

The Fallacy that Free Will and the Existence of God are Compatible

MAIN THOUGHTS

If free will exists then it is a mystery. Nobody knows how it works.

What do you need it for? The usual answer is that you need free will to be creative.

That would mean then that it is more important than free will being about having responsibility for good and evil. The only version of free will that is needed and desirable is that it is the power to be creative and own what you create. It is yours – it is not mechanical forces. God belief says free will is about choosing for God (good) or against God (evil, sin). But you have to be creative first before you can take one of those directions. You are responsible for what you do but not responsible as in being entitled to be accused of being evil.

When free will agent cannot know for certain what morality is then the free will is about creativity and not morality as such. If there is morality there it is a sideline. It's a side avenue.

We conclude then that telling us free will is about doing God's will or otherwise is both in opposition to what we really need and want and an insult to what free will should be about.

ANALYSIS

Many secular and non-religious people see free will as being a reality but not as a religious reality. They see religion taking over the concept and making it spiritual or religious as degrading it. Religion cannot take over things that have nothing to do with religion. Religion cannot say maths for example is inspired by God and so that we should do sums to be closer to God. There is no evidence or need for making free will about religion or God or spiritual matters. Even if it can embrace those things it does not need to therefore that is not what it is for. Your teeth are not for chewing sweets though they can.

Religion says that love is voluntary. Only a being with free will to do extreme evil can give love. So they say God gave us all this freedom we have but we abused it of our own volition and so he is not to blame for evil. This reasoning is called the free will defence or the freedom defence. It is meant to clear God of the blame for evil. But it is obvious that God could limit our free will. It is limited anyway by our feelings and what we can remember and what we can think of. In short, it is limited by our mental powers. It is limited by our circumstances. You cannot use your will to go on a world cruise if you don't have the money.

The freedom defence says that God by definition is pure love and the source of any love there is so God alone really matters. So it has the hidden premise that free will is given to you not for you but for God. It is meant to be used wholly for him. If free will is for that, then it follows that unless you are sure God exists then your free will is not fully activated. You are not really free. Faith in God triggers and the more faith you have the more it enhances free will. If you don't believe in God, you don't have real free will. The freedom defence ties itself up in knots completely. It is a heinous insult to offer it to justify belief in God in the face of all the suffering that exists in the world.

People who believe in freedom have two conflicting views of freedom to choose from.

Freedom of indifference is the first one. It says all that matters is making our own choices even if they are wrong. It is choice for the sake of choice. This view leads to resentment against legal systems and systems of religious law. They are seen as restraints on the freedom we are born with and that nobody can remove from us. It denies that the law helps make us more free. Nobody denies that we need laws but what happens is you end up seeing wrong as being against a rule. And if you are a slave to a caring slave-owner you are still a slave. So imagine how enslaved you are to the law which cares about rules, not you.

If a rule is right and good, it is still possible to follow it simply because it is a rule without regard for the goodness.

If the rule is arbitrary and you follow it then you don't care about the goodness either.

Freedom for excellence is about us using our freedom to restrict our freedom so that we will be excellent people. This form of freedom sees that we must try to be happy and use our reason and restrain ourselves in pursuit of happiness. We must think of others and not just ourselves. This freedom is about us becoming an excellent person. It is about us as people.

This kind of freedom is based on valuing happiness not God. Even if God is the source of happiness, that does not mean that we must want him. We must want the happiness we can get from him.

So??

Both forms of freedom show that the notion of God giving us free will so that we may freely come to him is nonsense. Freedom is intrinsically about us not God.

It is not true that God is the supreme good and gives us free will so that we might come to him and become manifestations of pure love.

A true relationship is based on mutual need and vulnerability. God does not have a relationship with us for he does not need us and cannot be really vulnerable. So the notion that free will was given to us so that we might use it to choose a relationship with God is preposterous.

There is no way one can believe in God if one rejects the doctrine of free will. But when the doctrine of free will is thought through properly it is seen that it does not logically fit the existence of God at all. It logically excludes it.

Believers are really thinking of themselves when they go on about the need for free will. It is that they want to be able to intend to be good. They would say that free will is still worth it if everybody else has none and if it leads only to misery. Saying it is a gift from God is an arrogant insult. If God goes with the doctrine and the doctrine with God then God is implicitly bad as an idea.

Surprisingly the Protestant reformer John Calvin held that if you do evil or sin you do it because God is willing you to. He noted there can be no such thing as free will to go against God. Even when you rebel you only think you do. You don't have to be atheist to see free will as anti-God! The Calvinist God deserves all the hate he gets.