

AP seminar

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## Freedom Comes With Responsibility

### **Introduction**

Responsibility is a term found worldwide, meaning the obligation of a person to evaluate their own goals and act accordingly with how they were brought up or raised (Palamarchuk 268). It is ingrained in our society, from businessmen to laborers, to listen to the powers that be and to do more than you can for fellow man. This behavior is seen as a sign of integrity and can lead people to donate to charity and uphold the law, but bad actors can also twist this concept of duty to justify atrocities and oppression, cloaking it under moral obligation and noble acts for the greater good. It has been noted that ordinary people, even good ones, can be swayed to do bad things under powerful circumstances and situations (Marcus-Newhall 244) without any checks or restrictions put on the higher authorities. This is backed up by findings from the Milgrim experiment, showing how people are likely to follow orders given by an authority figure, even to the extent of killing an innocent human being (McLeod 3). To further understand this potential problem at hand, we must see this through a political lens. The chance of a dictator can use the core tenants of responsibility and authority to enforce and legitimize a tyrannical rule is high, with an extreme example of this is in Ayn Rand's book *Anthem*, where human society has regressed to a primitive, medieval level and stagnated there due to an extreme sense of responsibility for not only the leaders, but to provide and contribute for the rest of society instead of trying to improve your own life. Extreme collectivism causing a drastic change like this is improbable in real life, but collectivism can still hold back a country, like what communism did

to the living conditions of Nicaraguan citizens, forcing them to wait for hours in sun-baked streets just to get their ration of milk and bread (Smolowe). Acknowledging the dangers of the abuse of a person's feelings of responsibility is very essential to maintaining a free, democratic society. There are many ways this danger could be combatted, like promoting entrepreneurship which encourages individualism and by promoting critical thinking by improving education. Policies like these should be able to make a populace more aware of potential power grabs and other machiavellian schemes by a hostile regime to control their society to their benefit. An example of what this awareness could lead to would be more informed voters that vote for politicians that actually care for their well being instead of electing oppressive rulers that only pretend to care.

### **Entrepreneurship**

It has been said that society expects from entrepreneurs not only high economic results, but also significant achievements in terms of social goals (Palamarchuk 268), but forcing entrepreneurs to adopt a collectivist mindset leads to their incorporation into the larger group, encouraging conformism, respect for superiors and discouraging individuals to stand out (Assmann, Ehrl 1249). As mentioned earlier, a collectivist mindset could very easily be manipulated to be used by a hostile power. Not only is it safer to have individualist entrepreneurs, but it has also been noted that being more individualistic positively affects opportunity entrepreneurship and leads to more innovation (Assmann, Ehrl 1250), promoting economic growth.

**Critical Thinking Education**

One of the main importances of critical thinking in our modern society is to know how to treat it appropriately, whether it is to accept it as reliable or to reject it as fallacious (Almeida, Amanda 178). This combats totalitarianism by keeping individuals more aware of any possible changes happening to their lives from a hostile influence. The current educational system encourages memorization of information and its recall on tests rather than covering complex thinking skills (Almeida, Amanda 185). A way to change the education system to encourage critical thinking over memorization would be to teach various thinking skills and have teachers guide students into developing critical thinking, enriching their knowledge base and expanding skills for reflexive thought (Almeida, Amanda 186, 187).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the threat of dictatorships and oppressive regimes rising can be combated with policies that encourage entrepreneurship and critical thinking. Measures like these can keep people with an individualistic mindset, preventing them from being used and deluded into thinking atrocities are for the greater good, like how Nazi Soldiers at concentration camps thought they were doing Germany a service out of obedience to their authorities. This safeguards our democratic society and can keep people in power creating so called bad barrels, situations under which evil thrives (Marcus-Newhall 243). Only through measures like these could all threats to our freedom be prevented.

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