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Quotes about Free Will

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The most intellectual of men are moved quite as much by the circumstances which they are used to as by their own will. The active voluntary part of a man is very small, and if it were not economized by a sleepy kind of habit, its results would be null.

- Bagehot, Walter

The liberated man is not the one who is freed in his ideal reality, his inner truth, or his transparency; he is the man who changes spaces, who circulates, who changes sex, clothes, and habits according to fashion, rather than morality, and who changes opinions not as his conscience dictates but in response to opinion polls.

- Baudrillard, Jean

Whereas the Greeks gave to will the boundaries of reason, we have come to put the will's impulse in the very center of reason, which has, as a result, become deadly.

- Camus, Albert

The will is never free -- it is always attached to an object, a purpose. It is simply the engine in the car -- it can't steer.

- Cary, Joyce

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.

- Crowley, Aleister

There are no galley-slaves in the royal vessel of divine love -- every man works his oar voluntarily!

- Francis De Sales, St.

A man may be a pessimistic determinist before lunch and an optimistic believer in the will's freedom after it.

- Huxley, Aldous

Fatalism, whose solving word in all crises of behavior is All striving is vain, will never reign supreme, for the impulse to take life strivingly is indestructible in the race. Moral creeds which speak to that impulse will be widely successful in spite of inconsistency, vagueness, and shadowy determination of expectancy. Man needs a rule for his will, and will invent one if one be not given him.

- James, William

Man is a masterpiece of creation if for no other reason than that, all the weight of evidence for determinism notwithstanding, he believes he has free will.

- Lichtenberg, Georg C.

We are all bound to the throne of the Supreme Being by a flexible chain which restrains without enslaving us. The most wonderful aspect of the universal scheme of things is the action of free beings under divine guidance.

- Maistre, Joseph De

It can even come about that a created will cancels out, not perhaps the exertion, but the result of divine action; for in this sense, God himself has told us that God wishes things which do not happen because man does not wish them! Thus the rights of men are immense, and his greatest misfortune is to be unaware of them.

- Maistre, Joseph De

The strongest knowledge (that of the total freedom of the human will) is nonetheless the poorest in successes: for it always has the strongest opponent, human vanity.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

I assess the power of a will by how much resistance, pain, torture it endures and knows how to turn to its advantage.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

One of the annoying things about believing in free will and individual responsibility is the difficulty of finding somebody to blame your problems on. And when you do find somebody, it's remarkable how often his picture turns up on your driver's license.

- O'Rourke, P. J.

Will power is only the tensile strength of one's own disposition. One cannot increase it by a single ounce.

- Pavese, Cesare

We defy augury. There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'Tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all.

- Shakespeare, William

We human beings do have some genuine freedom of choice and therefore some effective control over our own destinies. I am not a determinist. But I also believe that the decisive choice is seldom the latest choice in the series. More often than not, it will turn out to be some choice made relatively far back in the past.

- Toynbee, Arnold



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