

## What is Free Will?a

I promised that I would return to the final question from our last discussion. "Are universals something or are they nothing?"

From there I would like to take up the question "What is reality?" This is a question that came from the audience last time and I would like to return to it.

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Now we can talk about Ockham and Free Will.

I take Ockham to be concerned with how is it that man's will is to be understood in order to ensure the fullest freedom and happiness for man. A key question is what is the will?

1) Will designates the sequence of mental acts eventuating in decisions or choices between conflicting tendencies.

2) An act of will is analyzable into:

- a) The envisaging of alternative courses of action, each of which expresses the mental processes of a subject.
- b) Deliberation consisting in the examination of the alternative course of action with special reference to the dominant ideas of the self.
- c) Decisions or choices consisting in giving assent to one of the alternatives and the rejection of the rest.

3) By emphasizing the role of the will, Ockham associated reason with individual experience and choice rather than with legislating about a timeless nature of things (Forms, Universals).

4) The problem, as Ockham sees it, is that universal categories such as 'man' are more real than the experiences of individual 'men' and that denies God's, as well as, individual freedom.

5) Taking moral autonomy of individuals as their weapon, the nominalists broke through a set of assumptions that had confined free will, the structure of society, and the pursuit of knowledge.