

Ownership of Pain

I don't know where I am heading. As I climb higher with more achievements, I notice my eyes growing rigid and purple bruises forming on my back from the weight I carry. Each morning, I used to grant myself a pause through meditation, but now destiny seems to forbid this small mercy. Too much work made me hypersensitive to every passing second, transforming the silence of pause into a cage where every second feels stolen. People without the purple lines applaud as I ascend to the cliff, and I hate how their praise makes me feel both proud and empty.

I thought I was choosing to move forward, feeling happy thinking that sweat bursting out from every step expressed my free will. But life reveals a higher summit as I continue climbing—I cannot expect when this will end. I realized it was self-rationalization as a coping mechanism that I—who was shaped by my destiny—believed to pursue happiness. I felt the pain of the scrapes from the chain pulling me uphill, yet I believed my autonomy was what motivated me to move forward; I thought the goal I created for the future—happiness from imaginary ideals—was what was pulling me up the hill. But the chain and my vision were the same illusion. I appreciated the scrapes that every step made, mistaking the attrition of my soul for choice. I was doing exactly what the destiny of life wanted, blind to the present, living in the imagination of a future that never arrives—because each summit reveals another mountain.

Feeling free differs from having freedom. To feel free, I need happiness as a premise alongside the possession of freedom. Yes, I have freedom—to breathe, to climb, to lift or withdraw. But if I don't climb, the stone falls and I must chase and restart. So I must climb. The hill grants me free will but not the means to express that free will on my own.

My destiny of hardship—watching my bones show through where I've tied myself pierces my skin—whispers with a pleasant breeze: “Yes, keep up the work! You have autonomy to move forward.” But I realized that was just rationalization—forcing a smile to convince myself of happiness. The corners of my mouth maintained the lift, then gave way to a muffled collapse once endurance spilled into salty sweat. And I still see people walking on paved roads together. If I can be happy without *earning* freedom, what is the point of pursuing freedom?

Freedom has no form—it is an abstract notion people forged to express their discontent and desire for change. I don't know if humans are meant to create freedom and pioneer the world systems based on it, but I know that people are meant to pursue something that they lack in the status quo—unless questions and reasoning stop—for the sake of expanding consciousness. It's the destiny of hardship that makes humans pursue freedom—to fill themselves with purpose and meaning; so I can gain—not enough just as a memory, since memory without learning does not resonate long. Since gaining comes after realizing the things that I didn't know before, I irresistibly must be vulnerable in order to learn something. That is why learning is hard.

How can I call a heavy weight light? I can neither fool the truth nor ignore the pain. I cannot even escape it. Learning is the destiny of humans. Then how can I, as an incomplete being, thus fragile, find happiness while pursuing challenges? The answer isn't in finding happiness, but in choosing lucidity.

I choose lucidity over rationalizing myself as happy. I need to open my eyes and see farther than just the winding terrain, beyond the status quo of hardship and pain. I need to see the anatomy of the climb, not just the next step I will make. Climbing the hill with the rock is inevitable—feeling pain in hardship is inevitable. But I refuse to justify my bleeding soles and purple-lined back as a holy sacrifice to an imaginary endpoint in an endless loop of moments.

I must admit that I cannot convert pain into genuine happiness. I must admit that I cannot smile permanently because that kind of happiness is made from self-rationalization, not from loving the act of climbing with the stone. That smile is not from possession. Not from loving the entire part of the bleeding feet—I can love imagining the feet as a manifestation of effort, but I cannot love the pain itself because I am human. Even in solitude, imagining the future, I couldn't maintain myself without love from those who care for me. If one says they can smile anytime when destiny forces them to, it's because they believe pride in effort supersedes pain. But the pain endures and accumulates at the edge of one's mind regardless of whether destiny sees it. One must “force” a smile to pretend happiness.

If I cannot love pain, I can claim its possession so it can be numbed beneath consciousness.

When I studied 24 hours for an exam which I could've gotten the same grade with only 12 hours, I didn't think that I was stupid, or that the test was unfair. I simply owned my 24 hours of effort as a fact. My pain is quantified by *my* measure alone. Through owning the pain, through declaring that I am the one with free will to give each pain meaning, I choose the precision of each pain's value to me rather than its value assigned by external standards.

This ownership of pain's meaning—claiming hardship inside my own dimensions, not according to others' judgment—transforms hardship into something tolerable. Not because the pain gets lighter, but because claiming it as difficult is first saying that I understand the level—I am declaring to confront and deal with it. When I measure pain only through my subjectivity, paradoxically, I reach the most objective truth. My 24 hours remains my 24 hours, regardless of the outcomes or others' judgments.

I must not get used to pretending happiness. I must not ignore the weakness inherently given to me—humanity that feels pain—even though I might think acknowledging it is unhelpful in pursuing my goals. Pain is an indicator of my candid vitality and status quo. By giving all meanings and thus claiming

autonomy, I understand the pain as mine, making it “controllable” by me. I can scale it to my dimensions. Lucidity makes hardship tolerable, and the tolerable becomes feasible, so I can motivate myself to climb up knowing that there will be another summit after the hill I’m climbing. That is genuine rebellion against destiny’s irony—the declaration of my autonomy.

To claim autonomy, don’t just think about the situation you’re trapped in—reason the situation from your inside. Ask yourself: “Why am I trapped?” You’ll find “I did not” in your reasons. Transform that into “I did.” For example, if I forget something and lose it, I won’t say “I couldn’t bring it because I didn’t have time to check before I left.” I will say “I brought it to the table, and the pen wasn’t my priority.” That leads to the decision—I must make it a priority. Don’t say the situation was beyond your consciousness. Use “I did” instead of “not.” Even simple situations like losing things can become claims of autonomy over the situation destiny puts us in.

The stone is heavy, the hill is steep, but that fact does not affect my free will. Through pursuing lucidity, the stone becomes tolerable not because I rationalize it as light, but because I own it as hard, so that my autonomy can actually cope with it. The meaning I give to each step transforms punishment into purpose, making me not a victim of unexpected responsibilities but an architect who finds happiness through creating meaning in an absurd world.

Hardship remains hard. But ‘hard’ that I own is different from ‘hard’ that owns me. That’s the rebellion. That’s the lucidity. That’s how I keep climbing without losing myself to the climb.