

CHOOSING OR OBEYING DREAMS: THE STRUGGLE IN THE HUMAN HEART

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Abstract. *This article is devoted to the topic "Choosing or Obeying Dreams: The Struggle in the Human Soul", which analyzes one of the most important choices in human life - the conflict between personal dreams and obedience to the demands of society or family. The article highlights the issues of internal spiritual struggle, the need for independent thinking, and the desire for freedom, especially in the lives of young people. The events of the work, the characters of the characters, and the trials they have experienced serve as the main sources for revealing these problems. The events described in the work reveal the process of a person's understanding of his "I", the fear and insecurity that are formed under the influence of external pressures, as well as the courage needed to overcome this situation. In particular, it is shown that the dreams and inner desires of young heroes often clash with the strict rules of parents, the education system and society. The article also considers the role of mentors and coaches in the lives of young people as an important aspect. It is noted that mentors play a major role in increasing the self-confidence of young people and encouraging them to think independently. At the same time,*

the main idea is that each person is responsible for his own life, and the choice determines his future.

Keywords: *Dream, obedience, human soul, inner struggle, free thinking, personal choice, youth problems, societal pressure, parental influence, independence, courage, fear, self-awareness, meaning of life, freedom, education system.*

Human life is shaped by choices, yet not all choices are truly free[13]. Among the most difficult decisions a person faces is whether to follow personal dreams or to obey the expectations imposed by family, society, and tradition[9:42]. This conflict lies at the center of human experience, forming a silent but powerful struggle within the heart[4:112]. The theme of choosing or obeying dreams is deeply explored in Dead Poets Society, where young individuals confront the tension between inner desire and external control [16]

At its core, the struggle between dreams and obedience reflects a deeper question: what does it mean to live an authentic life?[2:15]. From childhood, individuals are often taught to respect authority, follow rules, and meet expectations [10:305]. These expectations may come from parents who wish to secure a stable future for their children, from educational systems that prioritize discipline and measurable success, or from society, which values conformity over individuality [7:56]. While such structures provide order and guidance, they can also suppress creativity, independence, and self-expression [3:120].

Dreams, on the other hand, represent the most personal and genuine aspects of human identity. They are not merely ambitions but reflections of inner passions, talents, and desires. To pursue a dream requires courage, especially when it conflicts with external demands. It often involves risk, uncertainty, and even failure. Yet, it is through this pursuit that individuals discover meaning, fulfillment, and a sense of purpose.

In the narrative of Dead Poets Society, this conflict is embodied in the lives of students at a strict and tradition-bound school. The institution emphasizes discipline, honor, and excellence, expecting students to follow predetermined paths toward prestigious careers. However, the arrival of an unconventional teacher challenges this rigid system. He encourages students to think independently, question authority, and embrace the philosophy of “Carpe Diem” — seize the day. This idea urges them to value the present moment and pursue what truly matters to them.

The impact of this philosophy is transformative. Students begin to awaken to their own desires and identities. For some, this leads to self-discovery and growth. For others, it creates an intense inner conflict, as they struggle to reconcile their dreams with the expectations placed upon them. The character of Neil Perry illustrates the tragic consequences of this struggle. Passionate about acting, he discovers a deep sense of joy and purpose on the stage. However, his father insists on a more conventional and secure career path, leaving no room for deviation.

Neil’s inability to assert his own will highlights a crucial aspect of the human struggle: the fear of disobedience. Many individuals hesitate to follow their dreams not because they lack desire, but because they fear rejection, disappointment, or punishment. Obedience, in this sense, becomes a form of protection — a way to avoid conflict and maintain approval. Yet, this protection comes at a cost. It can lead to suppressed emotions, loss of identity, and a life lived according to others’ expectations rather than one’s own.

The story also presents contrasting responses to this dilemma. Todd Anderson, initially shy and insecure, gradually learns to express himself and gain confidence. Through encouragement and support, he begins to overcome his fears and embrace his individuality. His journey suggests that self-discovery is a gradual process, requiring both inner strength and external guidance.

Unlike Neil, Todd manages to find a balance between his inner voice and the external world, illustrating that the struggle, while difficult, is not without hope.

The role of mentorship is particularly significant in this context. A supportive teacher or guide can inspire individuals to question limitations and believe in their potential. By creating an environment where ideas can be freely expressed, mentors empower individuals to explore their identities. However, the influence of such figures is often limited by larger systems of control. In *Dead Poets Society*, the teacher's methods are ultimately challenged by the institution, reflecting the broader resistance to change within society.

This tension between individual freedom and social structure raises important questions about education and upbringing. Should the goal of education be to produce obedient individuals who fit into existing systems, or to nurture creative and independent thinkers? Ideally, it should be a balance of both. Discipline and structure are necessary, but they should not come at the expense of personal growth and self-expression. When individuals are encouraged to explore their passions alongside their responsibilities, they are more likely to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.

Furthermore, the struggle between dreams and obedience is not limited to youth. It continues throughout life, manifesting in career choices, relationships, and personal values. Many adults find themselves in professions they did not choose, living lives shaped by compromise rather than desire. This often leads to regret, as people realize that they have neglected their true aspirations. The lesson here is not that one should reject all forms of responsibility, but that one should not completely silence their inner voice.

Courage plays a central role in resolving this conflict. Choosing dreams requires the willingness to face uncertainty and to accept the possibility of failure. It also requires resilience — the ability to persist despite obstacles and criticism. At the same time, obedience should not be viewed entirely negatively. Respect for others, understanding of social norms, and

consideration of consequences are important aspects of human interaction. The challenge lies in finding a balance where obedience does not extinguish individuality.

Ultimately, the struggle in the human heart is a search for harmony between inner desire and external reality. It is about finding a path that honors both personal dreams and social responsibilities. This balance is not easily achieved, and it may differ for each individual. What remains constant, however, is the importance of self-awareness. By understanding one's values, passions, and fears, individuals can make more conscious and authentic choices.

Another important dimension of the struggle between choosing dreams and obeying expectations lies in the concept of identity formation. A person's identity is not fixed at birth; it is shaped through experiences, decisions, and the environment in which one grows. When individuals are constantly directed toward a path chosen by others, their sense of self can become fragile or even lost. They may begin to question who they truly are beyond the roles imposed upon them. This identity crisis often leads to emotional instability, dissatisfaction, and a lack of purpose.

In contrast, when individuals are given the freedom to explore their interests and make independent decisions, they gradually build a stronger and more authentic identity. Even mistakes play a crucial role in this process. Failure, though often feared, is an essential part of growth. It teaches resilience, self-reflection, and adaptability. However, in environments where obedience is prioritized above all else, failure is often stigmatized, leaving little room for experimentation and learning. This creates individuals who are afraid to take risks, ultimately limiting their potential.

The influence of culture and tradition must also be considered when discussing this theme. In many societies, especially those with strong family values, obedience is seen as a virtue. Respecting elders and fulfilling family

expectations are deeply rooted principles. While these values promote unity and responsibility, they can also create pressure on individuals to sacrifice their personal aspirations. The challenge, therefore, is not to reject tradition entirely but to reinterpret it in a way that allows space for individuality. A healthy society is one that evolves, balancing respect for tradition with openness to change.

Moreover, the psychological impact of suppressed dreams cannot be overlooked. When individuals consistently ignore their inner desires, they may experience frustration, anxiety, and even depression. This internal conflict can manifest in various ways, such as loss of motivation, emotional withdrawal, or a sense of emptiness. Over time, the gap between who they are and who they pretend to be becomes wider, making it increasingly difficult to find satisfaction in life. On the other hand, those who actively pursue their passions often report higher levels of happiness and fulfillment, even when facing challenges.

It is also important to examine the role of communication in resolving this conflict. Many struggles between dreams and obedience arise from a lack of understanding between individuals and authority figures, such as parents or teachers. Open and honest dialogue can help bridge this gap. When individuals express their aspirations clearly and respectfully, and when authority figures listen with empathy, it becomes possible to find compromises that satisfy both sides. Unfortunately, such communication is not always present, leading to misunderstandings and conflict.

Another key aspect is the idea of responsibility. Choosing one's dreams does not mean acting impulsively or ignoring consequences. True freedom involves making informed decisions and accepting responsibility for their outcomes. This requires maturity and critical thinking. Individuals must evaluate their abilities, opportunities, and limitations before pursuing a

particular path. In this sense, the pursuit of dreams is not merely an emotional act but also a rational process.

Technology and modern society have added new dimensions to this struggle. Today, individuals are exposed to a vast range of possibilities and lifestyles through media and the internet. While this expands horizons and inspires ambition, it can also create confusion and unrealistic expectations. People may feel pressured to achieve success quickly or to meet certain standards of achievement and happiness. This external influence can complicate the process of choosing authentic dreams, making it harder to distinguish between genuine desires and socially constructed ideals.

Additionally, peer influence plays a significant role, especially during adolescence. Friends and social circles can either encourage or discourage individuals from pursuing their dreams. Positive peer support can boost confidence and provide motivation, while negative influence can reinforce conformity and fear of judgment. This highlights the importance of surrounding oneself with people who respect individuality and support personal growth.

The long-term consequences of choosing or ignoring dreams are profound. Those who pursue their passions often develop a strong sense of purpose and satisfaction, even if their journey is challenging. They are more likely to feel proud of their achievements and at peace with their decisions. In contrast, those who consistently suppress their dreams may experience regret later in life. This regret is often accompanied by the realization that opportunities were lost not due to inability, but due to fear or external pressure.

Ultimately, the struggle between dreams and obedience is not about choosing one over the other entirely, but about finding a balance that allows individuals to live authentically while maintaining meaningful relationships and responsibilities. This balance requires courage, self-awareness, communication, and support. It is a continuous process rather than a single decision, evolving as individuals grow and circumstances change.

This work can be considered one of the most thought-provoking literary pieces that encourages a deeper understanding of human life and the inner world of an individual. The central idea presented in the narrative — the struggle between choosing one's dreams and obeying societal expectations — reflects a universal issue that remains relevant in every stage of life. The events described in the story go beyond an ordinary school setting and reveal complex emotional and psychological experiences within the human heart.

One of the most striking aspects of the work is the internal conflict experienced by the students and their attempts to discover their own paths in life. Each character faces a crucial decision, balancing personal desires against external pressures. Some demonstrate courage and pursue their dreams, while others submit to fear or authority. This contrast highlights the idea that the most difficult battles are not external but internal. Overcoming fear, defending personal beliefs, and choosing an independent path require significant strength and determination.

The role of the teacher in the story presents another meaningful dimension. The teacher is portrayed not merely as a source of knowledge, but as an inspiring figure who encourages students to view life from a different perspective. The concept of “Carpe Diem,” which emphasizes valuing the present moment and making the most of opportunities, serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of living fully. This idea underlines the tendency of individuals to focus excessively on the future while neglecting the significance of the present.

The character of Neil Perry represents one of the most emotionally impactful elements of the story. His struggle between personal aspirations and imposed responsibilities, combined with the inability to express his true desires, leads to a tragic outcome. This situation illustrates the potential dangers of excessive parental and societal pressure. It suggests that a lack of understanding

and support for individual interests may result in serious psychological consequences.

In contrast, the development of Todd Anderson offers a more hopeful perspective. Initially portrayed as shy and lacking confidence, his gradual transformation demonstrates that personal growth is possible through encouragement and self-discovery. This character emphasizes the importance of inner strength and the ability to overcome fear in order to express one's identity. Overall, the work conveys an important message: preserving one's individuality is essential in the face of external expectations. While social norms and guidance from others hold value, they should not completely suppress personal desires. A meaningful life requires independent decision-making and the acceptance of responsibility for those choices. Otherwise, existence may become shaped entirely by the expectations of others rather than personal intention.

From a broader perspective, this literary work serves not only as a narrative but also as a valuable life lesson. It encourages critical thinking, self-awareness, and the courage to make meaningful choices. Most importantly, it highlights the transient nature of time and the importance of acting upon one's aspirations without unnecessary delay.

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