

12

LESSON

FREEDOM

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ① Understand the meaning of the word freedom.
- ② Understand the relationship between freedom and equality.
- ③ Understand the types of freedom guaranteed in a democratic society.

TERMS TO KNOW

- Industrial Revolution
- Soviet Union
- Physical freedom
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom of property
- Occupational freedom
- Freedom of religion

What is Freedom?

Every individual wants to live freely without undue pressure or coercion. What is freedom? The dictionary definition of the word freedom is ‘the state of being able to do whatever you want without having restrains from an external force or being bound to anything.’ However, the judgment of freedom may vary depending on the circumstances and conditions of the individual. For example, even if everyone goes to the pool in the same way, for a student who hates swimming, going to the pool would be a forced choice and it would become a shackle, while for a student who likes swimming, going to the pool would be a voluntary choice and freedom. Therefore, the standards for freedom of one individual should not be applied uniformly to everyone.

What is the extent of the freedom an individual can exercise? What would happen if everyone behaved in their own way? What if they steal someone else’s food because they are hungry? How about if they cut the line without lining

up because they are in a hurry? Such behaviors can infringe on another individual’s freedom or harm others. On the contrary, my freedom may be violated, or my body and property may be damaged. Therefore, it is important to enjoy one’s freedom within the scope of harmonious coexistence among the members of society.



Figure 12-1 *Statue of Liberty*

What is the Relationship Between Freedom and Equality?

Freedom and equality are two important values that are the foundation of democracy. A society in which freedom and equality are

in harmony is an ideal democratic society, but in reality, the two values often collide. For example, during the Industrial Revolution in the mid-1800s, the poor peasants in England flocked to cities to earn money. The capitalists who ran the factories wanted their workers to work for longer hours and pay lower. When capitalists were given



Figure 12-2 *Workers during the British Industrial Revolution*

freedom, many workers were exploited in poor conditions, and income inequality between the capitalists and workers grew. The capitalists made more money and became richer and richer, but the workers became the urban poor since they were unable to escape poverty no matter how hard they worked.

In the mid-1900s, the exact opposite happened in the Soviet Union. To achieve economic equality, the Soviet government confiscated and nationalized enterprises and farms. Equal rations were given to those who worked hard and to those who did not. As a result, many people lost their will to work hard. Many who opposed the state's policies were either imprisoned in concentration camps or deprived of their liberty under surveillance and fear. The Soviet Union, which used force to suppress the economic and political freedom of the people, eventually disbanded in 1991.

Although the values of freedom and equality are conflicting, it is impossible to say which one is more important. If one pursues only one value to the extreme,

side effects occur like in the examples above. Therefore, we must recognize that freedom and equality are values that complement each other's flaws, and we must strive to maintain an appropriate balance between the two.

Types of Freedom

Most countries on the planet guarantee the freedom that their citizens should enjoy by specifying them in their constitutions and laws. Let's see what types of freedom are there.

Physical freedom means freedom without physical restrictions except by law. Physical restrictions include arrest, detention, seizure, frisk, torture, forced labor, etc.

Freedom of expression refers to the freedom of individuals or groups to freely express their views and ideas. Censorship or punishment that suppresses freedom of expression is not correct in a democratic society.

Freedom of movement and residence refers to the freedom to live anywhere within a country, to

move residency, or to travel freely.

Freedom of property refers to the freedom to own, use, profit from, and dispose of property.

Occupational freedom refers to the freedom to choose, engage in, and change occupations as one desires.

Freedom of religion means freedom to choose or not to choose a religion according to one's will.

In addition to these, there are various types of freedom. Let's learn what types of freedom are given to us and become a democratic citizen who legally enjoys freedom.



Figure 12-3 A U.S. postage stamp commemorating religious freedom

Reviewing the Lesson

- ① What is the dictionary definition of freedom?
- ② What is the extent of the freedom that an individual can exercise?
- ③ What are some examples where the values of freedom and equality collide?
- ④ What are some types of freedom?

Activities

- ① Let's get into groups and discuss whether the different types of freedom guaranteed by the law are being well applied to each and everyone of us.
- ② Let's think and present about whether there have been cases where my freedom has infringed on someone else's freedom or, conversely, whether there have been cases where others have infringed my freedom.

Image Credits

Figure 12-1 *Lady Liberty under a blue sky*, User:Mcj1800, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/Lady_Liberty_under_a_blue_sky_%28cropped%29.jpg

Figure 12-2 https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/William_Bell_Scott_-_Iron_and_Coal.jpg

Figure 12-3 <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/47/ReligiousFreedomStamp.jpg>

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