

A reflection on freedom

What is freedom, actually? Is it doing whatever you want to do? Even at the expense of others? No, this cannot be freedom; you wouldn't do well by this. And God – what does He think about freedom? God's freedom? Can the freedom of God be something else than our freedom? Welcome to a small reflection on freedom!

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Foreword

This is a book about freedom and our limitations. The idea for this book came to me after a conversation with a seventeen-year-old student, who just happened to be a Muslim. He had been warned by his imam about singing the Swedish Christmas hymn "Nu tändas tusen juleljus" ("A thousand Yule-candles are lit"). It troubled him, as he wanted to sing with the school choir in the Lucia procession, yet without doing anything wrong. This led us into a introspective talk about our concepts of God, our limits, and where God might be found. The conversation badgered me as something important, and soon this book took shape in my mind.

My starting point is that I'm a Christian. Jesus crossed limits all the time. What about us? What kind of boundaries do we need, and which are just expressions of our fear of the unknown? In our time, with over-the-border flows of refugees and transboundary issues of survival, such as our climate, it seems important to reflect upon in what ways we can step outside of our boxes in order to stretch out our hands to each other and let loose our innovative creativity. Our mutual problems will only be solved with mutual resolve.

The Christian faith is all about love and stretching out a hand to everyone, and for me, it is important to take this seriously. It has also led me to ponder, not only what I let myself be restricted by, but

also about what restrictions people from other faith traditions might have. Honestly, I have to say that I don't know. Like most people, I have a set of prejudices and my own preconceptions as to what the aim is of other people's religions. The only reasonable approach I can come up with, is that everyone of us has to take these questions to heart and give them some serious consideration.

What does our traditions and religious observances have to do with our relationship to God? Sometimes, the patterns seem to be more important than the contents. And all those who claim not to have any faith at all, still let themselves be formed by existing patterns and systems all around us. All of us, faith or not, have reason to consider which borders are vital to us and which ones only constrain and hamper us. What is true freedom, for real?

This book may constitute a base for conversations or personal reflections, as you so wish. A book which you may freely use at your discretion!

This is God. His nature is love. He is all-compassing, carrying everything. He is beyond our comprehension, yet still He loves us individually, each and every one of us. This is what it is all about; because all love needs someone to love. He regards each of us as His most precious treasures. All of us know this, deep down in our hearts. But it seems like we have forgotten it? Or just don't dare to believe it. God's love is the most simple and obvious matter there is. Still, we often think about God (if we think about Him at all) with trepidation, as the most complicated thing we have ever encountered, which we don't know how to relate to.



So, out of precaution, we put up our own borders. In there, we can create some order. A pattern we can control. This is right, and that is wrong, this is how things should be managed, these cultural expressions serve us well. I am here, and God is there; this is the right way of doing things, I guess. Or – how can I know if God exists? I'd better create my own order.



In this way, we have created many borders. Around ourselves. Around groups where we feel we belong to. Around countries and around cultures. We have encompassed our different religions, which are our ways of searching for God, with very explicit borders. For safety's sake. Sometimes, we set up borders within our borders as well, in order to feel secure with ourselves and our sense of belonging in our social context. Eventually, the result may be that we end up feeling very limited.



Locked in. Hard-pressed. Diminished. Uncomfortable... What if I dared? What's it like, out there? Could I feel a little bit less restricted? Choose my own way... What is it I really want?