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Freedom

An essay about living a life of your own

This book tries to explain one of the most fundamental changes in the postwar Western world, the democratization of freedom. How come that most ordinary people have been able to take part in what used to be reserved for the economic, political and social elites, namely the opportunity to live “your own” life? The brief answer is positive social freedom.

In the West we have built up a unique constellation of enabling social institutions based on principles such as democratic rule of law, capitalist markets, individualization, differentiation, globalization, formalization and reflexivity.

On the way, the book also addresses current challenges to freedom, the conceptual question of what it means to live “your own” free life, and the normative question of whether and why freedom is worth having.

All in all, the book provides an empirical and moral defense of freedom. It claims that in the postwar West we have much freedom and that this is a freedom worth having because it provides the social basis of human dignity.

Gunnar C. Aakvaag

Gunnar C. Aakvaag is a postdoctoral researcher in sociology at the University of Oslo. He has published widely in sociology and social theory. He is currently working on a project addressing the social conditions of freedom in contemporary modernity.



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