

Believing that we are not programmed to do what we do but are responsible for what we do is bad news

FREE WILL DEFENCE

People who worship God say he gave us the freedom to spite his will. If he did then we have the power to create out of nothing and he has nothing to do with this power. We would have to believe that we enjoy free will because of God and not in spite of him. He creates our will and our power to sin. We cannot have free will unless there is no God. God implies that we are always dependent on him and never independent.

Surely then God would sin when we sin? He is not guilty of our sins for he lets us commit sin out of respect for us.

But religion defines sin as the worst of all evils so it is a strange form of respect that we are getting from God! It is not reduced freedom that is the worst of evils but sin. So God should not give us the free will to torture the innocent. There should be some boundaries.

The believers say God has to create us and our power to sin to allow us to be free so he is innocent. He would only be guilty if he had no right to do this. But surely this would mean that freedom is more important than us?

It is said that if there is no free will then we cannot be considered to possess supreme dignity. We would be at the mercy of blind forces. If there is no freedom then it doesn't matter what we do or don't do. The person who murders babies is as good as the person who saves them. It would be right to pity the killer for he or she is a hapless victim of fate. Study that argument carefully. See what it is really saying. "I don't want to say those who do terrible things are good people because they cannot help it. I want to excoriate and condemn them."

If you modify the doctrine to say that a lot of every choice we make is programmed and the rest isn't you only make it half as bad. You still want to condemn.

CASE FOR FREE WILL BEING A GOOD BELIEF:

If we don't have free will, then it follows that if I love you and you love me we are just like two puppets. If I ask you a question you only seem to give an answer. In fact you don't, you only say what the programming makes you say. Is it not an error to think that programming can talk to you or do the talking for you?

Belief in free will is inbuilt and necessary for our self-esteem. If the belief causes problems there would be worse problems without it. It would urge you to treat the person causing harm better than the person causing good. The poor victim of fate that makes her or him do evil needs pampering for being a victim. Free will can't be condemned just because we can abuse it. A free being is better off than a puppet.

If we don't have free will and kill each other it doesn't matter because we were programmed to do it and there was nothing anybody could do to stop the programming from controlling us. If we cannot control ourselves then fear will be our only legacy if we truly believe that.

CASE AGAINST FREE WILL BEING A GOOD BELIEF:

Firstly, the case for it being a good belief overlooks the fact that we are programmed to by-pass the logical conclusions of denial of free will. Denying free will will not make you worse than a person who affirms it. By the way, people who do great evil might need pampering for being a victim of fate but what about people who do great good? They come first. If a person threatens you with evil and harm, what matters is preventing them not if they have free will or not. You won't care then.

There is no evidence to refute the view that we are programmed to do what we do. We could be entirely programmed to feel like free beings. You need proof before you can accuse anybody of being responsible for evil otherwise what you end up doing is making a hypocrite of yourself and committing the hate-filled malevolent act of accusing your neighbour without justification. Even if you believe in personal responsibility, it may be that you are not fully responsible for your actions. Even if a psychiatrist cannot find anything wrong with you, it may be that you are still not wholly to blame. The human mind and how it works is still largely a mystery. So we have to remember that and not demonise anybody. If that is the case, then murderers should not be given over to capital punishment but get a jail sentence for ten years or whatever.

Our will is a feeling itself. The reason we feel free is not because we are free but because the programming that makes us

do what we do works through causing our feeling of attraction to things. When you break down your actions step by step you soon see that you only think you felt free. When you look back in memory you see the events collectively and you think you felt free. If I want some coffee I am only conscious of one thought per instant and the next thought comes in unsummoned out of nowhere and not under my control. I don't really know what I am doing at each instant for I have only one thought at a time so I am undoubtedly programmed.

There is no need to believe in personal responsibility at all. People think that if you deny personal responsibility then you give a bad person no reason to change their ways for the better for you are telling them its not their fault they are bad. But responsible or not, people will not change unless they are made to see that there is a better way and to feel it. So change has nothing to do with responsibility. It is because we are programmable that trying to change people is worthwhile. Believing you don't have free will and that nobody does will not make you bad unless it is in you to be bad in the first place. If it is not your disbelief in free will that makes you bad, it will be something else.

The other big attraction about faith in personal responsibility is that it seems to justify rewards and punishments. But we do not give rewards because a person has free will but because that person has made achievements we want to encourage and acknowledge. As for punishment which is paying back a person for doing wrong we do not need it. Yes we need to jail people but we can do that without belief in responsibility for protecting society from evildoing is what is important.

People like the doctrine of free will or personal responsibility because it seems to induce guilt. But we often feel guilty about things that are not our fault so we can still have guilt. Anyway we should do right because we like to and not because of guilt. Guilt is useless.

People say we should believe in free will because we need to feel anger and feel hurt at evil. but even if you do believe in free will, it doesn't follow that you should react that way. If John insults me and I am hurt it does not follow that John hurt me. Many other people insult me and I am not hurt so John is not really the reason. I am just programmed to feel hurt by that kind of insult. This means that even if personal responsibility does exist, it cannot have any bearing on the way we live our lives so we may as well disbelieve in it. The reason it is believed in is because people want to blame others for hurting them - a ruse that does not work.

Our tendency to think we have free will is seized upon by the Church to make us think it serves a good God. It blames us for evil and exonerates him. Blaming is vindictive because it implies we need to be punished at least by disapproval and being made to feel guilty as long as we are not sorry. To say we are responsible for sin has the following problem. Declaring a person responsible without blaming is about telling a person that they can change what is making them feel bad so its all about making them feel better without any concern for God or morality or sin. Declaring that is not a problem for the atheist! To say we are responsible for evil is ignoring the element of sin. For a believer in God, sin is the main thing. It cannot be ignored or its seriousness downplayed and its unfair to if there is a God. Thus the defence of God is only cosmetic - it increases the evil. It creates a culture of blame and resentment and fear.

Personal responsibility or free will is a religious superstition and so has no place in the law of the land. All our actions are caused by our perceptions which means that free will would have to be a miracle we work to get around these causes so that we have a choice so it depends on the supernatural which is the basis of religion. It is used as an excuse for not blaming God for human evil and that's why it is popular for if it is wrong then there is no God. Religious faith and politics have to be separated.

Sin is using your free will to offend God. It is very important that children not be exposed to nonsense about sin for if God is perfect good then he hates sin with a ferocity we can never imagine and we are to be like him so we have to hate the sinner as intensely as possible. You cannot love the sinner and hate the sin for sin is doing wrong of our free will and so condemning sin is condemning the person. The person and the sin cannot be separated for sin is not a thing but what shows you what kind of person this is. If you can love sinner and hate sin there is no point in believing in free will in the first place for you are saying that sin is not part of the person but something that comes into existence through the person. Indeed then you would be denying free will exists! If you love the sinner and hate the sin then why can't you trust the sinner but not trust the sin? See the hypocrisy and double-standard?