize itself by its response to the free gift of love and grace."²⁰ The gift of creative freedom in us actualizes itself as it responds to God's free gift of love and grace. This way of responding can include even the breaking of external or physical isolation or solitude and silence as it can be seen from Merton's willingness to go as a delegate to the inter-national congress on mystical prayer convened in Bangkok in 1968, in which he died unexpectedly. But Merton never parted with his conviction that a man is not the whole life, nor can his words ever define life. It is the realization of this simple fundamental truth that imposes silence on man, because he now enjoys the positive rest of the mind in truth.²¹

Seeking solitude and silence, Merton ran away from the world, committing himself of loneliness. But when he came face to face with his own identity, he found within his being a creative freedom which has to be

17. *The Seven-Storey Mountain* (New York; Harcourt Brace, 1948), p.421.

18. *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953) pp. 182-83.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

20. *Contemplation in a World of Action* (New York: Doubleday, 1971) p. 281-82.

21. *No Man is an Island* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1957), pp. 232-33.

actualized by positively responding to the gift of God's love and grace. Thus in the service of humanity, Merton broke his silence and solitude and it is a very apt contemporary instance to argue out the point that even in the strongest commitments man keeps his fundamental freedom.

5. Reality of Freedom

As we know, freedom is one of the rare concepts in language which ever electrifies the human imagination. It has been the object of mystic poems, the goal of political and economic struggles and the object of worship for philosophers. But for the common man it is a human phenomenon, or a quality in a conscious being. We are confronted with the problem of the co-existence of commitment and freedom. People say that they take a stand or commit themselves to a position because they are free. Now the question is where is that freedom after one has committed one self to a position? Is it non-existent or are all commitments floating in freedom?

Look at the various ways in which we experience freedom; it could be freedom from external, physical necessity such as chains, ropes, bars, prison walls, force, violence, hunger and thirst, thus giving a person freedom of spontaneity. Freedom of choice is there when alternative options are given or a law is imposed on the will for its observance. Freedom from the law imposed by an alien power is called independence. In political struggles what the mass-movements seek is this independence.

Freedom in the form of independence means freedom from human laws. Man cannot be independent or free from laws of nature. Poison will terminate his life and blazing fire will naturally burn his flesh. Man is subject to wear and tear, the law of decline and decay. There cannot be any independence or freedom from such laws. When we think of freedom we could either turn our attention to those enslaving circumstances of situations from which one can free himself or to those aspects which would leave him *free to be what he is* and to be what he wants to be. Ultimately the question is about the two complementary aspects of freedom, namely freedom from and freedom for.

6. Freedom From

From the standpoint of the Communists, the most striking sociological reality is the brute mechanization of the worker and his work in view of his complete subjugation to the capitalistic machine process. Sartre also admits

that in the empirical reality, man's existence is organized in such a way that his freedom is totally "alienated".²² It is admitted here that by certain types of organization of the society, human freedom can be alienated to such an extent that it all but ceases to exist. But for Sartre it would be foolish to think that human freedom can be regained by "a more rational organization of society", for this expectation is a reification of an ideal insofar as it conceives the liberated world in terms of a new relationship among things and new organization of things. Therefore, freedom has to be conceived in terms of itself rather than as freedom from certain social situations. This is what Sartre attempted to show in his masterpiece *Being and Nothingness*.

With the publication of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre emerged as a full-fledged ontologist of human existence. According to him the essence of human being is an aspiration which seeks to describe its mode of being. Human consciousness is free because it is forced to think of itself as - and thus is - other than the world and is unincorporable into any causal chain which it may find within the world. But there is a tendency in man to objectify himself and put himself on a level with things. This attempt of human consciousness to conceal its freedom is doomed to failure, because the concealment can be effected only to the extent it is recognized. Sartre basically defines human being as a self-contradictory effort to achieve the status of a thing while remaining a consciousness that contemplates itself as a thing. This leads to the emergence of a "bad faith". Its antithesis is an acceptance of one's own freedom and a recognition that human beings are the absolute origin of, and are solely responsible for their own act. Thus, for Sartre the very beingness of human consciousness is freedom. This freedom cannot be realized in any objectifying situation.

We have referred earlier to Marcuse's remark that the freedom of the *pour-Soi* is only one of the preconditions for the possibility of freedom, rather than freedom itself. He seems to subscribe to the position that freedom is in the abolition of all forms of exploitation and repression. With the help of revolution, it is said, "a more rational organization of society" can be achieved. But the pity is that even this reorganization of society, or the "abolition of labour" and the shortening of the working days can only be preconditions for finding "real freedom" and true freedom cannot be in the removal of certain social structures. Hence it seems that what is

22. *Les Temps Modernes* (June, 1946) p.16 (Quoted from *Existentialism Versus Marxism*, p. 166).

available for man in many situations would be a freedom in the self, rather than the actualization of real freedom. Man has the freedom to seize any solution, to take any position which he believes to be liberative for him.

7. The Freedom with which we live

What is human freedom in the concrete? We have seen that it is a focal point in modern philosophy. The contributions or opinions of the existentialists played a major role in the current discussions on freedom. For them man is the point of departure for their philosophizing.

Kierkegaard found the essence of the individual in the free choice of the human vocation to ascend the stages of the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. Jaspers considers the transcendental attitude in man, of course, without any definite intellectual orientation, to be the basis of his freedom. For Marcel, "A free man is one who receives his being with humility," and Marcel is Augustinian in realizing that the more perfect man becomes by free activity ordered to the true end of man the more he participates in being. . . . For Heidegger, "Not the individual who reads his own meaning into being is free, but the spokesman for being." As we have seen earlier, Sartre has equated freedom with man. "In setting forth his doctrine of freedom Sartre declares that he is opposing the Christian notion of freedom." He is more fundamentally reacting against a power of free choice that acts in relation to a nature with preordained end."²³

The Christian concept of freedom inherited from St Augustine is that it is the power of making good choice. St Augustine in his work *De Libero Arbitrio* (On Freedom of Choice) discussed the problem of evil and the role 'free choice' plays in it. In this work he regarded true freedom (*libertas*) as good will. He speaks of freedom as the positive vocation of man to use his will as a power of acting well.²⁴ True liberty, for him is to act well, to be dependent upon truth. Thus freedom for Augustine is the acceptance of truth which begets a sense of trust and confidence in God who becomes the object of man's love. "Our freedom consists in submission to truth, and it is our God Himself who frees us from death, that is, from the state of sin."²⁵ "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8, 32). Thus the key to freedom is truth, which is being accepted and loved.

23. For the main ideas and citations in this section I am indebted to Mary T. Clark, *Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom* (New York: Desclee Company, 1958), p. 196-98.

24. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

25. *De Libero Arbitrio*, II, 13,37.

The Classical Christian conception of freedom is a blend of Augustinian and Thomistic thought. For Augustine, there is freedom of choice and a higher freedom i.e., freedom of spontaneity or fulfilment, perfected by grace wherein alone man enjoys the truest liberty. It is a tendency of the will guided by man's nature to choose what is good; it is called good will. St Thomas takes the stand that the will is necessitated by nature to desire the good in general; because of this, it is free in its particular choices. Contrasting this position with that of Sartre's, Herbert W. Schneider writes: "... It is profitable to ask the question whether liberty is best gained by a love of liberty and by preaching that freedom is an end in itself, as Sartre does or by a love of truth, art, neighbour, God, in the hope that a love of liberty will be a by-product."²⁶

The Christian tradition accepts St Thomas' position that "The root of all liberty is fixed in reason".²⁷ Freedom is rooted in the intellectual perception of the universal, but above all in the priority of being (truth) to intellect. Here freedom is predetermined or pre-ordained by the nature or being. As Sartre, Bergson also reacts against this position. For him freedom meant escape from intellectual guidance. The only truly free act is one decided upon without reason, or that which springs from the personal self alone. For Jacques Maritain, who tried to unite many insights of Augustin and Aquinas, freedom is permeated with and preserved by intellectuality. The Christian reflection on freedom presupposes a purposeful implication for it for human destiny. Bergson, existentialists and other scientific thinkers raise charges of determinism against this view of freedom because here the act of will is determined by its relation to a nature with a pre-ordained end.

8. Conclusion

Our options concerning the perception of freedom seems to be narrowing down to these two opposing positions, namely that true freedom consists in the ability to act in accordance with the ultimate destiny and good of the agent, or that it is a perfection of human consciousness to or an ability of the personal self to cause an act independent of intellectual guidance or predetermined goal. I think we can distinguish two dimensions in the phenomenon of freedom namely the independence and spontaneity

26. Ruth N. Anslem (ed.) *Freedom, Its Meaning* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1940), pp. 671-72.

27. *De Veritate*, 24, 2

the whole person experiences, and the freedom of the concrete self to the act which it performs. The dispute among the thinkers is as regards the nature of the former, namely the higher freedom of the Experience freedom of the latter type, i.e., freedom of choice is universally admitted by the scholars. Commitments take shape in this second level of freedom. Every commitment is a concrete historical exercise of the freedom of choice, which in no way eliminates the spontaneity/independence of the whole person. With the change of times and circumstances people are able to change even their strongest commitments. So the simple fact is that even in one's committed action one preserves his freedom.

As regards the higher freedom (freedom of spontaneity) it seems that we could work out a scheme in which the theories of Sartre and Bergson and that of Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas can have a place. Thus if we imagine an anterior stage or moment of existence of consciousness in the form of will, in that moment the will is absolutely free from intellectual guidance. But, the reality of will gets its completion only when it is perfected by intellectual guidance. This is the second stage in the consciousness. The first moment of freedom, though given, is not realizable even according to Sartre and so it is something meaningless for the great classical Christian philosophers.