

Free Will - what does it mean?

Free will means that we are the cause of what we do – we weren't programmed to do it, we did it by choice.

Another way to define it is: Nothing controls you but yourself.

Does free will mean we make a randomiser (restricted randomising is still randomising - we are not talking about you being all over the place) or simulate one or a bit of both? Indeterminism or libertarian free will says that at each time you really in fact have a blank slate. You can murder as easily as you can pluck a flower at any given moment. Free will makes no sense unless you really are able to kill that baby you see outside but the fact is we do not feel able. If we do feel we have that kind of free will it could be that we in fact do not and are faking the randomising. So experience cannot show we have free will in the libertarian sense so how could it show it in any other sense if there is one? Since we cannot experience free will we cannot make sense of it or know what we are talking about. Anyway let us play the free will word game and see what comes up.

Religion says God has a role in our free will and if we are about to sin we can get help from him so that we make a different choice. This cannot be tested. I can't go back to test my free will to see if God could help me make a different choice. I have no way of knowing if I'd sense something helping me or not.

Do you notice how this idea of God's grace helping you makes a difference to free will?

We can talk about free will being the power to choose other than what you choose. But here God gives you power to choose other as well. If libertarian free will shows blindness to what free will and people are about and treats them as random creatures where real reliability is an impossibility this adds fuel to the fire. It is a reason for affirming that faith in God is downgrading human nature.

Free will is defined as the power to do right or wrong in the moral sense. Free will only gives moral responsibility if it exists for that purpose. Free will and moral responsibility are not necessarily connected. You can have free will without moral responsibility but you cannot have moral responsibility without free will. Free will and moral responsibility are endlessly confused. Free will too often has a hidden premise: God as giver of free will.

Too many define free will as the power to do right or wrong in the moral sense. This is a common religious definition.

A more philosophical definition is that free will is the power to err or be right. This is a better definition -

BECAUSE it gives me more glory and if I err I deserve help not hatred or punishment. Free will is the power to do good or less-good. I create my decisions. I create my good works as if I am God. I honour myself by believing I am free.

BECAUSE the power to do evil or good in the moral sense would depend on the power to err or be right. So the power to err or be right covers it all. It is possible that erring or being right are not moral concerns as such at all. If that is all there is to free will, then it is no excuse for hating "bad" people or punishing them. It urges you to help and inspire them. The power to err or be right is the only free will you need. If you have the power to be moral or immoral this is not a foundational faculty or indispensable.

Also, it could be that we are mistaken to think we have the power to be immoral or immoral! We could be using our power to be mistaken! We have no reason then to think we have the power to be moral or immoral. It is only people who think God gave us free will to be moral or immoral and we abused it that imagine they have a reason. We cannot accuse people of having the power to be immoral without reasons and evidences and there are none at all.

The believers in God claim that their doctrine of free will proves that evil could be our fault only so God is innocent and cannot be condemned for letting it happen. Their version of free will requires not just the power to do good and to do what harms others. It requires the power to do evil out of which no good can come. A God who brings good out of our evil would be a God who violates free will.