

# Conway-Kochen Free Will Theorem: Lecture series

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Some time ago, there was a bit of excitement when researchers John H. Conway (best known to geeks as the inventor of *The Game of Life*, a Turing-complete cellular automaton) and Simon Kochen (best known to geeks as, um, okay, he's not known to geeks) concluded that if human beings have free will, then so too do elementary particles. In 2009, Conway gave a series of six one-hour lectures on this theorem. The lectures have been recorded and are available online. (I also found a nice summary of a public lecture by John Conway on the same subject, for those who are impatient and just want the one-page version.) **Bonus Conway Chatter:** There are actually two noted mathematicians named John Conway. In addition to John H. Conway, whose work leans more toward group and number theory, there is also John B. Conway, whose work is primarily in functional analysis. (In a rough sense, John H. Conway studies discrete things, whereas John B. Conway studies continuous things.) The group theorist is by far the more famous of the two, and he told me that he had the opportunity to meet with his functional analysis counterpart, who noted that people outside the upper echelons of mathematics often mistook him for the far more famous group theorist. "When I'm introduced to people, they will recognize the name and say, 'Oh, Dr. Conway, it's such a pleasure to meet you. I'm a big fan of the *Game of Life*.' I then have to tell them that they are thinking of the other John Conway."

Which is why John H. Conway was amused when he was introduced at some mathematics get-together or other, and the other person enthusiastically responded, "Oh, Dr. Conway, it's such a pleasure to meet you. I'm a big fan of your book on complex variables."