

FREE WILL AND THE RESTRICTIONS ON WHAT WE CAN CHOOSE FROM

Free will is the power to choose things without being programmed to do it.

For religion, it is important not for the sake of being free but for the sake of being able to choose to obey God or violate his law.

We are talking about free will from now on in terms of choosing to be moral or to be immoral.

Religion does not care about our innate knowledge that if we have free will, what matters is that our decisions are our own. It is not choosing good or evil that matter.

Suppose you are equipped with mental processes that sustain and enable your free will. You cannot use this free will unless you are aware of all these processes. For example, you need to know that you are not doing what you are doing because of programming but freely. Why? Because free will is, by definition, freely using your mental faculties. You need to be aware why you cannot be insane now. You need to be aware that you are not partly insane. You need to see proof that no programming is involved. You just do what you do without thinking of all that so you are not free. And you cannot know yourself that thoroughly so you are not free. If you are you cannot be blamed for doing great evil. At best you might be partly blamed. But you can never be called evil or accused of being evil. Naughty yes but not evil.

Some say, "You were in a cafe and tea, milk and coffee are for the taking. You have to choose. Some mental problem makes it impossible for you to see that you have the option of coffee. So it follows that you do not really use your freedom if you chose tea. If you do you do not use it fully then you cannot choose to be evil or worth of severe condemnation no matter what you do as long as you have or even may have a mental problem that lets you choose a or b but not c though c is offered to you." The philosophers reply that that would not effect the faculty of free will. The power is still there even though the choices are limited. They would say that being free to choose tea or milk does not mean you had to have the option of coffee as well. They say our selections are always limited anyway. If it was not the mental problem that was stopping you picking coffee it could be the cafe having run out of coffee.

The answer is that it is not about what is put before you for you to make a choice but your mental problem that stops you choosing one of them. You cannot know when the problem is at work or not so you are not fully to blame no matter what you do.

Does the limit on our selections imply that the faculty is just about choosing for its own sake? No. That would be choosing something just because you can. It would be making the free will faculty the goal and not the means to achieving the goal.

Our choices are always limited by our perception. We tend to think we have less options than we actually have. Anyway, the limit implies that all that is needed is at least two options. If one is good and the other bad it follows that no matter how much harm we do, our intentions were not very bad. Sin is when we turn our hearts against God by breaking his law. Sin describes the hearts or inner being of the sinners. It is utter nonsense and insulting for religion to say that God has the right to let us commit horrendous sins. He does not. The argument that he gives us free will so that we may love him or do evil IS WHOLLY IRRELEVANT when trying to account for us being free to do evil beyond belief.

If somebody does evil, that person might not have done so had he or she seen more options. Thus whatever is to blame for the limited viewpoint is to blame more than him or her. He or she cannot be accused of being wholly evil. A will that sees all the available choices is more free than one that does not. The faculty of free will is enhanced and improves the more options the person perceives and is given.

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