



# The Question of Free Will

Morton White

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One of the main philosophical puzzles is the question of free will: what is it? do we have it? how do we know we have it? In this highly original study, noted philosopher Morton White offers a novel defense of the position that we may believe in free will without denying or accepting determinism.

White is especially concerned to interpret the statement that a person is free to choose to do something. If it means that not making the choice is not causally necessitated, the question arises: "Not causally necessitated by what?" Antideterminists answer: "Not causally necessitated by anything," whereas those who avoid antideterminism may answer: "Not causally necessitated by an attack of mental disease or by hypnosis." In evaluating these opposing views, White appeals to holism, which says that we do not test isolated statements but groups of statements. Moreover, he regards the statement that an obligatory choice must be free as a moral principle. With the help of these views, he shows how one's view of free choice varies with one's view of a moral excuse. He also shows convincingly why anti-determinism should be rejected in favor of an opposing theory that organizes the relevant data in a simpler way without abandoning beliefs that many of us are reluctant to surrender.



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