
Free Will: Reality Or An Illusion

The history of philosophy has been dominated by competing arguments around the ideas of Free Will and Determinism. Simply stated, the issue hangs on whether human beings should be thought of as fundamentally free to choose their actions and mould their lives – or whether they should be deemed as being at heart determined by forces beyond their control, be they fate, biology, politics or class. It seems obvious for most of us that we have free will. If we decide to do something and we do that, we could have easily chosen to do something else. Yet, many philosophers believe that this instinct is wrong. One of the major fundamental questions in psychological science and philosophy concerns the presence or absence of free will in the universe, or in any physical system. Are our choices in consciousness really just an illusion or it's what we really want? Do we really have the ability to control our will or it's just we do not have any other choices? These questions remains highly controversial and are one of the most famous and major debates in psychology and philosophy and are still arguable. A lot of studies have been conducted to understand this trait. The significance of findings, their meanings, and what conclusions may be drawn from them is a matter of intense debate and will have remarkable implications for understanding the concept of human behavior. Free will is the ability to make a conscious choices at any moment of life, without the interference of any external factors or constraints. When we introduce free will, neuroscience always comes with it in which the topics related to volition and agencies are conducted and analyzed. If free will is really just an illusion fabricated by our brain function and other factors, then things can really turn out to be a way more different than we can ever think of. Supposing, we are not accountable for our own actions but the neurons hitting our brain are, how the jury proceedings or criminal law of a nation can really held a person accountable for something he is not responsible for? With entanglements such as that, the significance of settling this debate is clear. Many researchers and philosophers have already attempted to justify their experiments and have come up with some intellectually satisfying outcomes. In this paper, you will find out some intellectual evidences to understand the human nature concepts and some other external factors responsible for the way we think and how we think. Free will is always influenced by various parameters such as social; factors, our upbringing and the environment we grew up in, which demonstrates that a person can never have his own free will to full extent.

An article in the journal "It's OK if 'my brain made me do it': People's intuitions about free will and neuro-scientific prediction" explores understanding of the human behavior by making neuro-predictions about the decisions through altering the manipulation levels. According to Nahmias, Shepard, Reuter, neuro-predictions are not the threat to free will as long as it's not been manipulated by other factors (pg1, 2014). In order to support the argument, an experiment at Georgia State University have been conducted in which two-hundred seventy-eight undergraduates volunteered (Nahmias, Shepard, Reuter, pg3, 2014). A pair of scenarios were created and the ability for perfect prediction by neuroscientist's was held constant. However, the threat of manipulation was varied in each scenario. A student named Jill volunteered and agreed to wear a Brain scanning cap for a month. Scientist predicted Jill's decisions even about the voting selection for Governor as well as President based on the data provided by Brain scanner (Nahmias, Shepard, Reuter, pg2, 2014). Other participants were asked to answer a three part questionnaire for each scenario. Nahmias, Shepard and Reuter also specifies that the first block was based on Jill's Free will and his accountability, followed by the second part that

had statements about Jill's Free will in general and third section includes questions of second part but with the manipulation of existence of technology (pg3, 2014). Later, the results evaluated relatively small difference between the actions that could not be manipulated and that could have been altered but left unchanged. Free will attributes were recorded to reach its peak in the absence of manipulation. However, with escalation in manipulation level, the attributes of Free will started declining while lighting up different approaches responsible to influence human behavior.

There are some other factors that possess much control to alter the ways we behave. The circumstances in which an event is occurring can have a huge impact on volitional control (Belopolsky, Awh, pg1, 2015). A lot of studies have been conducted in the past by various researchers to demonstrate this trait. A study similar to the experiment conducted by Theeuwes and Van der Burg (2007), but with some new conditions including the distracting color strength controller in color singleton was introduced to the participants. Participants were given a target colored word cue and the study was divided into two parts – one had homogeneously grouped target color distractors while other had different colored arrays (Belopolsky, Awh, pg2, 2015). After several trials, it was found that people's choices were affected by the context in which the experiment is conducted (Belopolsky, Awh, pg10, 2015). Some other scholars also have a similar perception about other features affecting our behavior. The type of behavior in which we will participate hugely depends upon the genetic factors as well as our surroundings. Human genetic origins alter the behavior attributes of a person, such as- it is much more difficult for a person to speak publicly who is genetically susceptible to shyness than a person without those genes (Brock, Buchanan, pg8, 1999). Sometime, people lose their faith in their ability to overcome their introvert or aggressive behavior adapted due to genetics rather than to acknowledge that it was meant to be a way more difficult for them as compared to others (Brock,

Buchanan, pg8, 1999). The concept of the effects of genetics on our mind and actions should not be resembled with the attributes of accountability as human moral responsibilities cannot be mistaken for the sake of genes or environment (Brock, Buchanan, pg17, 1999). External pressures such as social constraints have also been believed to diminish the complete presence of volition in our decisions.

Human actions are non-predictable in reality, one cannot completely rely on the previous data to predict the future. According to Alquist, Ainsworth and Baumeister, people have the tendency to behave in such a manner that they can never think of, due to presence of certain beliefs, in spite of knowing the truth behind that belief (pg1, 2013). In one of the studies demonstrated about the conformity, participants were exposed to three different circumstances and the results evaluated the strength of human control on our actions. Candidates were exposed to some biased and unbiased Free will statements (Alquist, Ainsworth, Baumeister, pg3, 2013). When people are given anti Free will assertions and asked to justify their answer if they allege the statement, to the surprise, it was recorded that people tend to conform more than the ones exposed to the statements in the favor of volition, even after knowing that they are wrong (Alquist, Ainsworth, Baumeister, pg3, 2013). This occurred due to the laziness and the need of effort to stand up and justify the opposing answers due to which most people agreed to go along with the group rather than responding in the way they wanted to.

People often believe that whatever they are doing is their own genuine choice. This belief to proceed with their own decisions is an ordinary thinking that people have about their each other

(Bergner, pg2, 2018). However, several conclusions have been made in order to oppose these sorts of counterarguments that indicates the presence of Free will. According to Bergner, various

studies have been conducted surveying the decision of hand moving patterns and psychological result of mind in initialization of these movements (pg4, 2018). In one of the studies resembling the presence of Free will, candidates were shown random letters on the screen that kept on changing at fast pace and volunteers were asked to press the button using their index fingers in order to revisualize the letter that was on the screen when they made their choice (Bergner, pg4, 2018). The results recorded illustrated that the patterns of brain activity that the brain had already made its decision even before the candidate was aware of making one (Bergner, pg4, 2018). It depicted that the presence of consciousness actually played no role in our behavior and unconscious human brain were remarked to be the catalyst in this study while directing the research towards the perception of Free will as an illusion.

This paper argues that we do not hold the complete accountability of the senses initiated towards the decision making process. Various evidences have been mentioned in this paper that anchors our choices and Free will on opposite ends. Our preferences of the response that we would initiate generally relies upon the stimulus to which we are exposed as well as some other traits. The extent of Free will is not only limited to the choices we make but is way more beyond the fact of living out life with freedom. People are forced to change their perceptions exposing their vulnerability to the manipulative circumstances. Humans thinking abilities are somewhere manifested by our internal as well as external factors. The environment in which an individual grew up, the genes passed on through generations implies to have certain liability of human behavior. Therefore, Free will is just an illusion as we are not the only one to decide our own actions. It seems like we exist and at the same time we don't.