



Father Theodore Gignadze, Andro Dgebuadze - Differing Opinions

In the book, the authors show us the main human values from a different point of view, offer us differing *Weltanschauungen*.

What do the authors agree and disagree on? What is a watershed issue that cannot be agreed upon and what can be agreed upon if we approach the issue with honesty along with critical thinking? In this book, the reader will learn about these points of difference and intersection. What do the authors agree and disagree on? What is a watershed issue that cannot be agreed upon and what can be agreed upon if we approach the issue with honesty along with critical thinking? In this book, the reader will learn about these points of difference and intersection.

The issues discussed in the first part are:

who is the person; What is the idea of personality? Freedom *per se* is a value that makes a person human and gives meaning to life. But what is this freedom: a goal or a tool for man?

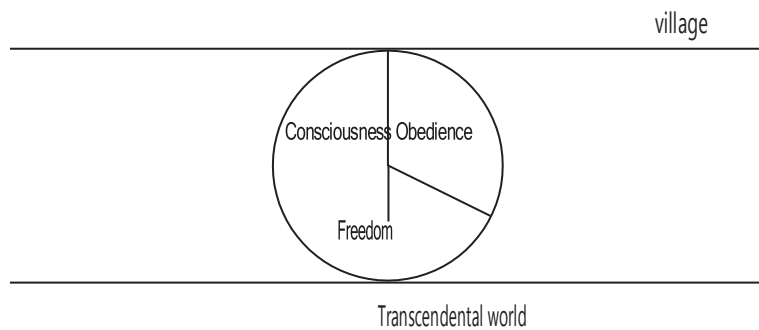
Love is the living source of existence. An event without which freedom could not be realized. Has the word "love" lost its value in the contemporary world? What is the role of critical thinking in faith?

On the one hand, these issues are our everyday life, and on the other hand, these are the eternal questions, which humankind struggles to solve.

Freedom

Andro Dgebuadze:

Freedom is a very vigilant and controversial thing; a man can't be considered a "human" if he/she lacks or goes beyond his/her limits. From this perspective, one needs to cross a narrow bridge as if a person goes through one big cycle. This is my idea. At first, a person comes out from the "garden of Eden" or a "village" as American mythology researcher Joseph Campbell calls it, the person then encounters the "transcendent world". In this world, the hero finds who he/she is inside and returns to himself/herself. Here, in this cycle, I have distinguished three zones, and three stages that a person goes through.



The first one I called obedience because this is the time when a person should abide by the rules. I often argue with my friend if we should raise the child in freedom, giving them the complete green light in everything. I believe that a child should find willpower, even for a simple thing, such as performing the same activity at a specific time. For example, study, think, brush teeth, and so on. Therefore, for me obedience has a great meaning, I look at it as a preparatory phase for will. This is the period when the child's mind is not yet matured, however, the child started to own himself/herself and can strengthen the "muscle" of willpower.

The second phase, which comes next is full freedom. I will focus on the ways the impulses of freedom appear and then fade away. I want to highlight that freedom has its beginning and its end. One of the most interesting things for me is to observe, how I think and how I reason. I am not bringing my ideas from outside texts or the holy bible, I am only basing my judgments on my observation about how I think and I can catch myself, that I have a certain structure already in my mind. As a child, you follow the rules established by others, you study, you also learned how to cross the street, and then the moment arrives when you start hearing some "voice" in your head. In a religious context, this voice is considered to be a "voice of a sin", sometimes these voices resemble the voices of certain people. The voices tell you: "wait, but are you cool? Are you this or that way? Will you be able to do this and skip school? Hence, voices that encourage you to break the rules and dare things, that prove you can swim against the current and that you have your own "identity", selfhood. These are the sounds that your friends directly and rudely voice in your ear. For example, if someone jumped somewhere, on the garage, and you couldn't jump, you felt that you were "less than" and you heard a voice -so,

"Huh, are you scared?"

This is a period for a person to dare his/her "self". "Have you grown up enough to do what you want, or do you follow your father's and mother's advice in everything, do you have your "self" after all? This is a very painful period. You don't feel well, as if you must commit a violent act against yourself. I remember me skipping school for the first time when I also influenced others to follow me, but I was not smart enough, I stayed at the schoolyard and the school director saw me. This was not thought through at all, but I did it. I violated the rules, I didn't go to the class, and I overcame my obedience with it. I also stated the voice of sin in other people's ears. This is the birth of "self" and its separation from obedience, that is from the rule that does not allow us to live.

Afterward, certain thoughts come to mind, like, whatever you dare to do, will have consequences, certain things will "work out" and certain things won't. You also realize with whom things work out and with whom they don't. You make judgments. A human ego is based on these judgments. You will conclude that you should resist some people and that with others you should be respected, somewhere you should surrender, while in some cases you should attack, hence, this is how tactical maneuvers of your interaction with the

world are shaped. These maneuvers will improve over time, revealing their contours and style. The process will continue. In the beginning, a person is not trained and is hesitant, but in the end, he/she became a "professional egoist", with sophisticated protective mechanisms. This is the impulse of survival and freedom, which helps the birth of ego (lower me) inside the person. This is the impulse of freedom that tells you that you are not a slave, you are not a slave of rules and laws, which surrounded you since childhood. (This can be school or police, district authorities, tax inspectors, or religious people who always preach morals).

"What about those who were not able to express their will? Did they stay in the obedience and thus in the past of the evolution of their consciousness?" – There are children who are bold, restless, risky, spoil everything, and those, who are radically different: very obedient. Believe me, if the impulse of unconditional obedience is not overcome with age, such a person will have problems.

As I mentioned, with age comes the time to express your "self", when a person should shape his/her ideas, attitudes, and individual relation to the world. However, you look around and the person is still in the obedience stage. "What do you think about this" – you ask – and the person replies using other's words and isn't able to express himself/herself. On the other hand, the one who started boldly can express his/her ideas. His/her actions might be insolent, but bold and viable. Hence, the first thing that comes into a human as a lower me "I" or "Ego" is courage.

In occultism and esotericism, Lucifer is the voice that will come and tell you: "Go, go, jump, dare!" At this moment, Lucifer is called "Lucifer" because he brings light, the grain of light that creates the foundation (the lower self) in you so that in the future, the higher self will be born from there. I would call this basis of low freedom.

This freedom starts with insolence, and patience followed by a very interesting process. It evolves into another phase, a conscious phase when freedom turns into consciousness, and what turns freedom into consciousness is not the adherence to rules, it is not obedience, nor the bowing, but inner understanding, knowledge, cognition, and awareness. This cognition is a much higher phenomenon than sinlessness. Consciousness means to revive the rule within myself, which I was hearing from the outside.

I was following the rules and adhered to them even before, but now I am reviving them. Revival means – "even if nobody forces me to follow the rules, I still experience it". As if you can directly contemplate the source of the rule. Then comes a moment, when despite dismissing all the outside rules in my freedom and becoming my own master and I do what I want, I realize that things are not going the way I wanted to. At least there is no happiness, it is an expression of what I want, and it comes back to me as something I accomplished but something is lacking, and I end up with an existential question: "if I do what I want then who am I?" And the answer comes: "you are whom you want to be". And in this conscious phase originates another deep question: "and what I want, or think is what I want or what I think I want?". For me this question was easy to answer, what I want is not what I want, but I want it despite my will. Merab Mamardashvili asked: "can I wish to wish something?" It is easy to check: "don't do it!" "So, you want something, restrain from it." One can see now, who is the master in me and if I am free if I can't even manage to restrain. How can I want something and be free? Freedom should mean that I should be free from "wants".

It is very hard for me to restrain from any kind of "wants". I don't smoke, but whoever tried to stop smoking will agree with me. Instead, I, for example, had the habit of biting my nails, and believe me, this is probably no less an addiction, and resisting it is suffering, but if you truly overcome and control it, you end up catching yourself thinking that "hand goes towards the mouth". So, it can be concluded, that fulfilling

what I want is not real freedom. Then where does freedom live? Freedom is not that I did what I wanted. Certainly, previously my view was that – “I must do what I want to prove myself that I am free”, but now a new phrase comes to mind: “do I want anything at all?”

When I went deeper into my desires, I realized that if I want something, then the one who wants something is not me, so my “want” isn’t coming from my central being. I would define central me the way Mamardashvili would define it: “what is that I want except for what I want?”. Mamardashvili himself says: “what is that I know, except for what I know.” Practically it’s the same. I caught myself that these “wants” are actually “voices of sin”. This is somebody’s voice in me, but not mine. A simple question arises: “where am I? What does my real me want?”

The Georgian language is relatively scarce and it is difficult to name both “I wants”. These two things are completely different. In old Greek or Sanskrit or any other old language, there must have been two words to differentiate between these two “wants”. However, the important thing is: that I “want” something which is inside me without me, he “wants” not because he follows someone, but because he cannot do otherwise! Because he is the way he is. He wants only one thing, to be what he is, and “not wanting” this is impossible. This is the point where “want” corresponds to “being”, hence it does not depend on the outside factors, it is viable and absolute. This type of “want” is called God’s (or absolute) will.

If you ask me, when I appeared in front of the absolute, this was the ultimate intimacy. Absolute means that it is not relative, it is not taking anything from anyone, it is not waiting to know what is happening outside, to decide how to be. Therefore, he is the way he is. This means that there is someone inside me who is the way he is, and he isn’t interested in Andro’s views. On the contrary, it exposes Andro to the fact that what he thinks he wants, he thinks because he has followed some kind of external impulse. You don't want anything either. You can look at the world and enjoy how genuine it is.

For me, all these start when a person’s object of thinking is observing his thinking process. I would call this self-awareness. It is also called gnosis. Merab Mamardashvili used to say: "Philosophy is thinking about thinking."

Whatever you want to call it, doesn’t make any difference. Anytime when I was looking outside and wanted or was thinking about something I was the subject, and that “thing” was the object. But when suddenly this subject and the object became the same, I examined myself and understood that my whole inner relation rearranged not only towards the external world but towards the internal world as well. What came on top of my value system was the notion of freedom. So, what is the notion of freedom? A person might tremble and get scared while experiencing it because it seems that he/she has to give up his/her freedom on their own. Go, dare to take this step! Something is resisting you inside: “what, now you want me to follow someone else?” No, you shouldn’t, God forbid, but you need to follow the one who is inside you and who is bigger than you, who talks to you without words. As Jalal ad-Din Rumi said, "There is a voice within me that speaks to me without words." This is an intimate moment. I don’t know, for some, this moment comes because they immerse themselves in philosophy, for some, because they are religious, for some because they were slapped in the face, for some because they were betrayed, for some because somebody died, it does not matter, but the moment comes when you suddenly leave yourself and you look at yourself and think: “who am I, who watches or who is watched?” So, whom I see is my frontal self, who stands in front and claims this freedom and shouts “me” all the time. He is an egocentric type. He wants things, but in a second comes the moment where I can observe my thoughts and scan them. If a person turns this process into a game, it will be great. In the beginning, you involuntarily start it before going to bed, then during the day and then you will realize that you are doing this almost non-stop. As if you are in love with the process where you experience yourself, you look and see it from the outside. This is as if never ending and most

amazing process. When you look at yourself from the outside, “so how should I talk?” “So, what is beautiful?” “So, what is right?” “Where is the law which was given to me by my mother and father and the outside world?” – You will realize that all these rules are already inside yourself. I don’t know who placed them there, but they are there, and you have an imminent understanding of what is beautiful, what is kindness, what is harmony, and this is the way it should be. The notions of kind and evil even disappear because at this moment the notions can only be divided between what is real and not real. From this moment on a person turns from a learner into a creator, which is a serious spiritual metamorphosis.

Father Theodore once said freedom is not the final goal, it is a tool, and I am experiencing exactly what is meant by it. I did not come to this realization in a Christian, religious way, but my gnosis and my self-awareness led me to the point that this is the case. Freedom for me is the middle stage, necessary attribute to dare to think, „Sapere Aude” (as old Romans would say.) If you don’t dare to think and you are obedient to outside authorities, you will always stay and be caught in that point. My favourite saying is that a fish should jump out of the water to know what the water is. What can make you jump? The ego which by its essence is an impulse of freedom that will tell you, “I don’t want to be with you, I left my mother and father, I will live my way, will dress the way I want and behave the way I want”. However, in the end, this egoistic impulse brings us to the amazing point where “I left everything outside that wasn’t mine”. Or this way: “I left outside everything that was attributed to me.” This “being” cannot be either moral or immoral. It is what it is.

However, on my way to this discovery, I thought that there was nothing inside me and everything was relative in this world, and the solid point didn’t exist. I want to insist that this is a very immature position. I often talk with the young people, I love their determination and I remember my internal vicissitudes, but here I must say that on the one side, we have absolute notions which are defined by our fathers, mothers, and the rest of the world and on the other side, relativity, which is expressed by the freedom of will.

Looking at external rules, you curse everything, and everything becomes not absolute, but relative. Instead of the following authority, you continue your life without one. The spirit of relativity and freedom follows the art of the 20th century as a red line. In painting, this is Malevich's black square. In classical music - John Cage, in pedagogy - to let children "break their necks", that’s how they will learn to be smart. This attitude is the idea of complete freedom. A typical expression of this philosophy in economics is Adam Smith and his thesis: "The invisible hand will solve everything." In a way, the vision here is that this "invisible hand" is the order that my freedom must stop where your freedom begins. To some extent, this is indeed true. However, if I don't liberate myself, I'll stay here, if I free myself, how far can I extend my freedom? We have reached your freedom, but after that comes a whole other level of consideration. Obviously, we have to turn off our phones, because if the phone rings, we will disturb each other. We agree that this is the example of how I limit my freedom, but in the end, I should stand in front of my imminent self and ask him: “If there is nobody else, is my freedom absolute?”

Mahatma Gandhi poured water from a jug and there was no water – “oh, look, I can't get enough water.” Jawaharlal Nehru, the first president of India, told him: “the river is flowing, get the water again.” Gandhi replied: “You didn't understand, I meant that I couldn't keep enough water for me, of course, it is clear that the river still flows.” Something erupts in your soul, that this freedom is like a river, and you can use it, but, at some point, something inside you (something bigger than you) tells you: “you are lying.” For me it is this way, maybe someone can describe this differently. A poet may describe this moment more beautifully, but “you are lying if you think that the world is owning things and making wishes come true”. The old understanding of freedom was that “if I brought something inside my home and placed it there then it was mine,” hence I acted upon my freedom, and in this zone, where I executed my will, was mine. I am like king,

the bigger the zone, the stronger I am. But what I call consciousness is completely the opposite impulse. It suddenly abrupt in my soul and told me, "If you take everything else outside, who are you?" If you ask me, the New Testament resonates with this with the very first parable: a rich man approaches Christ and asks him, how to rise. Christ tells him to sell everything. and give it away. Try this! Real freedom comes when you give up everything, that conditions your "self" and you become who you really are and you cannot be otherwise.

If you ask me, the freest person is the one who puts himself into a creative process. For example, Gia Kancheli or Antoine de saint-Exupéry...or let's take Galaktioni, who writes something and understands that this is yet not the one and changes his writing until he reaches the point where the writing is what is inside of him and what he can't change any more. This is the point of freedom, and I would say that this point is so viable, so uninterested in any admonition, so complete in itself and so relentless, so alive, that not even the Ten Commandments of Moses, no law in the world can change person's mind, because a person cannot deny what he/she truly is.

It is interesting to know what the rule is and what is the dynamic moral, a living law. The ten commandments are written and, of course, it is a dead commandment, and I, as an obedient man should not kill others, this is clear, but this is how I understand the line of Christ that, the Sabbath is for man or man is for the Sabbath. Clearly, a man is not for the Sabbath, but the other way around. The second point is that if you think about adultery, it is a sin. That is, this dynamic aspect of the concept of sin led me to the point that "it is not that the law determines where my freedom is, but that I fall into complete freedom and after that, only with my awareness and not with the influence of others, I put away everything that was not real and left what is real inside me, and I found the rule inside me. I found out that whatever interferes with "real" me is the freedom of my ego, hence, I should put away my ego to become what I really am. I couldn't get here without my ego because I didn't have my "self", but now I have no other way, but to become who I really am. When I put myself into my real me, I cannot sin anymore. Being real doesn't follow the rule. And sin is only defined by the rule. Being real only follows its essence. Hence, even if I want to sin, I can't. Because I don't know where even to take plunders of the sin. It is clear where would ego take it. He would put it in his pocket and be proud of the idea that "I have it!", but if I perceive the ego itself as a creature of my creation, which I worshiped and with which I identified, and I put away this ego and remained what I am, then where should I take the plunders of the ego? The pocket is gone.

I appeared not to be my ego, but the one who observes him. This is the point I caught during the self-awareness process, which is truly free in itself. Hence, I can tell you that until you "want" you are not free! But you can't be any other way because this is the imminent expression of your nature and essence – then this is it! Then you are free! It can be neither good nor evil, it is the reality!

Freedom for me is something bigger inside me. It is without me but at the same time, it is me. I will recall my previous lecture "who am I?" – I am who I am without attributes given to me from the outside. Someone asked Michelangelo, who David was. He said, he took the rock and took away what was extra, what he got then, was David. So, I have a feeling about myself, that I am some kind of completeness, perhaps even perfection, which is not lacking anything, but on the contrary, has too much attached to it. Simply, what did this perfection do? – Imagine the world where he thought he was a king and believed it. As soon as I reach my imaginary world, poke it and pierce it, I will see the reality. Therefore, I must say: "Freedom is something that should take me to see the reality" or this way: "with freedom, I looked at myself and I saw the reality".

I specifically don't use religious terminology" "God", "mercy", "purity", or "illumination"...I try to be honest. Because religious terminology is not embedded in me. They are from the outside. With my own words, when I understand how I create my thoughts and then how I obey them, if I can stop the process then I

naturally face the reality in front of which I should commit the following act: First, I have to identify what is created by me and what is created without me. "created by me" means I look at it the way I want to see it. This is the first detection when I put away this moment. I should ask myself, what is without me? If I say the way Mamardashvili would say it, with my thinking I should let myself fall into the hole. This is a mandatory first step.

For the second step, when I ask myself, I should remain silent and try to listen to my question and not answer it myself, but listen. Whom should I listen to? – I should listen to the central me who is inside myself, he already knows everything. The third step is that I should listen to him, which means that the thought inside me is not generated by me but by him. I let him enter me and look at me from his angle. After this, I will be shivering and have goosebumps.

If the vision is real, I should be experiencing intimacy and imminence. For me this point is the real point, hence, I don't have any doubts or mistrust. On the contrary, I am attached to this moment of the journey, that with boldness, and licentiousness, by being thrown out of the Garden of Eden started the path, the path that started because I ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge. If I want to know myself, first I need to separate myself from myself and I am trying to do this since I was born. The process is slow, and gradually with the help of my ego, I am trying to separate myself. But then comes the second metamorphosis, almost the kind that butterfly experiences...I separate myself from the ego which I created and I stay naked, the way I am, and I can't be otherwise.

The Georgian language calls both of them liberation/freedom which needs to be distinguished and decoded.

We cannot call will and spiritual freedom the same name. We can call it whatever you like, let's call it willfulness (lower moment), but the moment of awareness, a high degree of freedom for me is the point when I am who I really am and I can't be otherwise.

I will give you one more example. The ball is rolling, and a man stops it and asks:

- Where are you rolling to? – I don't know, I want to roll, and I roll! – you roll because it's downhill and not because you want to roll. A person should understand the moment: I want, and I think or I am forced to think and that's why I think. If my wish depends on the outside world, then I am the slave of my "wants". The freedom starts when I take my "want" into my hands and when I become both "boat and boatman". I will have the steering wheel in my hands, and I will not be turning it wherever I want to but towards where my real me wants to. I should look inside and ask: "who is the one inside me who wants anything? And if I find that all my "wants" are attributed from the outside, then the one that finds out, is the real me. Who is the one who acknowledges this? – that is the one observer in me, the will and boldness, which can objectify the observation of the thinking process in me. If a person continuously thinks about how he/she thinks, then he is already my friend.

This person is already pure. The person is free, free from himself/herself. Therefore, if I want to achieve high-level freedom from myself, I need to reach freedom from my ego, and on the lower level I need to swim into the current of ego, otherwise, I will not be able to acquire "self". Otherwise, I will get stuck into slavery, dissolved and scattered into the ocean, where I will remain just as a drop forever.

Deacon Theodore:

I was happy to come here, despite being tired. When I leave, I won't have time to rest, but I was still happy. I think our discussions will only have value if we are honest with each other, and I am sure Andro thinks the same way.

- You will be honest with us when you listen and ask honest questions and we will be honest and don't say anything insincerely. I don't want to talk for the sake of talking and I don't want you to be influenced by my thoughts, I'm not a sophist by nature and I don't like to have some kind of influence on you.

A long time ago at some point in my life, a very interesting thing happened to me: over the clear sky, when there was no precondition for anything, the Lord found me! He found me and I am thankful for this. He found me and firmly and strongly broke the plank of my heart! My life turned upside down and a new phase of my life began. It's been a long time since then, and what I am doing now is based on that event. Every word that I say at the meetings, is a verbal attempt to describe what happened thirty years ago.

What started back then? Now I know the answers to my questions. I know who he is. But I want to translate all of this into verbal language making it easier for me to comprehend as well as for the others. When I talk to you, my inner motivation is that whatever happened to me, I want it for others too. I want everyone to experience that joy. This is a joy because everything that is valuable on earth is alive. Look, Andro also talks in such an interesting way, because this is his personal, inner experience. Not that he hasn't read anything, or that he hasn't received knowledge, but he tries to talk about his experience and as much as he is honest, he is attractive. Every person, what he sincerely seeks, what he feels, and what experience he has, is realized in this space, here all the highest extra-terrestrial values are brought to life. I want everyone to experience what I experienced! It is great joy when you meet someone who is everything - life, happiness, freedom, goodness, truth, and light!

Theology, in its true essence, means a living relationship with God. Of course, theoretical knowledge is important, but in its perfect sense, theology is the practice of a relationship with God, as much as the one who entered me is alive, is an individual, and hence, the practice of relationship is essential. That is why when I say something, I try to have practical meaning, to help the listener in his/her everyday life and prepare his/her heart to find its place in Christ.

When we mention freedom, we think that this is a kind of transcendental reality. The example about the ball, which Andro told was very good: the ball rolls, the water runs downhill, and something falls from the sky, by the rules of physics this is free falling and it really falls freely. Yes, this is a certain type of freedom of an object, of material. We also see the same type of freedom in the animal world. When you put bread and meat in front of a dog, it makes a choice. This is the freedom of a dog. Freedom of a person should definitely be transcendental, as I am not just an object (but I am also an object), and I am not only an animal (but I am also an animal) and I am also the one, who is not satisfied by all of these. What is around us and we are physically part of it, based on certain necessity you are and that's it, as much as you protest, you are, the world is, the earth is, the sun is, the moon is, and so on. As soon as the concept of necessity is introduced, freedom is reduced, because freedom can't tolerate necessity. Freedom is not complete where there is necessity and determination.

Dostoevski created the character of Kirillov in his novel "Devil" who is an atheist, he doesn't know the essence of transcendental existence, he doesn't believe in this. He only believes what he can see, but he still strives for freedom an atheist strives for freedom! Even though he is one of the Devils in this novel, he still is

a good man. He is honest and thinks that this world exists because of necessity and he is part of this world, but he says one interesting thing: "a man should kill himself to become free". From a religious perspective, this is completely wrong, but not from the view of an atheist. He says that he is limited in his existence. In general, a human being is already limited by his physical being, with its intellectual, psycho-somatic resources. Additionally, he must suffer, grow old, get sick, be exiled, and be treated unfairly. If in this situation a person manages to kill himself/herself, he/she will be liberated from the suffering necessity of existence and become a creator. Interestingly, Dostoevski using this artistic method tries to show that where there is the necessity of existence, there is no freedom. We strive for freedom. I want to be free. But does freedom exist? From the perspective of an atheist, freedom does not exist, everything is determined. As a believer, I say that God exists, he entered me and said: "I am" and as much as he is, then freedom exists, because God is free. He does not exist because of necessity, he is not created. I am created and the world is created, God is not created. Then how he exists? A German philosopher of the twentieth century, Schelling speaks very well on these topics. He says: "God exists because he wants to exist."

This is a very interesting Christian theological thesis. This is what the personality of God means. Because there is a free God and I am his image, that is, I have the opportunity to be like him in freedom.

God is trinity – triune and one in nature and exists not out of necessity but out of a wish to exist. There is no contradiction in his essence and personality. The nature of a human being and personality is in certain contradiction. The fight in me for the realization of freedom is rooted in the contradiction between my nature and personality. According to Christian theology, personality cannot be reduced to nature, personality is the ontological essence of a person, the beginning, it is more important than nature. There is no person without nature, but nature belongs to the person. This is very important from the point of view of freedom. If a human being is not a personal being, then he can't have freedom. If a human being was only what it is, that is material, naked nature, then he can never be free because he will not be able to act outside its nature, but a human is a personal being, the feature of a human is to act beyond its nature, which was accomplished by the God himself, he created the world and came into the world as a human.

Christ is not personally human, he received human nature, flesh, and spirit, from the Virgin Mary, but he is the creator of the universe, the Son of God. God is absolute goodness. If there exists any value, that is God and when he came to earth as a human, he revealed himself as a human, as absolute goodness. But he is hated and killed. Who are those people who rejected Christ? Who couldn't see or could see but hated him by heart and sentenced him to death? Who were they? There were representatives of different social groups. There was a king, there was a prosecutor appointed by Rome, there were soldiers, there were simple peasants, there were fishermen, there was a religious hierarchy, there were the modern intelligentsia, scholars, educated people, honest people, patriots, and there were also democratic elections. One of the motives for sentencing Christ to death was patriotism. Very strange things happened, even the enemies reconciled, Herod the king and Pilate the procurator, who were enemies before. In other words, an impressive "harmony" fell between them, they united and pronounced a death sentence on Christ. When we say, which is better, to be good or to be free, this example is interesting, because, if we look at these people from the perspective of contemporary civilians, all of them were good, patriots, moral, and religious, they had everything necessary for national identity and so on. They had many good qualities. And those were the people that couldn't see Christ and sentenced him to death. Why couldn't these people see Christ? Even though these people were truly good, were they free?

What is better, to be good or to be free? (it is a strange question isn't it?). I choose to be free to be good. I will rather be free, than "right" and so on. When Giordano Bruno was sentenced to death by the Catholic church, one of the theologians describes the event, that Giordano Bruno didn't surrender and fiercely

defended his position which was not right. It should be noted that Giordano Bruno was not a scientist, this is a fabricated myth. He was an occultist, and the Inquisition fiercely fought against occultism, it was not about his scientific views. From a religious perspective, Giordano Bruno had the wrong position. He had the freedom to believe and the freedom to choose and he believed in it. If he was scared and said, what he was forced to say, would this have been better for him, as for the eternal creature? The theologian asks the question, and he answers himself, that it is better that he died proving wrong, and with this maintained more value, than agreeing to something which he didn't believe in because of the fear of death. The ultimate value was freedom. Without freedom, even truth has no value. One of the main values which create the foundation of Christian Theology is freedom. We come across it very often in the Scripture. Religious life and culture are good but not on at the expense of freedom!

A person might use freedom as an instrument for many wrong purposes, we know how destructive it might be sometimes for us.

I will borrow from Dostoyevsky again, in the novel "The Brothers Karamazov", you remember that the great inquisitor accuses Christ that he gave people freedom, which people didn't need, they preferred to be slaves. This is amazingly true for the religious life as well, when a person comes to the church, he/she wants to fully hand over his or her responsibility to God and the priest. As a rule, the priest should try to diminish this stereotype and shouldn't give the right to the person to place his/her responsibility on someone else, even if it is God, and become passive. People avoid freedom. How many examples are there that people don't want to get married because they want to avoid responsibility, they don't want to leave their parents' house, because they are running away from the responsibility? Often the intelligent person doesn't want to be appointed to a high position because he/she doesn't want the responsibility.

Freedom as an instrument can be used for cognition. The person cannot comprehend anything if he/she isn't free. This is the same for a believer, freedom is an important instrument for a believer in his/her search for God. Why? Because God is completely free and finding him is impossible any other way. You will not be able to find God based on rules, laws, logic, or intellectual comprehension. You cannot understand God through your intellect. Intellect helps you verbalize what you have comprehended by heart and share it with others. Intellect is only an instrument. When we want to comprehend God

God can only be understood as a free creature, through freedom. Comprehending God is a process of continuous growth. According to the Apostle Paul, human development is essential to understanding God because this process involves a personal relationship with him and this development is a continuous dynamic, opportunity for eternal development, which can't be achieved without freedom.

One additional nuance about Christianity is that the priest should not limit the freedom of a person, this is not Christianity and if you come across something else, you should know that this is not Christianity. If we look from the historic perspective, we will not be able to find any other religion, having so many denominations, as Christianity. There are denominations in Hinduism as well as in Islam, but Christianity is unique in this. The reason is that Christianity by its essence can't stand zombifying of human beings, on the contrary, it gives people freedom. If we take moral norms, external moral norms are more protected in Islam than in Christianity. Christianity gives freedom in everything, and it doesn't act as a suppressor, because any kind of violence makes a person lose God. My Christian teaching should not be limited to the fear of Hell and the luxury of Heaven but should be defined by striving toward God.

Another thing I would like to say is freedom, which is a supernatural act of nature. Here I want to emphasize freedom as the basis of creativity.

A human is a creator, and this is proven by the fact that he/she can exist beyond nature and this changed the universe.

Science has developed so much these days. Mathematics and many other fundamental sciences were indeed founded in the East, but humanitarian science was developed in modern Europe, where there was Christian culture because the matter is liberated, not sacred, it exists independently of God, and it is not a part of God's world. there is no emanation, matter does not exist out of necessity. Christianity says a very strange thing, God created the world from nothing so that there is no outpouring, no emanation, there was no need for it, simply, creation and matter are not sacred, they are not God, therefore the opportunity is given to science, to develop. Development is a creative process of man only because conditionally it operates outside of nature. An animal can make a hole in the ground and a bird can make a nest, but they cannot change the world, because an animal is not a person and cannot act outside of its nature. This impulse of freedom, which Christ introduced, changed the whole world and had an explosive effect on art.

I want to also touch on the degrees of freedom. There is a notion of "natural freedom". Some people don't understand the idea behind fasting, they protest and say:

"What difference it makes for God to know what I eat?" Of course, there is no difference for God, even in the Scripture

Apostle Paul says that it makes no difference what you eat, but in the same Scripture, we see that Apostle Paul is fasting. What is fasting? This is a school, of asceticism, exercise, and an attempt that freedom is not understood as "natural", meaning that I don't follow the wishes of my stomach.

Actually, Christ gives me an amazing example of this. He starts his journey not as God, but as a man. He fasts for 40 days, after which he is tempted by the devil (Matthew 4, 3-11) in greed, love for being praised, and reverence. Christ gives me an example, he is someone to look up to, I win the condition when pleasure becomes the essence of human existence and I tell you, that you also should win over it if you want to overcome the captivity of natural freedom and don't think that freedom is a possibility of natural choice. Otherwise, you will be manipulated. Is it so hard to identify how society is manipulated? By bread and by spectacle! Both are connected to pleasure, one is psychological, and the other one is physical. Christianity tells you to climb above this. Apostle Peter says in his epistle that those who are in immorality, slavery, or corruption promise freedom to others and forget that whoever is subjected to something has become a slave to it. Then he refuses the power, while it would have been logical right?

If he would become an emperor of the world, he would imperatively implement his rules and testaments and nobody would have had any other way, but to obey them, no? Christ refuses the power. But power and satisfaction are not a sin in themselves, but they limit human beings if a person's aim or life purpose becomes power and satisfaction. And in the end, this is vainglory. Christ shows how to win when one thinks he/she is special. Everyone is special, even our fingerprints are special, but not special in terms that I am superior to somebody else, this is a demonic state of a person.

This is natural freedom, and we should not confuse it with real freedom. There is also socio-political freedom for which many people have sacrificed themselves. I remember the words of Dostoevski again, that the Revolution or any other social change is not worthy of even one child's tear. How much was sacrificed by the French revolution, how much was sacrificed by the revolution in Russia...It is bad if a person considers this as the essence of freedom. A couple of words about national freedom. There is also a positive and negative understanding of nationalism. For example, in religious life fascism, chauvinism and

ethnophaulism are considered heresy. The essence of heresy or distorted Christian thinking is when they try to involve the Church which is a mystical body of Christ, in the service of nationalistic ideas.

This is an attempt to turn Christ from an end into a means. This is contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Christianity does not march against the love of one's nation, on the contrary, it teaches us this love, simply, nothing can supersede God who came to earth as a man. If taken separately and removed from other values, national freedom was an autonomous value, then fascism would end well. Even in Georgia, sadly, nationalistic views override Christ. This isn't bringing good results. Our homeland is free for 30 years and what is the result? How true was Merab Mamardashvili at the dawn of our freedom when he said: the truth is above the motherland, and he was almost killed and stoned. When hearing the word "truth" everyone, who has at least once read the New Testament will remember Christ, who says "I am the truth. How can you go against this? Once, one historian told me an astonishing thing, that for him motherland was greater than Christ. Did our ancestors think, live, or act this way? Let's remember Vakhtang Gograsali, Davit Aghmashenebeli, Shota Rustaveli, Grigol Khanzveli, Giorgi VII, and other patriots, who were distinguished examples of righteous Christianity and were righteous Georgians. For them, Christ was not just one, but the only value. For them, Christ was the sun, which sheds light on everything and brightens up. That is why their dwelling on earth brought so much yield.

This was a small detour, let's go back to the main topic. A human has two wills: natural and gnostic. Moreover, a will is natural, hence, God's will is also natural, an absolute truth, because he is God and as humans are creatures and as much as humans are alienated from God, humans are prone to evil. You can imagine that our natural will drags us to all kinds of wrongdoings, when a person thinks that freedom is to act upon these natural inclinations, a human might become like an animal, but there is another gnostic will that is not in God. Why? Because God does not need to choose between good and evil. A gnostic will allows me to choose between good and evil, God doesn't need this as he is absolute good, while I am not solid in good, I have to make a choice every day: good or evil. This is very important from the practical perspective, because if I considered the aspiration of my heart, my thoughts, and often my conscience as the absolute truth, and imagine that my consciousness, mind, emotions, heart and sub-feelings, everything physical, as absolute truth, I might be greatly mistaken. I need to liberate myself from this and make a personal choice, using gnostic will to achieve true freedom. The other issue is, how can I achieve this?

There is a condition of freedom of soul, where I will not have the will to sin anymore. Today, I can't not sin. However, in spiritual life, there comes a moment when despite the temptation I will not sin anymore, by God's grace sin will not be able to win me, however, sin will exist inside me as a potential. But a moment might come in my spiritual life, where I will not be able to sin anymore because sin will be estranged from me, as my soul healed from this specific sin. Hence, in spiritual life, there is a moment where the dweller doesn't sin anymore and when the dweller can't sin anymore This is the freedom of the soul and sin makes me lose this freedom, this personal freedom. Overcoming sin in the fallen nature of man is achieved by the realization of God's will in us, you remember the plea to God in "Our Father": "Thy will be done", the human being is liberated from its depraved nature and starts to act not only based on his/her nature but with God's energy. In these cases, I and God have one energy, energy which is absolutely free, and I act upon it. That is the moment when the human being, as an image and similar being to God, starts to reveal. This time human rejoices in true freedom. Human obtains divine abilities, that's why Christianity says that humans should become gods by divine energy and grace. But this will not happen without free choice.

There is one more, freedom is revealed into responsibility in relationships, and its ontological manifestation is love. It also comes from God. What is the price of freedom if I don't have a relationship with you, I must love you and this freedom will be manifested fully in love. I can sacrifice myself for you, I can sacrifice my

nature for you, I can die for you, and this is complete love, it is in God, and the Lord himself gives us an example of this when he is crucified for us. He told us that the greatest love is to sacrifice oneself for a friend. Freedom manifests itself most strongly in love. My freedom is realized in respecting and taking care of your freedom. Freedom is taking care of the freedom of others! And when you take care of the freedom of others, then your freedom is realized. This is an antinomian situation, a paradox, but this is how true freedom is revealed.

The manifestation of freedom is the passage from the New Testament about the two thugs (Luke, 23, 39-43). Two thugs are a symbol of humanity divided in two, what unites these two sides? Both are thugs. If each of us takes an honest look at ourselves, we will realize that there is no crime, no sin in the history of mankind that is not within us. This is logical because we all are branches of one tree, which has grown from the firstborn human, and we are all bearers of the same genetic code. We have everything within ourselves, and it is the dignity of a person if he/she can see it. The great French thinker and scientist, Blaise Pascal, says: "A person can feel he/she is miserable, or that he/she is a criminal. The tree does not feel it is miserable. A person feels his/her insignificance, and this is his/her greatness." As a priest, I will say that there is nothing more beautiful than a repentant person

Even paintings were dedicated to it. Doesn't Rembrandt have a stunning canvas on The Return of the Prodigal Son? And in general, how many artistic works and films have been created on this topic? Repentance, metanoia, and human transformation don't happen at once, this is a process, an extraordinary condition. From two thugs of the New Testament, one saw himself, as a thug, and attacked God, the other one said he deserved what happened to him. He saw himself and as soon as Crucifixion happened, he saw God in dying Christ. It is not an issue that he is not physically free, freedom is a much higher category, and it cannot reduce to the state of flesh. Both thugs are free in their choice, one chooses the road where he blames the world, which treats him unjustly, and the other one manifests freedom this way: "I got what I deserved, Lord keep me with you, remember me". This is a classical example of the manifestation of freedom, both were free about the way they would use their freedom. Christ tells them amazing words, "today, you will be with me in heaven," meaning today you are with me, and you will be with me forever. Christ is heaven and he is the proximity of the unity with God, which is incomprehensible to our minds.

The modern world rejected God who came to earth. He brought us values, including freedom. The world decided to keep those values but reject God, which was executed by the Crucifixion of God. But every value will become an idol without God, and the idol can sacrifice the lives of humans. Hence, freedom, which is alienated from the truth and life, or in other words from God is an idol. Humans gradually become more and more liberated through their thinking, and socially and culturally civilization develops more and more. You ask a question, which war killed more people the first world war or all wars that happened before that? Did the first world war kill more people than the second? The second. God forbid that the third world war begins, even though we hear people talking about it, it will kill even more people than the previous ones. The question here is, why does this happen? After all, we are more civilized, more cultured, and so on. One of the reasons is what we said above. We idolized freedom, as well as all the other values, while we alienated Christ, and so the idol asks for sacrifices, sacrifices of the human beings. Thus, freedom is a very beautiful, charming, ontological, but dangerous value for man. If we take it away from a life that is called Jesus Christ it becomes very dangerous and a very heavy burden for humanity to take the responsibility for it.