

Controlled

To be controlled is to be restrained or guided by persons or forces outside yourself or even, in some cases, by yourself—as in self-control. Controlled is totally different from enslaved, which is coercive, or from manipulated, which is strategic-coercive. Controlled is milder than those forms of dominance, and is a condition widely valued in societies of all sorts, since being a member of society in itself demands member-control.

Examples

1 Unfree

Though I feel free when I get up in the morning, I soon discover that I am not free. I must dress—can't go out naked! I must exercise—can't let the muscles atrophy! I must be sociable—can't let Scott, the maintenance guy at the gym, think I don't value him! I must treat my wife like the center of my life, which she is, but I must TESTIFY to it. I am a walking organism of debts, and here I am talking about being a free man. Do I feel myself bound? Oddly enough no. I wave my arms and sing! I chit chat fervently at the gym. I'm a chatterbox and a livewire! What *is* this creature gesticulating here? Is it a pasteboard dummy I've created, that dances and hops to emphasize its freedom?

2 Self-Control

Can a person who is basically unfree be said to exercise self-control? Would that be like the jailed person jailing himself? Whatever the illusion, what I feel like calling self-control kicks into my life on a daily basis. I drink a martini in the late afternoon. I have invented—now the moment of invention is in the mist of memory—the inward and repeatable tale that my Mother told me never to drink before five in the afternoon. This useful narrative provides the framework for a one-drink policy which I further tighten by stretching the time of the one drink to five-thirty—with the inner proviso that I can 'kill' it at five if required. (Ideologically self-lenient, I seem thus to guarantee myself license for postponing pleasure.) The drink itself comes as a *soi-disant* oasis, from which, sipping, I can buy another forty five minutes of *scribble scribble* before the day is over.