

# Do we have freewill?

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Do we have freewill? Yes, we do, but experimental science can't determine this. This can only be determined through abstract reasoning, and the steps are as follows.

- A. Establish a theory of knowledge, clarifying the structure and function of knowledge.
- B. Based on A, establish our intuitive notion of freewill.
- C. Based on A, show that the challenges to freewill are false.

The challenges to freewill are these: determinism, chance, and scale reductionism.

**Determinism** is countered by proving that it is irrational, and this consists of three steps, as follows.

1. Prove that reality is continuous.
2. Based on 1, prove that knowledge of reality is, of logical necessity, probabilistic.
3. Based on 2, prove that reality is indeterministic.

In his famous uncertainty principle, Heisenberg proved a limited version of step 2, while my proof is simpler and more general.

**Chance** is trivially countered because it constitutes a vacuous idea. In technical terms, it is countered by A.

**Scale reductionism** means that a model of large-scale behavior can be reduced to a model of small-scale behavior. For example, a model of the commercial and political activities of the human race can be reduced to a model of the behavior of molecules. Scale reductionism is intuitively false, and there is no example in which it holds. A proof in formal logic remains to be developed to complete this step.

I call the alternative to scale reductionism, **scale extensionism** for the sake of parallel terminology. Under this model, rather than reducing a large-scale model to a small-scale model, as in scale reductionism, what we do is extend the small-scale model to cover large-scale behavior, and we base the extension on observations of large-scale behavior. Alternatively, we can say that we extend the large-scale model to cover small-scale behavior. This is the way that we develop knowledge in real life, namely, through extension, not reduction.

Regarding the untenability of scale reductionism, the closest idea to this result in the literature is that of *emergence*. However, the idea of emergence suffers from the same problem as the idea of scale reductionism, namely, the notion that matter/reality can be understood in bottom-up terms, that is, in terms of the construction of large-scale objects from small-scale objects. My theory of knowledge clarifies how we should understand the structure of matter/reality.

I present the foregoing proofs in *Why Human Life Makes Sense* (2011) in chapter 6 on indeterminism and in chapter 7 on personal responsibility. I summarize this content in the chapter summaries at the following website:

<http://www.WhyHumanLifeMakesSense.com/Home/Index.php>

I present more detailed info in *Why? In Pursuit of the Ultimate Answer* (2008). The proof of indeterminism is presented on p. 172-178, and these pages refer to earlier passages that present more detailed content. The proof of personal responsibility is presented on p. 197-200, and these pages, in turn, refer to earlier passages that present more detailed content. Related concepts appear as follows: mind vs. body, p. 195-197; other minds, p. 207-211; the probabilistic nature of ethical behavior, p. 251/4-5.

In this meeting, I will present the foregoing proof of freewill, and we will discuss the main points as I present them.

Following that, I will present a model of the mind, explaining how decision-making works as a continuous flow of propensities based on predicting the future. The automatic processing performed by our mind/brain is essential for skillful behavior, and our mind/brain develops these automatic capabilities over time under the direction of our conscious volition. To illustrate, when we learn any skill, such as playing the guitar, we consciously concentrate on the movements of our fingers. We practice until the movements become automatic and can be executed at will as a coherent, automatic skill. Following this theme, unconscious, automatic brain activity leading up to a conscious decision is essential for skillful behavior. Ultimate control resides in our conscious volition for deciding to go with one flow of propensity or another.

In conclusion, consistent with our intuition about our minds and our behavior, we do, in fact, have freewill: we are responsible for our decisions, though the degree of responsibility is graded, depending on the condition of our body and the situation. In addition, a competent model of the mind/brain is completely consistent with this understanding of freewill. Put simply, our everyday intuition about human nature is correct.