

Do we have freewill?

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Each of us intuitively believes in freewill, or personal responsibility, because we experience it as a matter of course throughout every day of our life. We intuitively believe in freewill because we experience it, and our experience of freewill is as natural as breathing and is as necessary as breathing in order for us to survive and thrive.

But the experience of freewill is cognitively complex. It is not equivalent to, say, the simpler experience of perceiving a color. The experience of freewill is the experience of high-level volitional control of our mind together with the ramifications of this control. The experience of freewill includes an awareness of intention and an awareness of mental or motor behavior that follows from the intention.

We also know from our life experience that our personal responsibility for our behavior is graded and that the degree of responsibility varies with the condition of our body and the situation at hand. Yet, except in extreme situations of coercion or physical abuse, we intuitively know that we are ultimately responsible for our decisions.

In view of the nature of knowledge, we have the following result. Unless we have good reason to believe that our experience of freewill is an illusion, we will attribute the feature of freewill to the objective nature of humans because this assumption will be part of the simplest, most accurate axiomatic theory for predicting relevant observations.

Four main challenges have been raised that the feature of freewill is an illusion: *determinism*, *chance*, *scale reductionism*, and *unconscious mental activity*. I will present a proof that counters all four challenges. Most of this material is drawn from my books *Why?* (2008) and *Human Life* (2011, 2012).

Meeting format

At the meeting, I will present my proof that we have freewill, and we will discuss the features of the proof as we proceed. After I'm done presenting the proof, we'll have an open discussion of all ramifications of the topic of interest to the members.