

# A Structure of Choice: Potential For and Failings Of Free Will

Joseph D. Jones

23 February 2022

## Intro

The free will debate has a long history, with several contesting positions and many fine distinctions therein. Intuitively, we generally all have the sense that we do freely make our choices, but there is also a great deal of evidence and theory out there that choices that people make are determined by other factors, rather than freely chosen by themselves. Some thinkers that accept a form of determinism of human action do go on to claim that such is compatible with a form of free will existing (these positions are termed as compatibilism). This essay is a formal attempt on my part to assert a fresh take on the entire free will debate. No doubt the attempt itself displays my own shortcomings and limited knowledge base, but I do still think that the paradigm that the debate has hardened into can be re-imagined in a useful way according to the model presented herein. My position is indeterminist and incompatibilist (rejecting both determinism and compatibilism). Indeterminist because there does seem to be some capacity for people to make undetermined choices and incompatibilist because I reject the watered down versions of free will that compatibilists resort to—the human capacity for free choice is not just undetermined, but also (potentially) agent-causal in a very strong way, in that the human consciousness may be a source of created cause. However, my theory does not reject evidence brought in favor of determinism, but rather seeks to account for any evidence that people have acted in a determined manner, by modeling a structure by which choices take place and allowing that the structure can fail or need not always be utilized. I firmly believe in the human capacity for truly free choices, but do not think that many, or most, people realize or fully utilize that capacity very often, if ever. In short, there exists the potential in human beings for free will; failures to develop or utilize that potential have been presented as evidence of determinism. What follows is an effort to model and explain how this can be so.

## Structure of Choice

I will begin with an attempt to model a structure by which free will exists and by which free choices may be made. This is a consciousness centered model, and so is person-based and derived from internal perspective. I will not term it subjective, as I consider that paradigm and the subjective-objective dichotomy to be potentially useful in a limited sense, but so limited as to be generally false. Instead, one may consider that each individual can look within themselves to compare that which is modeled here to their own internal state/being/capacity. Also, that much of what I utilize here is accepted and

understood as the shared experience of human beings. Instead of being 'subjective', this is a person-centric structure, and while not necessarily anthropocentric, is derived from the common experiences of humanity.

The elements of the structure conceived are the consciousness, influences upon the consciousness, mental faculties, and the will. The consciousness is held as the nexus, or locus, of the person; it receives influences and exerts the will to take action in response to those influences (ideally)—which actions or decisions are made with the aid of the mental faculties. The influences upon the consciousness considered here are perception, instinct, emotion, rational patterns, and creative choice. The mental faculties considered here are perception, memory, reason, and imagination (also will, but that is considered separately as being distinct and special). The will is understood as the exertion of the conscious being, of the being of consciousness itself, upon the body; this incepts physical action. Together these elements form a structure by which we can understand the human capacity to make free choices (or any choices, any actions).

I understand the consciousness itself to be distinct from the brain. This will be developed further below as my field-based model of consciousness/will. In brief, I assert that the consciousness takes place within or as the distinct stable(ish) 'energy field' generated by the body, in full participation with the body, particularly the brain and neural system, but *not* within or as the physical brain structure itself. This field-based model is an important part of the overall understanding developed within the essay, but for now may be put aside. It is very useful to meet certain objections but is not critical to an understanding of the structure of free choice being developed in this portion of the essay.

For now, I will simply rely on a common intuitive understanding of the consciousness and its capabilities. That is, a person is conscious, in that they have a continuous sensorium at least while in a waking state; that sensorium contains distinct types of stimuli that the consciousness decides/perceives/has learned as requiring responses, and the consciousness perceives itself as deciding between alternative responses or perhaps acceding to a given response. I think this definition, if carefully parsed, will be acceptable to most readers. So the consciousness is the locus of the person, which receives influences (the distinct types of stimuli) and at least perceives itself as sometimes choosing alternative responses to those influences.

Those influences, as considered here, falling into the categories of perception, instincts or urges, emotions or desires, rational patterns, or creative choice. There may be others I have overlooked, and some may disagree with my categorization, but in any case these are sufficient here for the limited purposes of the essay.

Perception, or perhaps better phrased as 'reaction to perception', is a bit of a catchall influence category but still useful to consider. It is important not to just lump these into the 'instinct' category because humans at least notice and react to some things

more than to others, and different people notice and react to different things. The sensorium itself that the consciousness receives must be shaped and interpreted and limited before the consciousness receives it. We, as conscious beings, do not (usually) directly access the sensory organs of the body, but rather the sensory organs transmit data to the physical brain; the physical brain and the non-conscious mind compound and interpret that into a sensorium to provide to the consciousness. At any given moment this may seem like a rigid relationship in which the consciousness is somewhat a captive of the perceptions that are passed along, but we have learned that over time people can be trained, or train themselves, to have an altered or focused emphasis in regards to the perceptions received into the sensorium of the consciousness.

So, we may consider the influences of perception to be: direct impulses on the consciousness as reactions generated and passed from the non-conscious mind in response to specific perceptual stimuli, outright alterations of the conscious sensorium by the brain and/or non-conscious mind, and/or specific perceptual focuses which provide direct indications to the consciousness of the relative importance of given stimuli. These are somewhat arbitrarily given here, in the interest of brevity, but I think the previous paragraph at least suggests how they may be arrived at.

My second influences category is that of the instincts, or the urges, or perhaps instead that of the subconscious impulses. These may be conditioned responses that press upon the consciousness or instead attempt to circumvent conscious choice, inherited influences that do the same, responses picked up/impressed during human developmental phases, 'deeper' responses having to do with basic survival conditions, and etc. They are above the basic substratum of the perceptual sensorium, but are largely buried away from conscious knowledge or deliberation. The instinct to remove the body from pain stimuli, such as to jerk a hand away from an open flame, is one example. There are many others, but I think this brief description is adequate for my purposes here. Though of course these are not irrevocable or unchanging, any more than are the influences of perception. Paul Atreides and the Gom Jabbar and the pain box are fiction, but Herbert was describing an outcome within the realm of human capacity when Paul kept his hand in that box despite the pain.<sup>1</sup> So too can a person exert their will to keep a hand within open flame, despite the very strong instinctual urge to jerk it away.

My third influences category is that of the emotions and the desires. I will not attempt an exhaustive definition here either, as I think these to be commonly understood sufficient for my purposes. Call them less basic, less deep, urges that influence the consciousness in various ways, obtaining to more complex situations, but still not things that are fully rationally understood or normally open to the consciousness. So as the 'perception' category alters the very fabric of the sensorium and the 'instincts/urges' category is mostly buried away from conscious perusal, the 'emotions/desires' category is more visible, more understood consciously, but not in its

entirety. These influences do still yield to alteration over time, from conscious training or otherwise. Consider that anger may arise as an influence on the consciousness, repetitively in response to a specific stimulus (such as slow traffic while driving), but cultivating patience as an opposing response can lessen or eliminate the force of influence of that anger upon the consciousness. Even to the point that anger no longer arises in response to that stimulus.

Patience, in that case, being an example of my fourth influences category, rational patterns. These may be any number of learned, trained, or deliberately consciously chosen influences that impact the consciousness, but are ones that have become set over time rather than in a given moment. Thus I write of cultivating patience, rather than of simply creating it in oneself. We may consider these to be learned or trained influences, consciously arrived at through some use of the reason or else through acceptance of knowledge imparted by others, and which pattern-match older reasoning to new situations. Rational patterns are those influences that impact the consciousness that have been set within the view of the consciousness and by the choices of the consciousness over time. Though not necessarily with full conscious understanding, of course. We acquire habits from choices/actions that are repeated over time, but we do not necessarily deliberate upon or understand the full meaning or implications of those habits.

And of course none of these categories are fully distinct one from another in actual life, any more than the consciousness is fully distinct from the sensorium or the subconsciousness, etc. Addiction to nicotine might seem to fall into this category of influence, because imbibing is a choice/action made over time, but addictions also partake of the second and third, and even the first, categories. These categorical distinctions are useful in certain ways, but not necessarily exhaustive or pure.

Though perhaps my fifth and final category of influence is such, at least in some ways. I term this one as 'creative choice', and it is both special and distinct. Showing that people have this capacity relies to some extent upon my theory of consciousness which is further developed below, and my explanation of it draws upon the mental faculties which will be described next, but simply put it is the capacity of the consciousness to influence itself. That is, using the mental faculties of imagination, memory, and reason, and the special ability of will, the human consciousness is capable of adapting its responses to other influences upon it, of modifying those influences upon it, and even of generating an original influence upon itself. This last is perhaps most important for my theory propounding free will, as it entails not only the ability to choose between alternatives, but also the capacity to imagine and create a new alternative to choose.

I will expound on this further below, but for now will go on to discussion of those mental faculties by use of which this may be possible, as this influence category of creative choice is at the heart of my 'competing influences' model of free choice and requires more development to fully explain. The mental faculties needing to be

discussed, as considered here, are perception, memory, reason, imagination, and then, separately, the special ability called the will.

Perception is considered to be a mental faculty as well as a category of influence, because while the brain and non-conscious mind have significant impact in shaping overall perceptions, the conscious mind seems to be the source of direction and focus for human perceptions. The sensorium is provided to the consciousness, but conscious interest in specific aspects of perception may even occur prior to the full shaping of that sensorium, and it is certainly the case that the conscious mind can direct its attention and focus upon specific aspects of the sensorium. So, as a mental faculty, perception is an active state of the mind rendered to the consciousness, in conjunction with the brain interface. Always limited and shaped by the physical/sensory body, the brain, and the non-conscious mind, of course, but still yielding some to the power of the consciousness. This faculty of perception is of critical importance in focused learning and understanding, and in the idea that we can make joinings or divisions within the mental world of the individual regardless of whether they exist in any overall world outside of individual minds.

The faculty of memory is considered here as collected experience and thoughts available for recall by the consciousness, but also those which may not be recall-able, not immediately recall-able, or just not recalled (which can still affect the non-conscious mind in some way). So there is a blending here also in that memory impacts the influences upon the consciousness whether or not the conscious mind is utilizing it, but deliberate memory is also a distinct capacity of the conscious mind. The conscious mind draws upon this faculty to bring forth the wealth of previous experiences for various mental purposes. Beyond these points, it is readily understood what is meant by 'memory', so more precise or exhaustive definition will not be attempted.

The faculty of reason is also broadly understood here, in this case to include all deliberate mental process that is not covered by the other faculties listed. So, pattern matching and analysis, mental projection states (also called 'knowledge'), deliberate thought or pondering, speculation, decision-making, and etc. As a faculty, this can be the source of the influence category of rational patterns, taking place in the present moment, while those influences are the results of thoughts and decisions over time.

The faculty of imagination, distinct from reason or memory or perception though partaking in part in the capacities of all of them, is also something that may be broadly and generally understood in an intuitive sense. More specifically, it is the faculty used to create or project internal mental states which are not directly received from perceptions and not purely drawn from memory, though may utilize aspects of both. It is considered to include non-conscious intermingling of memories, past perceptions, past thoughts, and past imaginings. More importantly for the purposes of a structure of free will, it is also considered to include deliberate efforts of the consciousness to achieve a unique

mental projection state or a unique thought pattern. The imagination is the faculty of creativity, supported by the will, that draws upon the past but also makes the new.

Which brings us to the will. Central to this structure of free choice, the will is that faculty which the consciousness utilizes to choose between the influences upon it. Or it may be surrendered, to allow the strongest (or most preemptive) influence upon the consciousness, or just upon the person, at any given moment to lead to the action of that moment. Or instead it may be exercised to make a creative choice, whether in the moment of that choice or prior to it through conscious planning. The will is capable of all of these things because it is the expression of the being of the consciousness, the force of that being expressed. If held docile or dormant, the person simply accedes to strong influences upon them as those influences come. If exercised, the person may instead choose between those influences. And if the will is trained, strengthened, and the consciousness itself practiced in the utilization of the mental faculties, unique outcomes of choice may be freely created through the use of that will.

I will not claim that all people have this capacity in full, or even that all people are capable of developing it. But all people have will. All that are conscious have will, for will is the expression of the being of the consciousness. It does seem to be the case that most healthy, adult, fully formed human beings have the necessary faculties to develop the ability to achieve true freedom of choice as described here. It does not seem to be the case that very many do so to any great degree. But in order for the conscious capacity to choose to have outward effect, to achieve action in the consensus world of shared perception, the will as the expression of the consciousness must have a cascade effect, through the mind, through the brain, through the nerves and muscles, down to the extremities of the physical body which impart physical force. The next section of this essay will attempt to hypothesize the aspects of that process which are less well known or not known at all. After, I will discuss various ways in which the expression of free choice is limited.

### Model of Consciousness

My basic idea is that the consciousness takes place within the energetic field that is generated by the body; the will is the exertion of that field upon the cells and systems of the body. I postulate this 'energy field' as the electromagnetic field generated by the biological processes of the body, but it is unclear whether such a model is sufficient to describe it in full. Regardless of how successful my attempt is here, there does seem to be sufficient reason to doubt a brain-cellular consciousness model, that claims the consciousness as being derived solely, or mostly, from physical brain interaction activity.

I do not deny that such activity has a generative role, over time and in any given moment, for the energy field of the body. There is too much correlativity to doubt that the physical structure of the neural system is an integral part of the conscious

experience. Instead, I am claiming that the consciousness itself takes place in the field that is constantly being generated by that neural system, rather than in some physical location or locations within the neural system. More, that over time (and given the fulfillment of necessary conditions) that field develops sufficiently in strength and self-awareness to be able to deliberately influence the bodily structures that initially, and to a lesser extent continually, generated it. So do adult humans come into the capacity for self-discipline and self-mastery after a period of childhood development.

Consider. Every single cell in the body, while it lives, is generating an electromagnetic field. Different types for different cells, but all of those fields are interacting. This cannot be an accidental or random process, given the consistency of human development and bodily life. Those cellular fields, and the organ-cluster fields in which they are grouped, and the bodily system fields in which those are grouped, are all grouped in turn into a full body field dominated by the enormously complex field of the brain.

Over time, that field becomes enduring and to an extent self-sustaining. Consider that something like one percent of the body's cells are replaced daily<sup>2</sup>, but the electromagnetic field of the whole body continues throughout the life and death processes of the cells. The simple objection here is the state of unconsciousness during sleep, taking place on a daily basis for most people. But I am not claiming to fully equate the body energy field and the consciousness. I am instead stating that the consciousness takes place within it. I think that the field itself is the mind, which has both conscious and non-conscious components. Dominated by the neural system to be certain, and though it seems strange to think that the living skin cells over the big toe are contributing to the mind, nevertheless it is the case that every living cell in the body contributes to the overall bodily electromagnetic field that is the mind.

That covers at least some description of the enduring character of the mind-field, but what of the self-sustaining aspect? To add yet another radical claim to this essay, I assert that the mind-field, once generated and developed in capacity, is capable of partaking in various potential sources of energy to sustain itself, and is not restricted solely to the particular field-energy-generation of the cellular body (though of course that remains very important). Electromagnetism is a spectrum; it is also mutable. A self-aware continuously existent electromagnetic field will, not might but will, have some innate capacity to gather and transmute accidental electromagnetic fields with which it comes into contact. The process will be haphazard and dangerous (one might consider the rise and even prevalence of various cancers in this new electromagnetic age), but the survivors will have learned to adapt to differing potential sources of field-sustaining energy. And to tune out or otherwise protect themselves from corruption by other sources of electromagnetic interference.

The necessity for which helps to explain the capacity of the consciousness and overall mind, seldom fully developed but still adequate, to maintain a state of balance in

the midst of ongoing interactions with other field-systems ('exterior', such as other people, or naturally or technologically generated E-M fields) and competing influences within the field-system of the mind-body ('interior', broken down above into categories of influence). Some people who have intentionally developed this mental capacity for a balanced state have described it variously as the oneness, inner peace, zen, wai, the void, a state of virtue, stoicism, perfection, grace, and etc, but in any case all people that survive must have it to some extent, both conscious and non-conscious (in order to continue surviving, but also to function as an autonomous individual).

That state of balance, particularly conscious balance, extends in importance beyond this model of consciousness to be of critical support for the overall model of free choice being developed in this essay. The conscious balance, especially a developed and extended one, between competing influences creates a 'space' in which consciousness need not be determined by any one, or any at all, of those influences. It is the integral capacity to resist the drives of those influences. It is the potential to halt, even if only temporarily, any and all chains of causality which impact upon a person. In that halting resides the potential to break those chains of causality. Thus it is that the necessary ability of individual life to protect itself from electromagnetic chaos contains also the seed of freedom for the conscious aspect of that life.

I should note that I consider just 'electromagnetism' to be an insufficient explanation for all of the phenomena which I am using it to describe. I use it more for convenience, and it may be the case that I simply do not understand the more subtle aspects of the potentials of electromagnetism, but there seems to be something lacking when I attempt to match these postulations to the known accordances of that spectrum. Perhaps we as a people have not yet fully explored that phenomena which we term 'electromagnetism'. Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps instead that which we term 'the electromagnetic spectrum' is simply one part of a greater phenomena that we as yet lack the subtlety to describe or even comprehend. Whatever the case, I think the charitable reader will forgive me my inadequacies as I attempt to describe potential reality with my own limited understanding—the work is worth the uncertainty.

While the model described above has various implications (such as whether one can endure beyond bodily death, especially in conjunction with a model of potential interaction with various dimension-states, the hidden dimensions, other possible realms of existence), I will bring the discussion back to those implications specific to the human capacity to make free, rather than determined, choices.

So, the consciousness takes place within the mind-field, and the will is the conscious exertion of some part of that field to influence the body or other aspects of the mind-field.<sup>3</sup> Some proofs of this are obvious: I can consciously and deliberately reach out my hand to pick up an object. The occurrence then is that specific pathways of conscious control are built into the body and laid open for smooth utilization by the conscious will. The human developmental process, in terms of physical learning and



education, shows that these pathways are a matter of individual development and specialization but are also general features of people—unique, in particular realization within a specific mind-body system, but common, in that each (healthy, fully formed) person is able to obtain equivalent results. Most everyone can pick up an object, deliberately and consciously.

Though they will not be aware of the fullness of the process (some will have developed more awareness than others). I consider it as a cascade effect, in that the consciousness wills an action which is imparted to the overall mind and the mind utilizes well established field-neural links (starting in the brain but linked onward) that stimulate generation of electrical impulses that trigger muscle contractions in a particular sequence. So-called 'muscle memory' will then be those responses to particular situations that have become so practiced that each step along the way, each domino in the cascade, requires little or no active force to participate once more in that process. With practice, less will is required by the consciousness to achieve the same result, to the point that it may become largely or entirely non-conscious in achievement, and to the point where the mind itself may have little or no input and the process becomes pure reflex (for good or ill). In terms of my competing influences model of free choice, these habitual actions, once chosen and practiced by the consciousness as free choices, may become non-chosen influences upon the consciousness or even automatic and non-conscious, unless the consciousness once again deliberately exerts itself (its will) upon the mind-body to reverse or otherwise alter those ingrained responses (those habits).

This section has offered a series of radical claims that are not fully supported. Which potentially cannot be fully supported given the present state of human science. I still think them to be interesting, regardless, and quite possibly true as well. Let each reader decide on this for themselves. This field-model of consciousness (and mind, and human existence) will not be further developed here beyond one more point, as what has been stated is sufficient for present purposes and any attempt at full development will require an essay of its own, or a book (if possible at all).

The last point is that the sovereign domain of the consciousness, that section of the mind-body potential which is yielded up to conscious 'control' (capacity to choose between or create influences), is not static.

Throughout development toward adulthood a given individual will pass multiple tiers of increased personal control/responsibility (sovereignty) over ever broadening aspects of themselves. 'Adulthood' is a term used for when a person has reached a sort of plateau in this process correlating to a common set of sovereign controls over the physical body. In many cases such seems to be age-based and almost automatic with the passage of time.

Concurrent with this process of physical sovereignty, however, there is a process of training in mental states of sovereignty which are determined differently within different cultural groups—and for individuals within each cultural group that receive specialized training that differs from the norm. These may be task-based. A plumber will require a different set of trained controls over himself than will a physicist. The latter requiring a variety of mental-state controls not needed by the former, though the plumber will also have developed a set of controls suited to that occupation which the physicist (professionally) will lack.

The relevant point (for this essay) being that the development, expansion or contraction or just differentiation, of conscious sovereignty over the mind-body, the being of the person, can and does change over time. The examples just above focus on expansions, increased developments, but the person may also yield up conscious control over aspects of himself. The physicist who instead becomes a plumber will lose some or all of the skills of that former profession over time as they are unpracticed, and the mind allocates resources toward those other skills that the conscious will demands over time.

So too can the capacity of the person to make free choices expand, or shrink, or just become different, over time. Need, as expressed by conscious will, determines the attempted boundaries of our choices. We only live in the present moment; there is only so much that we can focus our power of conscious choice on in any given moment. It is a good thing, indeed it is outright necessary, that we are able to yield up conscious control, to limit conscious sovereignty, over those things that do not require our attention. Good habits, once acquired, may and should stand unmodified.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, there are few, if any, aspects of the mind-body which will not, in extremis or otherwise, yield to the sovereignty of the consciousness. Bad habits can and should be modified or removed, through a variety of means but always also by consciously willed alteration of the self—which generally requires a consciously willed alteration of the *consciousness*, in order to bring into conscious sovereignty, conscious awareness/control/responsibility within a given moment, those aspects of the self integral to the bad habit in question.

The locus of the mind-field of the person which is the consciousness has the (repeatedly historically demonstrated) capacity to influence or directly alter many (or possibly all) other components of the person and even itself. So does the living, dynamic, electromagnetic field that is the human (mind?) navigate and adapt to the world of life.

### Competing Influences Model Restated

The importance of my influences category termed as 'creative choice' thus becomes more clear. The consciousness has power, but is also very limited in capacity for change (for deliberate choice) within any given moment. By developing influences upon itself and the total person that do not require ongoing complete effort within each moment, but that are still the creation of the consciousness (through utilization of the

mental faculties), the individual is able to extend the power of the consciousness beyond the temporal boundaries of the moment.

Above, this is termed as the capacity of the consciousness to influence itself; this is so, but through that capacity the consciousness may also influence all aspects of the person (and the greater world, of course, via actions taken over time). The means which is utilized to do so being the capacity to generate one of those influences of the moment that lead to the actions of the person in a given moment (or the modification of an existing influence, or adaptation to an existing influence). Such as a mental reminder. A re-definition of a known term. The categorization of a certain act as evil, or good, or neither. In short, any deliberately chosen modification or creation of belief-structure, knowledge-base, or any aspect of the mind or body or mind-body interface or mind-body conjunction of the person, such that future choices of the conscious person are influenced.

So, to restate my competing influences model of choice: At any given moment there are a number of influences upon the person that demand or suggest certain different actions for the person to take in that moment. The actions that a person takes in any given moment are often derived from these influences, from various sources noted above and broken down into various categories, but the conscious part of the mind has a special capacity (the ability of energetic balance) to choose between these influences at least as they rise to the level of impinging on the consciousness (conscious awareness). Further, through utilization of the will—which is the energetic expression of the conscious component of the mind field, and may be amplified circumstantially by harnessing in other components of the mind-field—the consciousness may adapt or modify or even generate original influences upon the person by altering the mind-body state in various ways with that energetic expression.

The ability to deny the expression of other influences and instead generate and choose an original influence/action may even take place within that given moment of choice (for a person having well-developed mental capacities, or instead in a case of critical/existential need) and amounts to a capacity for the person to make free choices (if that is considered a necessary component of such capacity, beyond the easier abilities to influence and otherwise alter oneself over time). Regardless, the actions of people need not be determined by the influences upon them. The chains of causality of the past do not bind the autonomous expression of human consciousness.

### Limits

But are human choices, in *practice*, determined? Often it does seem to be the case that the actions people take are determined by circumstances and causes beyond their control. Because of this, it can be said that the choices people make are largely determined for them prior to the conscious decisions that they make. Or that those conscious decisions are mere psychological illusions—comforting beliefs, but ultimately

false. Observations such as these can be made into different types of argument against there being freedom of choice, or against any freedom of choice being meaningful.

I will discuss these possibilities further below, in terms of determinist positions that claim free will to be precluded or otherwise not meaningful, and also other points of objection or philosophical interest. This present section instead will focus on consideration of various ways in which the structure of free choice modeled above may fail—outcomes which are beyond the limits of the structure of free choices presented in the essay. I think that most, if not all, arguments against there being free choice can be explained as a failure in some aspect of our capacity for free choices, rather than as there being no capacity for free choice or that capacity being not meaningful. To the contrary, this capacity, tied up as it is into the very being of what we are, may well be the most meaningful thing about us as people.

Here I will discuss three categories of limitation to the structure of free choices which is developed above. That is, I will summarize failings in that structure, limitations beyond which it may not function, into three general categories. Those categories are: developmental failures in the personal faculties, ignorance or false knowledge, and the willful surrender of choices. One may note as this discussion develops that I do not include wrongful choices, or what one may call bad will, in these categories. This is because, while wrong choices may often lead to these categorized failures and so reduce one's capacity for choice, the act of doing so is actually an expression of free choice and so operates within the above structure of those free choices. As with those above, these categories are not meant to be exhaustive but rather summaries and introductory thoughts on this aspect of the structure of free choice.

Developmental failures in the personal faculties, which may also be termed undeveloped or misdeveloped personal capacities, include many possible outcomes.

Every mental faculty explored above may be left undeveloped in an individual, or may instead be misdeveloped so as to not serve the consciousness well in its pursuit of fateful choice. The memory may be neglected as a tool of conscious use, instead remaining at whatever default level a person arrives at through basic education or living necessities. The imagination may be deliberately limited to a constrained world-view, to narrow horizons, or instead not allowed to access or speculate on particular matters that the individual accepts as immutable; in either case the imaginative faculty cannot be fully developed, but only grow as possible within those constraints. This will also lead to lack of creativity. Similarly, the reason may be withheld from certain areas that are instead accepted from some other authority than the individual mind, stopping the mind from utilizing that faculty or developing it fully. And so forth, for these and other mental faculties.

Failure to develop the will or placing limitations on the growth of the will, of course, will lead to rather critical limits upon one's capacity to choose freely in life.

Though I may also point out that being 'willful' is often considered an undesirable trait for individuals to have when assessed on a societal scale. Thus various civilizations have sought to discourage the unbridled development of personal will in the majority of its population. Through various means. These counter-efforts to the development of individual will must be carefully balanced—it was implied above that the will is directly tied into human health and longevity—and so a diligent individual should be able to overcome both physiological based counter-efforts (to a limited degree) and mental-control efforts (almost entirely).

There are also a broad range of reasons directly impacting and derived from the physical body which can lead to an individual not having a fully developed ability to make free choices. Such as drug abuse. Poor diet, especially during childhood but also throughout a life. Overexposure to neurotoxins (in the water, perhaps?). Injury, especially to the brain or neural system. Some types of illness. Some genetic disorders. And etc. Some of these may be overcome, with effort and luck. Others may be lifelong afflictions, such that the individuals affected may never fully develop their capacity to make free choices.

Though it should also be noted that development of individual capacities may continue as long as life continues. Children do not necessarily have the capacity to overcome the influences upon their minds in order to choose otherwise in a particular situation, but if they continue to develop their faculties they will increase their ability to make choices in life. Just so, the many adults who have failed to develop, or been hindered in developing, their mental faculties in full, may continue to do so throughout their lives (though sadly most adults seem to halt mental development, or at least drastically slow it, upon reaching adulthood).

My second category of limitation is ignorance. This may also be termed as false knowledge. The most pertinent form of which is a belief held by an individual that they do not have the capacity to make free choices, whether because they think they are determined by some unending universal cycle of material cause and effect, because mainstream philosophy has told them that free will is an illusion, or because of some other, false, reason. And it can only be the case that a belief position counter to the existence of free will, of the capacity to make free choices, is false; as pointed out above, we cannot survive as individuals without some ability to break the casual chain, to balance and exert our being against the influences of the world.

More broadly, the mind of any individual is limited, and shaped, by its belief structure. Any false beliefs, limiting beliefs, or education/indoctrination that reduces the capacity of the individual to think freely, or to make free choices, if only in the privacy of their own mind, falls into this category. Thus may our choices be limited by what we believe—at any given moment; fortunately, beliefs are temporary constructs of thought that may be changed by effort of will—provided that some little capacity to choose

remains to incept alteration of the belief structure (and which always will remain while conscious life endures).

My third category of limitation is the willful surrender of choices. That is, any individual may freely alter their belief structure or personal commitment of being to limit possible choices rather than to expand them. This may be good, arguably, such as willfully limiting one's capacity for vice or to do evil (however that may be defined). But any point in which the will or potential action is limited deliberately, there exists the potential to abridge one's own capacities to choose and in so doing place limitations upon the being of the self. The vices (pride, lust, greed, etc) actually do this in an unambiguously harmful manner—they limit the being of the self in various ways. Pride by blinding the consciousness from seeing the true self, lust by altering perceptions of the self and the world into sexual (very mentally limited) channels, and etc.<sup>5</sup>

Also included in this category is the surrender of the will to another, or to a cause. That is, not only utilizing one's choices to serve a united goal, but also deliberately surrendering the capacity of the will to choose into the hands of another. Personally, I judge this latter choice to always be wrong. It is a surrender of personal responsibility, of the individual duty to continually judge and discriminate the use of the power of one's will. If a cause is worth serving, then by all means serve it if you choose. But do so with a series of fully consciously chosen actions over time, rather than by pledging oneself to blindly follow the will of another.

As noted, these categories of limitation in the structure by which people make free choices are not exhaustive, but I think they do serve to reinforce the key point that outcomes, or people, in which a lack of free choice is apparent do not exist because free choice does not exist, but rather because the structure by which free choices are made has been exceeded or broken down in some way.

### Philosophical Points

This section will be used to discuss and clarify a number of points of interest, as well as to detail answers to some arguments against there being free will.

The old standby argument for determinism is the claim, based on an understanding of science, that past events coupled with the laws of nature<sup>6</sup> render free choice to be impossible. That we, and all human actions, are entirely determined by past events and the inevitable chains of causality that they have engendered.

I think that my model adequately renders null this argument. The human consciousness is a special state that is able to create a place of balance for itself by meeting the influences upon it, the forces of the past, with the force of its own being, the will. At the most basic level, that is. More generally, the development of humans as they are now has been a long process of willful development to improve the capacity to choose—the evolution of these minds and bodies that respond to the will, the

development of human science and technology to increase control over the natural world, and etc. Even more generally, it seems likely that non-human animals at least and potentially all autonomous entities have some power of consciousness and so some ability to interrupt chains of causality.

That old scientific argument is dated because it is derived from an interpretation of the meaning of Newtonian physics—the clockwork universe, or some such. Now, Newtonian physics has been superseded by relativistic (Einsteinian) physics and also challenged outright by quantum mechanics. That is, we know that Newtonian physics is false (as are models of the universe and systems of logic based upon it), but we still use it because it provides useful approximations and good data within a certain range of scale.

There are some newer arguments for determinism based instead upon quantum mechanics. One of which is that quantum indeterminism (uncertainty, causal breaks) cancels out at the macro level where human interactions occur—that it is half one way and half the other way, so we need not consider it. My model does not really touch upon the quantum scale of interaction per se, but the possibility of quantum indeterminacy does provide a potential avenue of support for my model of conscious choice. That is, even if the micro level of quantum indeterminism normally cancels out at the macro level, the precarious balance of the delicate and complex field interactions in which the human consciousness takes place may take advantage of that indeterminacy (theoretically) to support the capacity for undetermined choices.

The Libet experiments<sup>7</sup> present another challenge that I think my model may overcome. These experiments purported to show that there was 'preparatory' brain activity prior to human actions, which was interpreted to mean that the conscious deliberation of choice was a mere illusion regarding something that had already been decided by the brain or perhaps the non-conscious mind. There is some criticism of Libet, of the methods used and how far the interpretation can be taken, but I will not get into that here. Even taking his results as given, my model may show an alternative interpretation of the meaning of that preparatory activity. That is, the preparatory activity may represent an influence upon the consciousness from the brain. That such influences may have been consistently chosen by the person being monitored may show that it was a strong influence. We may also consider that the persons involved in the study may not have very well developed their capacity to make free choices—or conversely, that the stakes involved in the study were so low that they saw no reason to exert their wills.

Now to move on to basic questions in the literature that should be answered. Does my model represent the 'freedom to do otherwise'? Yes—provided that the capacity to do so has been developed. The 'power of self-determination'? Yes—with the same caveat, and given that this requires both choices in the moment and efforts to enable change over time. Can there be 'irresistible desire'? No and yes—any desire can be

resisted by the consciousness itself, but whether this plays out into the body not taking the action of desire is also a matter of developed capacity. Those who have that capacity may not give in, or may, as they choose; those who have not that capacity will give in to that strong desire.

What is the relationship of willed choices to actions/outcomes? A person makes choices, mentally, if they have the requisite developed mental structure to do so. Those choices become physical actions if the requisite physical structure to do so is also in place. Which means that there must be a cascade structure of sovereignty such that the will of the consciousness is borne out through the mind, through the brain, through the body in order to accomplish physical action. Of course, taken conversely, not all actions are conscious choices. Far from it—much human action is of unconscious origin, whether reflex or instinct or the mind eclipsing the consciousness or etc.

What of moral responsibility? This is one aspect, though a significant and important topic in the free will debate, that my conscious-influences model of choice does not really get into. I think that my model may have a number of repercussions in regards to how moral responsibility may be judged, but the model itself is concerned entirely with the innate human capability to make free choices. Whereas moral responsibility is a derived judgment, which may or may not consider larger human interactions among people.

Do we have free will? We have will, because we are conscious and the will is the exertion of the being of the consciousness. The being of the consciousness can be exerted as will, always. Whether that will is free, or has the capacity to make free choices that become chosen actions, depends. There is a full structure, a cascade of links, by which chosen actions take place. Failure in the structure, inadequate structure, or simply non-utilization of the structure, will result in a person that has constrained or even not-free actions. Though of course that situation may always change over time, as the consciousness may expand or alter its realm of sovereignty and so effect changes to the structure.

Outright determinism of conscious entities is false, because the consciousness and a properly developed structure of action have the capacity to effect change, but the practical determinism of many conscious entities is nonetheless true. Even among human beings, which have the possibility for very strong powers of self-determination, there are many who are not capable of exercising such because of failures in their personal structures of choice, and many more who simply fail to make the effort to develop their innate capacities very much. Practically speaking, many people are determined in action, due to these failures. Though not all, and many more have the capability to escape that determinism, given time and effort.

In this way, oddly enough, my position is both compatibilist (in that we have free will despite practical determinism) and incompatibilist (in that there is no absolute



determinism of conscious entities). Determinism, or at least the causality of extant forces, prevails absent the intervention of consciousness. This includes human actions that are not consciously chosen/willed, except possibly for actions incepted by non-conscious mind (as mind that is not conscious is still very similar to consciousness in character, taking place also within generated fields). Human actions may not be determined, but often are. The human capacity for change, the power of creation, remains.

- 1 Herbert, Frank. 2006. *Dune*. London, England: Hodder Paperback.
- 2 *Scientific American* 324, 4, 76 (April 2021), doi:10.1038/scientificamerican0421-76
- 3 Also potentially other electromagnetic phenomena or even other physical phenomena, but I will not get into that further here—the effect is both specialized and subtle, making it problematic to be applied to other things than self mind or body control, and the total energy involved is very limited and thus usually not applicable for gross physical effects.
- 4 Unless the individual world/situation changes such that the habits are no longer good, in which case they become not-good habits and should be modified.
- 5 Vice, and virtue, are actually very interesting intersections with the human capacity to make free choices. Each of the vices limit the being and capacities of the individual in some way, as the opposing virtues expand the same; each of the vices can or have been harnessed to serve the goals of a broader society (at the expense of the individuals in it), whereas those opposing virtues have the opposite effect upon those societal goals (in a society, that is, which has developed to harness the vices rather than to structurally encourage the virtues). Greed and gluttony and envy drive the economy. Pride is harnessed to nationalism, or any group mythos really. Lust and sloth absorb excess energies into leisure activity, which energies might instead be used for political or social protest. And etc.
- 6 If there are such things. I prefer to think of those things defined as natural law instead in terms of forces and behaviors of this realm of existence, this conjunction dimension-state, that can be met, force to force, or rendered mutable given sufficient alteration of state.
- 7 Libet, Benjamin, 1985, “Unconscious Cerebral Initiative and the Role of Conscious Will in Voluntary Action”, *Behavioral and Brain Science*, 8(4): 529–566. doi:10.1017/S0140525X00044903  
See also: Libet, Benjamin, 2002. “Do We Have Free Will?” in *Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane, 1st edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 551–64.