

REWARDS ARE ABOUT THE PERSON NOT THEIR FREE WILL

Answering the worry, "If we say everybody is programmed and has no free will we cannot really reward!"

CAN WE REWARD THE PAST?

If it were not for the notion that free good acts should be rewarded and free bad ones punished, nobody would believe or want to believe in free will. Free will, at least on the human practical level, does not support them anyway as we shall see. So it makes no difference. It is complained that determinism abolishes the notion of rewards and punishment. Determinism retains them but has a more honest understanding of them.

Giving rewards for an act is giving a reward because of the person's past. The reward is not principally given because the person has merited it but to encourage good endeavour in the future. Rewards are more future-centred than anything. The only way one can be given is based on the person's past performance. So the rewards that are given are not real rewards. These "rewards" can still be done without belief in merit so the abolition of the fascist gibberish that is free will shall not make drastic changes in the way we live and think. When the main reason for bestowing a reward is the future it is nothing to make it the only reason. The recipient knows anyway that if he has won a gold medal for winning a race that it was not his will alone that got him through. It was not the aspect of his nature that can merit. It was the luck to have genes that gave him a body to do what he willed. Merit does not come into it. Rewards then have nothing to do with merit. They would if he could make his own genes and body but they do not.

The argument, "The past is over so he is rewarded for what cannot be changed. He can no longer help it that he won once he crossed the line" superficially appears to be incorrect. It seems that what is relevant is that he freely had control over his past. He is rewarded for his past not for the present. But the question is, what comes first? Does the past moment have to be put before the present moment? Is it right to reward him for a past moment he can no longer help? If it is wrong then it is wrong to reward anybody because people can only be rewarded after they do the good deed. But it is wrong for the present comes first. So even with free will you reward in spite of it just as determinists reward in spite of determinism for the sake of encouragement and respect and entertainment.

DO WE REWARD ACTS OF FREE WILL?

When a free agent wins the race it is not free will that made him win for the rest had the same goal. It was the condition of his body. His body has not been made the best by him but has become the best by itself building on how he treated it. His success depended on factors other than skill such as health, the ability to have a good night's sleep, the way his body handled food and the good luck of finding a real good trainer, factors beyond his control. Even a trainer's credentials don't guarantee that that he can get his employer to win.

So when the winner is rewarded he is reward for what he cannot help.

Most people think that free will is only part of what is involved when a person does something. If you are a product of your past then it is either completely or partly wrong to punish you. Even if you swear you are free you might be wrong and maybe your choices are coming from nowhere and are only simulations of choice.

The free will doctrine cannot solve any of these problems so if you fear the consequences of denying free will then don't.

DO WE REWARD/PUNISH MOTIVES?

To say we need belief in free will to punish or reward people really only makes sense if we are going to punish good or bad motives acted upon. It is not really the bad deed that is punished but how you have proven by it that you have a bad motive. It is the motive.

You cannot reward choices just because they seem to be good choices for you can't see what a person is really after. The motive behind the choice has to determine if what they did should be rewarded or not. For example, when you reward the winner of a race you are rewarding the outward actions of the person and not the motives for you don't know them and if they are bad and driven by smug superiority you are not going to be told that. This is not real rewarding for real rewarding is giving back good for doing good with a kind heart. The less you see if a person's motive is good the less any reward is intended to be a reward for it depends on the extent of your knowledge of the person's goodness. And we may ponder if it is right to reward somebody for winning a race and not reward somebody who tried harder and failed?

People are never rewarded for being good but for their achievements. Nobody can reward motives for nobody can see motives. Motives are what should be rewarded anyway but the problem is we cannot see them so we have to forget about that. There is no difference between rewarding the likes of Mother Teresa for her good achievements when she could have had the motive to promote the evil side of Catholicism all the time and she probably did (eg when she forbade contraception among the poor who needed it) and rewarding somebody for good achievement who has no free will. The only reason the reward is given is to act as an incentive to others and also because nobody rewards themselves so other people do it and do it because they want to gratify their own desire to encourage good work and are not doing it for you. So it is called a reward but isn't really for it is for themselves for it is the desire they want not the desired. That is what rewards and praise are then. They cannot justify belief in free will for they have nothing to do with it at all.

FINALLY - Free will has very little to do with it if I am a social or sporting hero who is up for a reward. Luck is the biggest thing. There is no reason why rewards cannot continue in a culture that affirms we have no real power of free choice. We cannot go back and change the past so once it is done we are no longer responsible for it anyway if we have free will.