

## IN DEPTH: WHAT IS FREE WILL?

Free will is creating an act out of nothing. You are the creator. Free will is the ability to act on your own behalf. Free will must be the only and final explanation for what I consciously do. The action is yours and not the result of programming and other things that make the brain think it really does choose when it does not. Free will is the ability or power to willingly do other than what you willingly do – it means you can choose. It means you can deserve. All agree that free will is the ability to choose one of two or more courses of action that are presented as good to the intellect. This is the definition used by the Catholic Church (page 52, Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine, Part 1; page 3,4, Moral Philosophy) and everybody else. Free will says that when two or more options are open to you it is up to you which road to take. There are no forces making you go for one. If there is no free will there is no such thing as choice even if you feel free and think you are free.

This is what we are tricked to believe. We are forced to combine personal responsibility and the right to be rewarded or punished with choice. But in fact the only definition we need or really want is this one: Free will is the ability for our body/brain to enact what we desire or want it to do at some given time. It is about what we can get our bodies to do.

If hidden processes mean these things are not a choice we will realise we do not care as long as we do what we desire. Desires are not chosen. Literally speaking it is not free will but worrying about that misses the point. Free will is about wanting to do as I desire regardless if the secret processes at work behind it are making me do it or not.

## "SHOULD FREE WILL" AND "CAN FREE WILL"

Free will doctrines typically assume you should use your will to love and to be fair or whatever.

Some hold it is not about ought or should but about can.

Say “I can not I should.” Should implies judgement and can sounds liberating.

We do not care what can means as long as we do something we can so there is no need for belief in free will as in should.

Should free will is not the same thing as can free will.

You can have can free will without should free will but you cannot have should free will without can free will

## NO IN BETWEEN

The doctrine that tells us that we are programmed to do what we do or that there is no such thing as choice is called determinism. When the determinists say that they are free they mean that there is no external compulsion and that they can act according to their nature not that they really can choose. Determinism is the view that we have a will but it is not free.

The will is the faculty we have with which we seem to make choices. It is either free or unfree. If there could be hidden forces controlling you though you think they are not then nobody and not even yourself can accuse yourself of having done

anything deliberately wrong. So the choice is between unfree will and free will. There is no in-between. Some say there is but they are messing around with words.

## ULTIMATE FREEDOM?

Sam Harris holds that there is no real free will because we cannot be the final or ultimate cause of what we do. An analogy, suppose something made the universe. That something is the start of all other causes so it is the ultimate cause. To be ultimate choice-maker means you have to control the preconditions of your choice not just your choice. Nobody is the ultimate creator of their actions so free will is proven false.

Daniel Dennett says you don't need ultimate free will to be free. It is enough to have a little freedom. It is like we have a little say in how our programming works and what it will get us to do. He says it is very valuable and worth having even if it fails to give us any significant responsibility.

## IS FREE WILL ABOUT THE MAJOR SPIRITUAL CHOICES?

What is free will ultimately or solely for? Maybe free will is purely about choosing God or rejecting him? You might have no free will except that. You could be programmed to choose coffee not tea. And when it comes to doing something entirely for the love of God or otherwise free will could kick in. That would be a part-time free will. It focuses only on the final goal of your free will - the ultimate.

Here is a variation on the notion that free will is only about your ultimate purpose in life: "Having the power to choose one of different alternatives is necessary before you can be called a free agent. If you have no way to do other than what you do, if there are no possibilities that you can choose from you are not free. So we are talking about alternative possibilities being what free will is all about. Kane talks about alternative possibilities as in ultimate possibilities. Only in those is free will made possible. Free will is founded on ultimate responsibility. He speaks of SFA - self forming actions. Your ultimate responsibility is to choose actions that make you what you are. If you form yourself into a thief then you are a thief. Your actions flow from the kind of person or character you are."

This view is nonsense but interestingly it refuses to pretend that the sin is not the sinner. The sin is the sinner for the sin shows the kind of person the sinner is. Also it is part-time free will and it does not give people the full-time free will they want to imagine is true.

All believers in God do think free will is part-time in the sense that you can turn it off by drinking too much or taking drugs.

But a God who sets up part-time free will then is doing what you do when you are not free. The drunk who kills is God murdering for God is the puppet master.

## FREE WILL AS SENSE

The will, whether free or not, is a sense. It reaches out for an action be the action a thought or a deed. Even when you don't move you are doing something, you are not moving. The will is a need to do something. Is the will a capacity or an activity? The will is a need that responds to other needs such as the need for friends and food etc. It is a capacity and an activity.

## THEORY

Free will is a theory. You can accept it or dismiss it. Just like that.

## DO WE REALLY BELIEVE IN UNPROGRAMMED WILLS?

The Christian doctrine of free will tells you not to look for an explanation if some stranger passing you on the street just thumps you in the face. It says it just happened for no reason. But we will not buy that. We will look for a reason. We will not simply just say the person freely did it and that is all there is to it. To explain what people choose we need the why. Their wills are not totally under their control.

The Christian doctrine ties free will to the idea of a spiritual soul. It will say free will is not subject to any natural explanation. That only encourages the notion that you should never ask anybody why they just hit you for there is no point. Do you really want to live in a world where people act so randomly? There is a sense in which the thump was random but we are not talking about that.

We do not really believe in real free will or want to. A choice made randomly and without explanation is not a choice at all. It simply cannot be.

## FREE WON'T

There is free will and what some call free won't. Free will is when you freely give a child some sweets. Free won't is when you freely won't give. Free won't is as much of a choice as free will. it is a yes to no. So if there is no free will there is no free won't either. The two work together for to choose something is to say I won't to other things.

