

# A Beneficent Dictator?

by Ernest O'Neill

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*We live in a world where we have the freedom to choose, but our actions occur within the heart of a loving creator who bears all the pain and works to bring us round to willing what he made us for.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 41:10, John 8:36, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "Gods Sovereignty", "Human Freedom"

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## Description

Ernest O'Neill preaches about the misconception of human freedom, highlighting the tendency to live as if we are solely responsible for our destinies rather than acknowledging God as our loving Father who desires to live His life through us. Despite the burden of self-reliance, many reject the idea of needing a divine parent and choose to navigate life independently, even though evidence of a guiding force in the universe exists. O'Neill explores the conflict between our perceived freedom of choice and the involuntary instincts that influence our decisions, emphasizing the need for a loving Father figure to provide guidance and relief from anxiety.

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## Transcript

Am I Totally Free?

Am I a little bunch of atoms that has to work out a direction for its own actions each day ? Or am I a member of a family whose loving father has a life he wishes to live in and through me? The answer to the first question is "no" and the answer to the second is "yes", BUT we live as if the answers are switched -- we live as if we were just a little bunch of atoms that has to work out its own destiny as best it can.

In one way, this seems very exciting -- we look out on the wide vista of our future and reflect that we can do just whatever we please. However, it's not long before this responsibility becomes a burden that hinders our free enjoyment of life rather than enhances it. And this very obligation exerts pressures upon our otherwise free will. Many of us come to reflect that our carefree childhood days were some of the happiest we've experienced, and we wonder if the existence of parents proves the existence of some great cosmic parent of the human race.

But this is not fashionable thinking today, so we reject any notion that we need a father-figure to look after us, and we set our face toward this vast, trackless wilderness of life that lies before us. We don't like the prospect, but the idea of having our own lives in our own hands appeals to something inside us -- even though we see basic illogicalities in the whole scheme.

## Psychological Pressures

For instance, we see that the birds don't spend all their time crashing into each other -- nor do the planets! If we explain this by noting that they obviously have some kind of guidance system that enables them to avoid collisions, we see that this presupposes a system that works for their preservation. So, obviously there is an over-arching will or direction in the universe that makes for continued existence rather than annihilation. In other words, whatever freedom we ourselves may have, there are undoubtedly some tendencies and instincts that are involuntary. Nevertheless we persist in emphasizing our own freedom of choice because the apparent alternative depicts us as robots!

Even our own fathers had difficulty restraining themselves from trying to "put an old head on young shoulders". They loved us so much that they would often have preferred us to do what they thought best -- even if this meant that we submitted to their judgement rather than our own. When we think of all the other "wise heads" that have wanted to run our lives for us, we feel a strong resentment against the idea of an overruling providence that directs our lives. But, despite these fears, we can see the great relief that such a situation would bring to our anxiety-ridden lives. We can glimpse the possibility of those "lazy, hazy days of summer" that we used to enjoy as children.

### A Loving Father?

Is it possible for us to have our cake and eat it? Is it possible to have our freedom and the caring supervision of a loving parent? Only if that loving parent is willing to bear and gently correct the wilful choices that we will make. Can you find on earth a father that is willing to be killed, if necessary, by his child and yet continue to lovingly draw that child towards the complete fulfilment he has planned for him? Obviously this is only possible for a father who is not destroyed by death and whose wisdom is infinite! Such is the reality in which we exist!

You were made by a loving creator who ensured your place in his heart by bringing you to birth inside his own son - much as he eventually brought you to earth in your mother. At the same moment, as he created you in his son, he foresaw what you would do with your free will, endured that in his son, and bearing all that "sin", allowed his son to keep you within himself even though it forced him to do what you did and say what you said! Despite all that your free will costs him, our father-creator continually works to bring you round to willing what he made you for. So, each time you speak, you do what God foresaw in eternity and what therefore Christ is compelled to speak, and, in turn, you benefit from the countering remedy that Christ activates to draw you round again to the life He wishes to live in you.

Thus every day you are experiencing the tender mercies of a loving Father who bears in himself all your actions and attitudes so that you are saved from the annihilation they would normally cause. At the same time you experience the daily desires of the life that the Christ of God has for his life in you - and which you accept or reject. This is why a man called Wesley in the eighteenth century wrote "thus to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be". Today we would say -- "how lucky can you be!" What more could you ask from your Creator?

So we live in a world where we have all the right to do what we want, but all our actions -- good and bad -- occur within the heart of our creator, who bears all the pain. As a result, he is able to protect and rescue the world from the absolute devastation our behavior would cause while he faithfully endeavors to live within us the life he planned for us from the beginning. How long can we resist such graciousness?!

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