

## **The Third Argument Against Individualism:**

### **The Fallacies of the ‘Free Will’ Argument for Individual Freedom**

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#### **Introduction to the ‘Free Will’ Argument**

One of the most frequently used arguments for Individual Freedom (*Individualism*), is the ‘Free Will’ argument. This argument uses a particular understanding of ‘Free Will’ which arose out of the enlightenment, and was re-defined as: the ability of an individual to initiate and cause actions without being caused themselves. This argument then posits that because individuals allegedly have a Will ‘free’ from causality itself, it must then have a special cosmic right, or *Natural Right*<sup>1</sup> for the human Will to be unobstructed. This is commonly referred to by its political manifestation as the ‘right to Individual Freedom’<sup>2</sup>.

The ‘Free Will argument’ emanates from the Enlightenment’s debates on the concept of ‘Free Will’, which arose from a mixing of Christian metaphysical concepts, and a pseudo-scientific investigation of humans. This mixture, when added to a belief in the pre-eminence of human rationality (the mind), led some European thinkers to postulate that humans have an unrestricted Will, and a mind capable of directing that Will. Thus, it was believed that the human Will possessed a cosmic freedom to

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<sup>1</sup> This term originated from the legal understanding of ‘right’ mixed with the early scientific term of ‘Natural Law’. Natural law was a scientific description of the observed regularities and relationships in the universe, that were called ‘laws of nature’. It was believed that knowledge of the Natural Law of humans, would yield knowledge of their ‘Natural Rights’ ordained by the Creator of the universe.

<sup>2</sup> This is sometimes referred to as the ‘right to individual autonomy’, or ‘right to personal freedom’

initiate actions without any prior external or internal cause<sup>3</sup>. This was used to justify the argument, that if man had the ability to be the first cause of the actions by his Will, then he should not be stopped from doing so. It was surmised that the 'Free Will' was 'intended' by 'Nature' to be free, and thus possessed a *cosmic right to freedom!* It was then concluded that any human society seeking to order itself based upon the laws of the cosmos (universal Natural law) must permit the free practice of Human Will by granting it 'Freedom'<sup>4</sup>.

This forms the basis of one the key arguments for the legal recognition of 'Individual Freedom' within the Liberal political system.

However, the recognition of an alleged cosmic right (i.e. freedom of the individual), was founded upon the assumptions<sup>5</sup> that the human Will initiates actions without prior cause, is independent of control, and is unlimited<sup>6</sup> – in essence, 'Free'.

If these assumptions about the 'Free Will' are disproven, and the Will is not be 'free' of causality, then consequently, the philosophic basis for arguing for practical/legal Individual Freedom would collapse<sup>7</sup>.

So can these assumptions be rationally disproven?

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<sup>3</sup> The famous Liberal philosopher, Immanuel Kant said '*Transcendental freedom is the idea of a spontaneity which can begin to act of itself, without (requiring) to be determined to action by an antecedent cause in accordance with the law of causality.*' (Critique of Pure Reason, 1781)

<sup>4</sup> 'Freedom in the practical sense is the will's independence of coercion through (sensual) impulses.' (Critique of Pure Reason, 1781, Immanuel Kant). However, this is not practically possible in any human society - absolute freedom is impossible, and Liberal society still needs/has many coercions.

<sup>5</sup> 'Practical freedom presupposes [...] a causality which, independently of those natural causes, and even contrary to their force and influence, can produce something that is determined in the time order in accordance with empirical laws, and which can therefore begin a series of events entirely of itself' (A Critique of Pure Reason, 1781, Immanuel Kant)

<sup>6</sup> The famous Enlightenment philosopher Rene Descartes argued that the Human Will is like God's own Will, and therefore Infinite(!): '*It is only the will, or freedom of choice, which I experience within me to be so great that the idea of any greater faculty is beyond my grasp; so much so that it is above all in virtue of the will that I understand myself to bear in some way the image and likeness of God. For although God's will is incomparably greater than mine, both in virtue of the knowledge and power that accompany it and make it more firm and efficacious, and also in virtue of its object, in that it ranges over a greater number of items, nevertheless it does not seem any greater than mine when considered as will the essential and strict sense. This is because the will simply consists in our ability to do or not do something (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid); or rather it consist simply in the fact that when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial or for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that we do not feel we are determined by any external force*' (Meditations on First Philosophy, 1647)

<sup>7</sup> 'The denial of transcendental freedom must, therefore, involve the elimination of all practical freedom.' ('A Critique of Pure Reason', 1781, Immanuel Kant)

## **The Fallacies of the 'Free Will' Argument**

### **1 – The fallacy that cosmic rights to free action exist in a material universe**

In a purely materialistic worldview, an object doing something, or having an ability to do something, does not mean it has a *right* to do it. In a purely material world, only physical laws and occurrences exist – not rights. Attributing rights to the universe is like saying that an atom traveling in a direction has a right to be unobstructed, merely because it is able to travel, or capable of continuing in that direction! Of course, the atom does not have the right to be unobstructed, and we see that the universe regularly bares testimony to the obstruction of atoms by other atoms. Similarly, a living creature may try to survive in a harsh universe, but just because it tries to survive, and possesses a survival instinct, does not mean that the universe respects, or even recognises, that right. In fact, we observe that the universe regularly kills large multitudes of living creatures every day. Likewise, if ability merited rights, then would Individualist thinkers claim that less-abled humans also deserve less rights? Of course not.

To claim that merely possessing the capability to exercise 'Free Will' confers some sort of cosmic right, we would have to believe that everything in the cosmos (universe) is intended to be there by a higher power that created everything by its own Will - God. This would give a purpose (intention) to all things in the Universe, and a meaning to them - including its creation of the human Will. However, even then, humans possessing an ability that is God-given does not mean they possess a right to wield it without restriction. We observe that God made the universe with many restrictions, and these restrictions are called the physical laws of the universe. If humans possess 'Will' for a purpose then, by definition, that purpose limits and directs the use of the faculty of human Will. Just as the study of the universe is basically a study of its laws, the study of humans - for the purposes of setting up a political system - would likewise have to be the study of what restrictions humans are subject to in light of their purpose.

In order for us to deduce that humans have rights that accompany the God-given ability to control some of our actions (i.e. the human Will), we need to have an authenticated communication from God (i.e. revelation) explaining the purpose behind human Will, and the extent we are intended to use it.

Without revelation to inform us of God's purpose behind all things, the mere fact that humans possess a Will would not yield any certainty as to how we are to use it, and what respect it deserves from other humans (i.e. rights). Without revelation we could only be left to speculate as to the purpose of human Will, but could not affirm any rights from it. For thousands of years of human history and philosophy before the

western enlightenment era, ever claimed that the Human Will was unlimited, independent of influence and a strictly uncaused cause<sup>8</sup>.

Any claim to any cosmic rights for humans devoid of revelation, is merely a vain anthropomorphism of meaning behind the universe.

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<sup>8</sup> The Greek philosophers, for example didn't have a word for "free will", instead, they used a term that merely describes human responsibility (ἐφ' ἡμῶν), which translates as "depends on us"

## **2 – The fallacy of speculating on metaphysical concepts like human Will without revelation**

How do we know that humans have 'Free Will'? There is no scientific proof for its existence, and just because a human experiences the world with the *belief* that they have 'Free Will', does not make it truthful. What we call 'Free Will' could simply be a complex form of calculation, perceived by us as 'choice'. If anything, we observe that humans do not do any action without there being a cause for it. A human may search for food at a convenient time because they are hungry, or defend themselves from harm when threatened or run away when the threat is perceived to be insurmountable. In fact there is no action a human can do without there being some cause behind it<sup>9</sup>. Quite simply, all humans are subject to causality.

Knowing these observations, how do we know that we have 'Free Will', and not merely a complex ability to calculate the best course of action based upon our genetics, knowledge and character-forming life experiences?<sup>10</sup>

It can only be due to a non-scientific, metaphysical idea that we believe in the existence of 'Free Will'. However, this belief requires proof to come from revelation; otherwise we are just making conjecture. We have no way to attain knowledge of the 'soul' or its ability to affect actions (Will) purely from our own reasoning.

The famous Liberal Philosopher, Immanuel Kant claimed that the mind and soul was part of a hidden world behind the physical world (i.e. not tangible, but still real). He conceded that the nature of the mind, soul and Will were unknowable beyond what we believe their effects are<sup>11</sup>.

Seeing as we have no way to access knowledge about the true nature of the soul, and how it possesses the attribute of 'Will', how can we make assertions of 'Individual Freedom' due to human Will, when we have no knowledge about its

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, humans that do actions for no recognisable or barely understandable basis in reality are deemed mentally insane.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth bearing in mind, again, that life experiences and one's knowledge may be flawed, and ultimately lead to self-defeating, or self-destructive behaviours. On many occasions, an individual does not learn from their mistakes, and ends up repeating destructive cycles of behaviour.

<sup>11</sup> 'we are constrained to think a transcendental object as underlying appearances, though we know nothing of what it is in itself.' (Critique of Pure Reason, 1781)

nature?<sup>12</sup> And if the idea of Free Will is conveyed to us by revelation, then we have to defer to that revelation in order to inform us what rights, if any, it conveys<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> The Qur'an mentions the 'secret of life/soul' but merely informs us that only God knows its nature, and how knowledge of it is little beyond its name: '*And they ask you about the soul. Say [O Muhammed]: The soul is one of the commands of my Lord, and you are not given aught of knowledge but a little*'. (Quran 17:85)

<sup>13</sup> Immanuel Kant, in his desperation to prove the Will/Mind/Soul initiates actions, then contradicts his earlier statement about not being able to have a knowledge about the hidden world and provides a description of the Will/Mind/Soul willing an action: '*No action begins in this active being itself [i.e. nothing causes the 'soul' to act]; but we may yet correctly say that the active being of itself begins its effects [manifests its Will physically] in the sensible [physical] world.*' (Critique of Pure Reason, 1781)

### **3 - The fallacy of deducing a freedom of the Will from the three influential revelations behind the enlightenment**

It has been claimed by Individualists that the right to freedom for the human Will is evident in religions that claim the accountability of humans. Is this true? We will examine three religious traditions of revelation (i.e. known as the Abrahamic religions) known to have influenced the Enlightenment thinkers who invented the idea of Individualism to see if Individualism was deduced from these three claims to revelation. If it can be shown that they do not justify the Individualist claim to Freedom of the Will, then it means that the Individualist thinkers merely speculated, and therefore have no certainty or authority in their claims about it.

#### **3.1 The sovereignty of God's Will over the human Will**

While humans are responsible for their choices, it should be acknowledged that God is sovereign over all choices and actions and events. God describes Himself as guiding people to salvation by His Will in each of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The Hebrew Tanakh (Old Testament) explains that human Will cannot escape the determination by God:

*'In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps'*<sup>14</sup>

The Christian New Testament says that the Soul is impotent to save itself by its own Will:

*'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God'*<sup>15</sup>

We read in the Qur'an that God's Will ultimately determines who is guided to salvation, and who is not guided:

*'And We sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them. Then Allah misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise'*<sup>16</sup>

This does not negate the human *choice* being made, but rather demonstrates that the individual does not possess sovereignty over their Will - everything is ultimately in the hands of God.

If God possesses sovereignty over human Will, then where exists the cosmic right for freedom for the Will?

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<sup>14</sup> Proverbs (16:9)

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians (2:8)

<sup>16</sup> Qur'an (14:4)

Furthermore, we see in verses of the Quran, that Allah's Will cannot be contradicted by His creation whether it willingly submits, or is compelled to do so:

*'Then He [God] directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, "Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion." They said, "We have come willingly."*<sup>17</sup>

The Quran continues this theme in another verse:

*'So is it other than the Din (way of life) of God they desire, while to Him have submitted [all] those within the heavens and earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?'*<sup>18</sup>

In light of this, what creature then in the universe can claim that it is an exception to the rule of God, and deserves a special cosmic right to freedom?

*'They say, "Allah has taken a son." Exalted is He [from this]! Rather, to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. All are devoutly obedient to Him'*<sup>19</sup>

The Hebrew Tanakh (Old Testament) also denies the Freedom of the Individual to direct himself, but that he should be directed by God:

*'I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps'*<sup>20</sup>

In light of these religious traditions contradicting the enlightenment's attribution of a free cosmic right to the Human Will, we can only conclude that the early Individualist thinkers merely derived this idea from their own biased speculation - and not from any revelation they believed accessible to them.

### **3.2 Does Divine accountability mean humans have a right to freedom for the Will?**

Many of the largest religions possess doctrines stressing human accountability for their actions. This accountability means that humans must possess a Will in order for it to be just to account them for their actions. It is claimed that since many religions preach punishment and justice in the afterlife, this grants an implicit right to freedom of the Individual in this life.

These arguments are fallacious, as accountability itself means that humans do not possess a right to freedom of the Will. For if man acted within *his right* to freedom,

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<sup>17</sup> Qur'an (41:11)

<sup>18</sup> Qur'an (3:83)

<sup>19</sup> Qur'an (2:116)

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah (10:23)

how can he be punished for it? Whether something is punishable by society or by God is irrelevant to the significance of what accountability represents against the claim of a right to Freedom. Accountability demonstrates that there is no cosmic right for freedom of the Will, but only a limited right to *exercise* the Will.

Nowhere in Islam, Christianity or Judaism does it mention that human Will is 'free'. Rather, the text of these religions consistently talk of the limited moral scope for the human Will, and the responsibility for an individual's action for overstepping that limited scope. This limited scope, being in accordance with human purpose, negates any claims to 'freedom' outside that scope. Therefore accountability demonstrates human subjection to God, not freedom.

### ***3.3 Are human beings accounted individually in the afterlife, and does that justify freedom of human Will?***

It is argued that the proof for humans deserving the right to freedom for the Will is that each will be accounted 'individually'. Firstly, this is inaccurate, as both of the two religions which influenced the Enlightenment (where the concepts of Individualism arose) do not claim that the afterlife will be a solitary experience for individuals. On the contrary, tribes, nations and companions will be raised from the dead, and judged side by side. The Qur'an states:

*'And you will see every nation kneeling [from fear]. Every nation will be called to its record [and told], "Today you will be recompensed for what you used to do"'*<sup>21</sup>

*'And those who disbelieve say, "We will never believe in this Qur'an nor in that before it." But if you could see when the wrongdoers are made to stand before their Lord, refuting each other's words... Those who were oppressed will say to those who were arrogant, "If not for you, we would have been believers."'*<sup>22</sup>

*'They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy. Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the Lord, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?'*<sup>23</sup>

We also find in the Christian Bible (New Testament) the following verses:

*'Then He [Jesus] began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to*

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<sup>21</sup> Qur'an (45:28)

<sup>22</sup> Qur'an (34:31)

<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah (5:29)

*you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you Capernaum, If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you'*<sup>24</sup>

And they won't be the only ones, Jesus is reported to have plainly stated:

*'The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South [Sheba] will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here'*<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, the argument does not follow that just because a human may be accounted individually, that they deserve the right to individual freedom to exercise their Will. Rather the opposite may be the case, if an individual exercised their Will freely, and it influenced others to do bad actions (which they would not have otherwise done without influence), then the individual would have to account for the consequences of their actions too.

If we humour the Individualist argument, it would lead to absurd results. Take, for example, a genocidal dictator who orders his people to massacre a minority group amongst them - yet he does not kill anyone himself. If his people carried out the order, then according to the Individualist, the dictator would not bear the sin for each life killed, because each soldier had their own 'Free Will', and could have refused him at any time. So the Individualist, according to their beliefs, would have to absolve the dictator from the death of each life his soldiers took, because his soldiers are 'individuals'. The dictator could always claim that he never killed victims with his own hands, and that his soldiers are individuals who can think and choose for themselves. This is in fact Satan's argument in the Qur'an!<sup>26</sup> It seems Satan is an Individualist!<sup>27</sup>

Of course, the correct answer is that the dictator would be responsible for each and every soul that was killed as a consequence of his actions, due to his evil intentions.

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew (11:20-24)

<sup>25</sup> Matthew (12:41-42)

<sup>26</sup> *'And the devil will say, after the judgment had been issued, 'God has promised you the truthful promise, and I promised you, but I broke my promise. I had no power over you; I simply invited you, and you accepted my invitation. Therefore, do not blame me, and blame only yourselves. My complaining cannot help you, nor can your complaining help me. I have disbelieved in your idolizing me. The transgressors have incurred a painful retribution'* (Qur'an 14:22)

<sup>27</sup> Of course, Satan's argument does not help him, as God in the Quran tells him and his followers *'Hell will I fill with you all.'* (Quran 7:18)

The soldiers would bear the responsibility of each life they killed and if they did not speak out against the crime, may bare collective responsibility too.

Humans do not exist as islands unto themselves, but can influence each other, and cause each other to have incentives to commit evil. In light of this, humans can be punished for what others do, too, even if the full extent of the evil result was not planned by the agitator. This demonstrates that human accountability goes beyond the power of one individual's Will, for the individual will be accounted for what his Will chose, and all the consequences of his Will, in light of his intention. So if a person committed a bad act, and further evil came from it influencing others, then that individual will also be accountable for what those he influenced did too.

This understanding of humans has been re-iterated in every one of the major religions that affected Western history.

The Christian Bible (New Testament) has Jesus telling his disciples:

*'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. "Woe to the world for temptations to sin!. For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!"<sup>28</sup>*

In the Jewish Tanakh (aka Old Testament):

*'the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation'<sup>29</sup>*

In the Qur'an:

*'And verily, they (i.e. the evil souls) shall bear their own loads, and other loads besides their own, and verily, they shall be questioned on the Day of Resurrection about that which they used to fabricate'<sup>30</sup>*

In light of this, the early Individualist thinkers could not claim revelation supports them - so where does the authority to make such statements about revelation come from?

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew (18:3-7)

<sup>29</sup> Exodus (34:6-7)

<sup>30</sup> Qur'an (29:13)

### **3.4 Does worldly respite from divine punishment equal right to Freedom of the Will?**

It is additionally argued that religions that stress the voluntary nature of the human relationship with God, grant the 'right to sin' or 'freedom to sin', therefore proving the right of individual freedom in worldly life.

People do not have a right to sin, but are given temporary respite from punishment. Respite does not give them freedom, but merely a delay in punishment for them to condemn themselves. Saying that this respite is a license to sin, or 'freedom', is as absurd as saying that undercover police who delay immediately arresting a criminal for committing a crime – due to waiting to gather sufficient evidence – is legally permitting the criminal the freedom to commit the crime.

Furthermore, if God grants people the right to sin in this life, why does he punish them in this life too? In the Bible, we read the terrible punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. These accounts are also repeated in the Quran as follows:

*'Those it was whose deeds shall be nullified in this world and in the Hereafter; and those - they are the losers. Has there not come to them the tidings of those who were before them - of the people of Noah, and Ad and Thamud, and the people of Abraham, the inhabitants and the destroyed cities? Their Messenger came to them with the clear signs; Allah would not wrong them, but they wronged themselves.'*<sup>31</sup>

Likewise, we see in the Qur'an, God rebuking people who think that they have a permitted space to sin in the life:

*'Or shall man have what he wishes? No! For Allah is the hereafter and the former (this life)'*<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, after careful consideration of the traditions of revelation accessible to the early Individualist thinkers, we can only come to the conclusion that this was not the source of their metaphysical claims about 'Free Will', or the right to its freedom - nor do these traditions support it.

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<sup>31</sup> Qur'an (9:69-70)

<sup>32</sup> Qur'an (53:25-26)

## **4 – The fallacy that ‘Free Will’ is actually free or unlimited**

### **4.1 Human Will is fundamentally limited**

The seminal Individualist philosopher Descartes argued that the human Will is unlimited, and therefore deserving of freedom. However, this is not the reality of the human Will. We witness that the human Will is regularly overcome by strong emotion, contradictory desires, and inconsistency in the face of changing circumstances. If the human Will were infinite, then no amount of external pressure, whether gentle, persuasive or strongly coercive, could surmount it. However, what we witness is that humans regularly succumb to causality.

We read this too in the Quran:

*‘They will say: "our Lord! Our misfortune overwhelmed us, and we became a people astray!’<sup>33</sup>*

*‘And had We [God] willed, We would surely have elevated him therewith [with the knowledge he received] but he clung to the earth and followed his own vain desire. So his description is the description of a dog: if you drive him away, he lolls his tongue out, or if you leave him alone, he (still) lolls his tongue out. Such is the description of the people who reject Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.). So relate the stories, perhaps they may reflect’<sup>34</sup>*

### **4.2 Free Will is chained to causality**

Free Will is still bound to causality – it is not as free as first thought by Individualists. Our Will can only manifest itself when we are under the motivations of internal causes (instincts and genetics) and external causes (social and environmental influences, and intellectual observations). We can only deduce that our Will, that Revelation assures us exists, only has the ability to make choices between the causes we experience. So, if a man was motivated to acquire comfort, and knew that comfort came with wealth, and he observed that there was an opportunity for him to acquire wealth easily by theft from another, yet he possessed the belief that it was wrong, then he could choose to either attain that wealth by theft, or abstain (and presumably he could choose to follow the less easy alternatives that his mind has presented to him).

However in other cases there is no requirement or opportunity for the human Will to make a choice, For example, if a man is faced with a need to hunt food due to hunger but there were only two creatures available – a cow or a bull – both of the same size and weight, his mind would calculate that the cow was the less dangerous of the two, and he would be compelled to take that option. This would be subject to

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<sup>33</sup> Qur’an (23:106)

<sup>34</sup> Qur’an (7:176)

there being no other desires present in him (for example, to impress his tribe, or a female, by hunting the bull). In this case, the hunter appears to have made a choice, but it is in fact a calculation.

This simple observation of human choice shows us powerfully that Will is not 'free' in the sense that it can initiate actions without cause. Rather, it is dependent on causes in order to make choices. And the only time it can make a choice, is if more than one real option is given to it.

Of course, the vast majority of human choices are resolved by mental calculation. A weighing up of pros and cons, opportunities and risks, benefits and harms, interests and threats. These 'choices' involve about as much 'Free Will' as a math calculation! In fact, humans are mostly predictable with regards to the majority of their behaviours. Rulers and political authorities regularly rely on this predictability when managing their populations. Humans are regularly predictable and non-random in reality. Humans generally follow a consistent set of behaviours, which mostly solidify as time progresses, unless a life experience or internal biological change causes a change<sup>35</sup>.

If 'Free Will' is the capability to initiate actions without there being a cause (i.e. the ability to initiate an action from nothing), then the evidence for this is poor or non-existent from observation of humans and the physical world<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> The Western philosopher David Hume, famous for his empirical approach to philosophy, made this observation: "*Our idea, therefore, of necessity and causation arises entirely from the uniformity observable in the operations of nature, where similar objects are constantly conjoined together... It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations*" [A Treatise of Human Nature, 1739).

<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note, that famous Liberal empiricist philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and David Hume all believed that the human Will is part of a deterministic system, and is fully subject to cause and effect, with no real choice emanating purely from some metaphysical thing called the 'self' or 'soul'. Their argument for Freedom was merely that humans, like a particle travelling in a particular direction, should be left unobstructed. Of course, why should humans be left unobstructed, if nothing in the universe is left unobstructed or devoid of being driven into one direction or another. It is hard for there to be an argument against an object (like humans) from being forced, when it exists in a universe naturally composed of objects and forces.

Immanuel Kant disagreed with the empiricists, and posited that the 'Free Will' could possibly reside in the hidden world of 'noumena' that exists behind the observable (i.e. empirical) world of phenomena – and from this hidden world, the Will is an uncaused causer of actions. He was forced to use this idea to keep the possibility of 'Free Will' alive because he had to concede: "*If we could exhaustively investigate all the appearances of men's wills there would not be found a single human action which we could not predict with certainty, and recognise as proceeding necessarily from its antecedent conditions. So far, then as regards this empirical character there is no freedom*" (Critique of Pure Reason, 1787)

### 4.3 *The human Will is limited to when and where it can operate*

It would seem that the only time we could claim that 'Free Will' exists is when we witness that, as humans, we can sometimes observe ourselves choosing between conflicting options between our intellects and impulses (or 'hearts'). However, in order to make that choice, we need an alternative option that is provided by the intellect, usually consisting of beliefs about moral good and bad<sup>37</sup>. This therefore might suggest the possibility of real choice – but it is only a choice, not the ability to initiate action devoid of cause.

The human Will might be within the control of the human, but it is not unlimited or 'free' in the absolute sense, and depends on circumstances to give it the opportunity to manifest itself. 'Free Will' cannot initiate action – but merely permits the choices to be owned by the individual (i.e. responsibility).

A good analogy for the human experience of life is that of a train that moves along its tracks, propelled forward, and is constrained by its tracks to move in the direction ahead of it. The only choice the train driver has to change the train's *direction* is when it reaches a junction. At the junction, the train driver can choose to go either one way or another. Usually, it is easier to continue along the same route, but if another route is understood to be wiser, he must make effort to move the switch on the track to change direction. However, the train driver cannot turn the train until he meets another junction, and so his choice of direction is limited until the next junction appears.

A human that has been raised in a particular culture and society, may live a simple life and encounter most of his day to day problems as merely problems to solve by calculated action. If he lacks something, or sees an opportunity, he calculates new actions to acquire new things to satisfy the interests that his culture values (e.g. wealth, children, honour etc). On one day, he might encounter a book containing a different set of ideas about the world, advocating different values and a different culture – all of which the man discerns to be true. It is only then that the man is tested, and faces a *real choice*. His tastes, level of comfort and character are habituated to one lifestyle, yet his intellect urges him on to another. His choice in the direction he goes, at that point, would be his own, and the faculty of the human Will is then tested. Anyone who believes that the man would always choose his intellect's discovery of the truth, over his heart would do well to study the psychologically proven phenomena of denial and compartmentalisation.

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<sup>37</sup> A person can also be conflicted by their beliefs in the risks of undertaking an action they strongly desire. For example, a smoker may understand intellectually that smoking may cause cancer. However, they choose to smoke to gratify an impulse. This may be due to a calculated risk. However, this may also be due to the individual choosing to disregard their intellect's understanding of the consequences, even if it was shown to them by looking at family/genetic history that they *definitely would* get cancer by smoking.

The human Will is therefore limited to options presented to it, and depends on these being made available during opportunities<sup>38</sup> in order to have the opportunity to manifest itself. Although one choice can generate more choices, or decrease them, the lack of capability to initiate actions devoid of an underlying cause means that the human Will is limited to the options it encounters. We therefore see that human Will rarely surfaces in day to day life, and most 'choices' made by humans are as a result of calculations within reality based upon achieving pre-existing interests and tastes.

This is the limitation of the human Will. It is not as 'free' as was first thought. In light of this, we are forced to ask the question: What special 'cosmic right of freedom' does possessing a 'Will' grant an individual, when the human Will itself is intrinsically restricted to a limited arena of where and when it can manifest? The only conclusion is: None - possessing a 'Will' grants *no* special cosmic 'right of freedom'.

Interestingly, we read in the Qur'an the following regarding the inhabitants of paradise:

*'Wherein they shall dwell (forever). No desire will they have to be removed therefrom.'*<sup>39</sup>

We see clearly from this that the inhabitants of paradise will lack the 'Free Will' to ask to leave paradise, for they will not possess any motivations or interest to leave. If they do not have a motivation to leave, their Will cannot initiate any action or intention to leave of its own. Here we read the Qur'an re-affirming a rational observation that 'Free Will' depends on pre-existing interests and desires in the individual.

#### **4.5 Does human Will have freedom to choose what set of interests it gets to pick from?**

Individualism advocates that Individuals should be free to pursue their own interests. However, this has not taken into account how interests arise in the individual, how tastes and desires can be formed and influenced by internal factors independent of the human Will (like genetics), or factors external to the human being (like environment, society, family and social experiences, producing a regularity across society called 'culture'), or even random and unforeseen character-shaping life experiences.

If interests can be changed, or inculcated into 'individuals', and individuals depend on other humans to teach them many of those interests, then to what extent does the individual possess the right to determine their own interests, if their choices depend

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<sup>38</sup> Also called 'tests' or 'trials' in religious terminology

<sup>39</sup> Qur'an (18:108)

on underlying tastes, habits and prejudices that they were brought up with or inculcated to have?

#### **4.6 Does the Human Will need Freedom?**

A fallacy of Individualism, in trying to argue for freedom of the individual, is that it ignores a fundamental reality of the human Will. The Will cannot be extinguished, but only limited in its options. Making a choice between options cannot be extinguished by humans, only the options themselves. If there is anything we can infer about a cosmic right from studying the existence of the Free Will, it would only be the right to choose between options and incentives.

However, there is no justification for a right upon the individual to dictate what those options and incentives are. The universe, the nature of man, and society all determine the options available to man in his existence. If we truly were to look at the universe to come to the conclusion of the 'rights' of man - it would be not be that he could do anything he wishes but, rather, that he can make decisions only within a permitted sphere of action granted to him - regardless of whether he followed a moral code or not.

### **5 - The fallacy that choice grants a right to freedom of the Will**

It is argued that even if the options of a human are limited, humans still possess a right to freedom due to their ability to exercise some choices. This is like a criminal in a jail cell arguing that he has 'freedom' because he can move from one side of the cell to the other.

Although humans have an ability to control the limited, *real* decisions they make - it does not follow from this that they have a right to unlimited action or 'freedom'. Just because an individual has the capability to make choices and influence the direction of their existence, does not necessarily mean that they have freedom, or possess ultimate ownership of their own selves. Being given command of something merely proves you have responsibility over it, not necessarily the right to ownership of it, or an unlimited right of disposal over it.

For example, if someone gave their friend a computer to look after and use, this friend now has a computer in their keeping which they can use for all the tasks they may require. However, does this mean that the friend can use that computer for cyber crimes, or even break that computer, just because the computer is 'under their direct power'? No, of course not. Likewise, if someone looks after a baby, and has power over the baby's day to day life, does not mean they can do anything they want with the baby.

Possessing power or control over something does not mean ownership of it, or the unrestricted use of it.

## **6 – The fallacy of advocating the Freedom of the Will while denying it as the origin of Evil**

Individualists struggling to produce an account of the problem of evil have produced a number of arguments to attempt to explain how it arises, without incriminating the concept of 'Free Will' itself. For if the 'Free Will' is the ultimate and incorrigible source of evil, why argue to unleash it further?

Descartes posited that because the human Will was 'infinite', and the human intellect 'finite', the Will sometimes does things outside the bounds of its knowledge and this is the cause of evil<sup>40</sup>. Hence the human Will is not intrinsically evil, but can be merely ignorant.

Another argument is that people who are oppressed or denied freedom, or denied their interests, are prone to commit evil. Hence the individual is never evil, but is merely in a state of oppression against his individuality. This was argued by famous french philosopher Jacques Rousseau<sup>41</sup>.

It was based upon these explanations that it was argued that if we wish to rid ourselves of moral evils, we must not obstruct 'Free Will', and give it as much freedom as possible.

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<sup>40</sup> "What then is the source of my errors? They are owing simply to the fact that, since the will extends further than the intellect, I do not contain the will within the same boundaries; rather, I also extend it to things I do not understand. Because the will is indifferent in regard to such matters, it easily turns away from the true and the good; and in this way I am deceived and I sin." (Meditations on First Philosophy, 1647, Rene Descartes)

<sup>41</sup> Rousseau posited that, before man joined society, he fulfilled his interests without obstruction, and so had no cause for evil: 'The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying This is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, "Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody...But it must be remarked that the society thus formed, and the relations thus established among men, required of them qualities different from those which they possessed from their primitive constitution. Morality began to appear in human actions, and every one, before the institution of law, was the only judge and avenger of the injuries done him, so that the goodness which was suitable in the pure state of nature was no longer proper in the new-born state of society. In a word, there arose rivalry and competition on the one hand, and conflicting interests on the other, together with a secret desire on both of profiting at the expense of others. All these evils were the first effects of property, and the inseparable attendants of growing inequality.' (The Origin of the Inequality of Mankind, 1754, Jacques Rousseau)

Of course, what Rousseau is actually arguing is that man can only be good when you take away all his potential victims and rivals!

The explanation posited by Descartes and others<sup>42</sup>, has led individualists to call for increased education as the means to remove the perpetration of evil<sup>43</sup>. However, it is not proven that evil people are less intelligent than those who commit good actions. In fact, many of the greatest perpetrators of evil were highly educated dictators and tyrants. Indeed, education merely raises the capability of a perpetrator to achieve moral evil (e.g. planning and scheming). Lastly, it was not for lack of understanding of social morals that many criminals commit their crime. Rather, it was because they were pursuing their interests.

Furthermore, there is another glaring problem with Descartes' explanation. If the Will is infinite, and the mind is finite, then there is no amount of education that can be taught to humans to bridge that gap and expunge their propensity for evil. Further still, if evil is due to the Will acting beyond its knowledge, then according to Descartes, humans have an infinite potential for evil (as the measure between infinity and finitude is infinity).

Descartes' problem of evil actually becomes unsolvable, as the human Will always outstretches its good-causing knowledge. Descartes has inadvertently argued that the freedom of the Will is the cause of all evil. If that is so, why should we grant it freedom?

Rousseau's argument also falls into problems. Seeing as humans live together in society and naturally impinge upon each other's interests, would increasing everyone's freedom to impinge upon each other even more decrease evil or actually increase it? Of course, it would increase it.

During Medieval Europe, it was believed by Liberal philosophers that the denial of wealth to the many serfs caused them to rebel and commit crime. So, to solve this problem, it was proposed that Europe adopt a *free market system* (aka Capitalism), theoretically granting everyone the free, open and equal opportunity to legally acquire wealth. This new 'Freedom' allowed those who were already rich, or middle class to claim the lion's share of wealth and assets, leading to severe economic deprivation and poverty for the newly 'liberated serfs' - leading once again back to crimes<sup>44</sup>. More freedom did not lead to less crime and injustice, but quite the opposite. So, in both cases, if the cause of evil is 'Free Will' being unleashed, then what justification can be given to demand 'Freedom of the Individual'?

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<sup>42</sup> and John Locke

<sup>43</sup> John Locke, for example, commented '*I think I may say, that of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. 'Tis that which makes the great difference in mankind*' (Some Thoughts Concerning Education, 1693)

<sup>44</sup> At this point in European history, the Western powers dropped the model of pure Free Market system, and adopted a welfare state combined with Keynesian economics, which advocated state interference to keep economies stable. This will be covered in more depth in a future publication.

## Conclusion

After carefully examining the arguments for Individual Freedom due to the existence of a 'Free Will', we can only conclude that we cannot infer the right to Individual Freedom for there is no connection between a human possessing the quality of Will, and deserving it to be unobstructed. We also notice that the nature of the Will is not 'Free' in a literal sense, in both the physical universe and according to the Abrahamic revelations - and therefore it cannot justify any claim to unrestricted exertion, or unobstructed movement.

Consequently, the right to Individual Freedom (individualism) cannot be proved by appeal to 'Free Will'.

What our observations of the nature of the human Will have shown us is, humans have not just the right to make a choice, but a duty to make that choice when the opportunity presents itself, and a duty to choose the truth (or pursue the truth) according to the best of our intellect's ability.

The Islamic concept then advocates the right of humans to make a choice. While humans do not have a cosmic free right to reject the truth, no human can be compelled to believe in the truth. This is because for the Will to have the opportunity to make a choice, it must be allowed to have two options to pick from. To have two options, there must be a difference between its desires, and the course of action prescribed by the intellect, emanating from the truth which its intellect observes. If a believer were to make life unpleasant for a disbeliever, to induce the desires of the disbeliever to embrace the truth - then where is the two options for the disbeliever to make a choice upon? For surely if a man is taught the truth, and is tortured to accept it, both his desires (at that moment) and his intellect, would be in (artificial) agreement! So no choice would be possible, and the right to make a choice would be denied. So the Islamic concept of non-compulsion for those who are not believers, must be maintained so that the purpose of the human God-given ability for choice is properly fulfilled - which is sufficiently achieved by merely presenting the truth<sup>45</sup>.

However, once a believer has embraced the truth, they do not have a right to choose the laws prescribed by that truth, or a right to choose not to follow them<sup>46</sup> (and will be accountable to God for neglecting them in private, or political authorities for publicly influencing others to neglect theirs). These laws would fulfill human life upon its purpose as creations of God. Of course, the believer does not attain complete harmony between all their desires and the laws governing their creation, so they will

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<sup>45</sup> *'There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut [false idols] and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing'* (Quran 2:256)

<sup>46</sup> *'It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed'* (Quran 33:36)

experience the need for many more choices in their path to perfection. Due to the human desires being formed in a chaotic (i.e. highly complex) universe, the process of reconciling human desires with the intellect would be an ongoing process throughout most humans lives. Such a life path of the one committed, is called 'submission to the Will of God'.

Since it is impossible to eliminate the propensity to commit evil, humans who have chosen to accept the truth can be helped by conditioning their environment and society to make negative interests less compelling, and positive interests more compelling. Human choice would be retained by permitting believers to choose their level of achievement and rate of change into creatures fully submitting to their purpose. This would help the believers in their efforts to attain purpose-affirming habits, and would be a mercy for mankind.

In summary, humans do not have 'Free Will', but a limited Will, with the capacity to make choices between conflicting emotional and intellectual interests. Humans do not possess a right to unlimited action, or direction of their Will, but only a right and duty to make a choice, with a consequential duty (responsibility) to seek and follow the truth - to which they will be held accountable.

God Wills matters without possessing instincts, or motivations that drive Him to do so - it can truly be said that God's decree is pure uncaused Will, which causes all things. It neither contradicts itself, nor possesses rival Wills to contend with. In the end, it is only God's Will that initiates actions without prior cause, is independent of control, and is unlimited – in essence, 'Free'. By refuting the Individualist claim for the divine-like nature of the human Will, we actually discover that there is only one true Free Will in existence, that of the Creator of the universe.