

Freedom has been a vague, but insistent, idea that would not leave me alone. I have been circling it, gawking at it endlessly and finally I earned the privilege to immerse myself in it. I studied the concept up close via the triumvirate of philosophy, politics and economics. Out of interest, I attended a number of Quran lessons and became involved in a discussion with the Imam about "free will". Having read Simon Blackburn's "Think" and Nigel Warburton's "Philosophy: The Classics", I knew philosophy offered many interpretations of the nature of the mind and I had been fascinated with the Locke vs. Leibniz dispute on Cartesian Dualism. According to the Imam, however, "God alone knows our destiny". In other words: We suffer from the delusion that our will is free, when really it is not. Although his "argument" was only a conclusion, I found it intriguing nevertheless. Chaos theory stipulates that any complex iterative model is no better than a wild guess. Given the intricacy of the human brain, free will may just be illusory, albeit persuasive. Could the Imam be right, I wonder?

Philosophical inquiries did not, however, satisfy my desire to comprehend the concept of freedom. Therefore, I began to look at freedom as a type of currency: something to be stored, borrowed and traded. Reflecting on my wider readings from this perspective, I discovered that, for instance, Orwell's "1984" exemplifies communism where freedom is centralized and only parcelled out to the population in small, equal amounts. Hobbes' "Leviathan" warns of anarchy and the "state of nature" in which, ironically, the pursuit for total freedom would deplete our "freedom purse" entirely. In "The Undercover Economist", Tim Harford analyses Cameroon, a country in which income distribution is highly skewed. I realised that increasing the freedom of the wealthiest - economically, politically or socially - would not serve the interest of the greater good. Nor would it noticeably impact the aggregate freedom of the country, because income follows a Pareto distribution, rather than a Gaussian distribution. All of this tell me that freedom is multifaceted, slippery and heavily contextual. Yet, I hope to model it as a currency and subject it to the rigours of mathematics.

During a case study of Enron in English class, I discovered Malcolm Gladwell's article "Open Secrets". I discovered how lack of transparency and imperfect markets limit the freedom of the many, who are then left out or disadvantaged. From Enron to Lehman Brothers, I enjoyed reading Michael Lewis' "The Big Short" and watching "The Inside Job" by Charles Ferguson. They opened my eyes to the prospect of bad incentives and overly complex financial schemes conspiring to derail the economy. This led me to write my Specialised Study Project on the reliability of economic models. Writing this paper intensified my interests, specifically the application of mathematics in economics, but it

also made me consider the links between economics, politics and mathematics. The processes of researching for my paper, reading books in my spare time and reflecting on my findings supplemented each other. Likewise, I have also realised that philosophy, politics and economics not only overlap, but also fuel one another.

In my gap year, I have been given the unique opportunity to work full-time as the youngest member in Danske Bank and experience first-hand the world of banking. In my spare time, I own and run a micro-business, prepare for marathons, and, weather permitting, parachute. I have always managed to find time for leisure activities as I consider myself an efficient time manager. As such I feel well-equipped for university studies and would feel privileged to be able to devote all my time to the subjects about which I truly care: politics, economics and philosophy.