

Is My Will Essentially Free?





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Various freedoms

1. Social freedom: freedom from coercion, freedom of speech, other civil freedoms;
2. Moral freedom: primacy of conscience and reason over my passions, impulses and addictions; authority of higher self over lower self.
3. Freedom as a burden of loneliness and responsibility; fear and escape from freedom (E. Fromm); eternal fascism (U. Eco);
4. Ultimate freedom, freedom of will: freedom from determination by whatever existing and by chance. Is it possible at all?

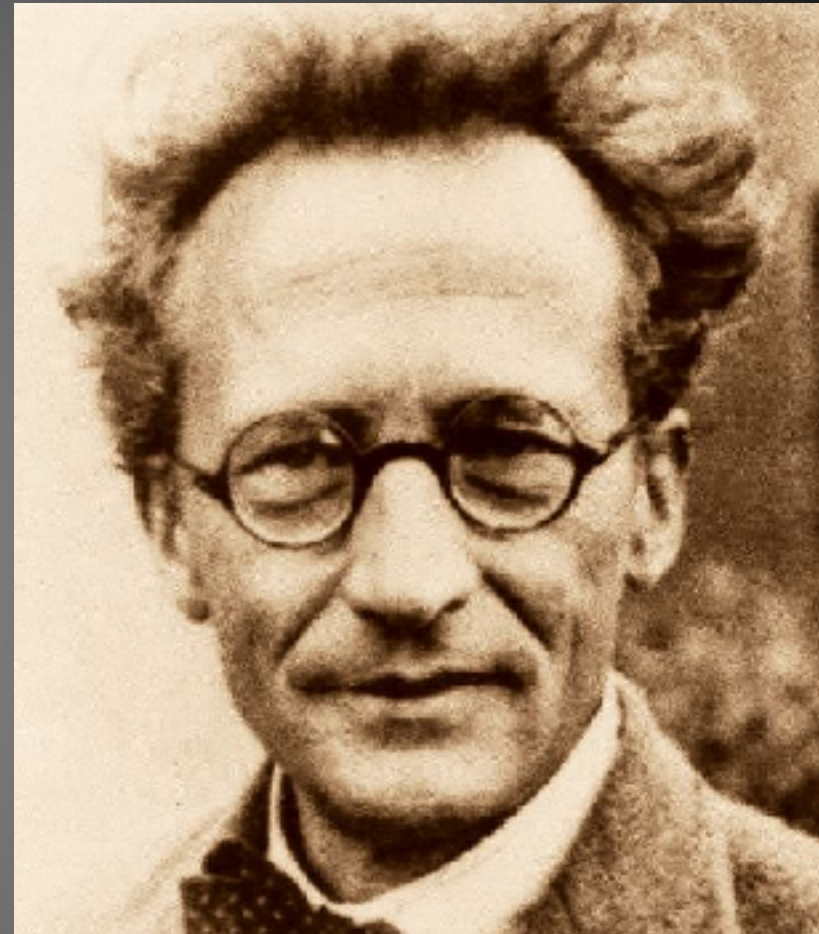
Why do I care about #4 ?

Value of Knowledge

“... you are bound to ask me now: What, then, is in your opinion the value of natural science? I answer: Its scope, aim and value is the same as that of any other branch of human knowledge. Nay, none of them alone, only the union of all of them, has any scope or value at all, and that is simply enough described: it is to obey the command of the Delphic deity: get to know yourself!”

Erwin Schrödinger,

“Science and Humanism”, 1951



Erwin Schrödinger

1887-1961

Moral Importance of the Free Will Belief



On a basis of one thought and one real experiment, philosopher Daniel Dennett argues that telling people that free will is an illusion makes them less concerned about the negative implications of their actions.

Taking this point seriously, I still cannot just proclaim the free will. I have to find out, how the free will may be possible.

Determinants

All the factors which may determine our thinking and action I will call **determinants**. They are of various levels:

physics (laws and chance),

biology,

neurophysiology,

psychology,

culture & society,

individual habits

demons and divinity

?

If my thought and will are not totally determined by all of them,
to some degree, my thought and will are, and so am I, free.

Passive Mind: No Free Will

I am determined both unconsciously and by means of my mind.

When my mind does smth standard, regular, unproblematic:

just picks what is obviously better,

or lets chance decide,

or just follows a rule or habit, or memorizing, or recollecting, etc. —

it works in the **passive mode**,

it follows the determinants.

I am free to choose what I want, but I am not free to want what I choose.

(Schopenhauer)

Thus, when my mind is fully in the passive mode, my will is not free.

Who am I?

Once all the determinants are taken into account,
does anything at all remain
for myself?

Am I a totally composite entity,
fully expandable over the basis of determinants,
or
is there a holistic and unique core of me,
ultimately responsible for something important?

Everything composite decomposes. Strive...
(the last words of Buddha)

My natural prison

My passive mind represents something organic to me:
my memories, manners, habits, tastes, values, views, abilities, skills,... —
inasmuch as they are truly mine.

A lot of that is important to me, deeply reflecting my personality.
When I am following myself, naturally and unproblematically,
whether am I not free? Well, this freedom is predetermined.

When I freely, effortlessly follow what is natural to me,
soon I begin to feel enclosed within certain walls,
like in a prison, no matter how comfortable this prison is.

The longer and more naturally I follow myself, the more unfree I feel.
The longer it happens, the more my passive mind exteriorizes,
turns into a prison: but for whom?

Active Mind

My mind can do more than just pick the best or follow usual routes.
It is not passive, when it solves problems,
tries to explain, understand or create.

Active mind, or spirit, is more than selective; it is creative.
It is the entity which brings new things in the world and in myself.
It is also the higher order judge about truth and meaning.

Is the active mind free? Is it the ultimate source of creativity
or only an intermediate agent of laws and chance?

Is it possible that the creative mind is fully caused by determinants?

If so, these determinants could be only the laws of nature and chance.

However, the laws themselves require explanation,
which can be only the Upper Mind.

(Genesis of a Pythagorean Universe)

Hence, this hypothesis leads to Deism.

Deism, being consistent metaphysically, ruins ethics:
it does not support possibly unlimited requirements of duty (**Cicero, Kant**).

Deism also leads to mistrust to human cognitive abilities.

(Moirai and Eileithyia for Genesis)

On this ground I conclude that
active mind is essentially independent from determinants.

Could I be mind-controlled by a *powerful demon*,
or be a part of a world-simulation of an *upper trickster*,
be a puppet in a theater of God,
or an element of the *Matrix*?

(Descartes Evil Demon problem)

If so, my freedom would be illusory.

Here is a fork in the road:

If I accept any of these derogatory possibilities,
my active mind would also be derogated, made meaningless.

All spiritual values — morality, philosophy, science, art,... — would be devalued.

The only way to save them is to reject such possibility.

Is Active Mind Truly Mine?

Although new ideas appear only to those
who intensely look for them,

their appearance is fully and forever mysterious.

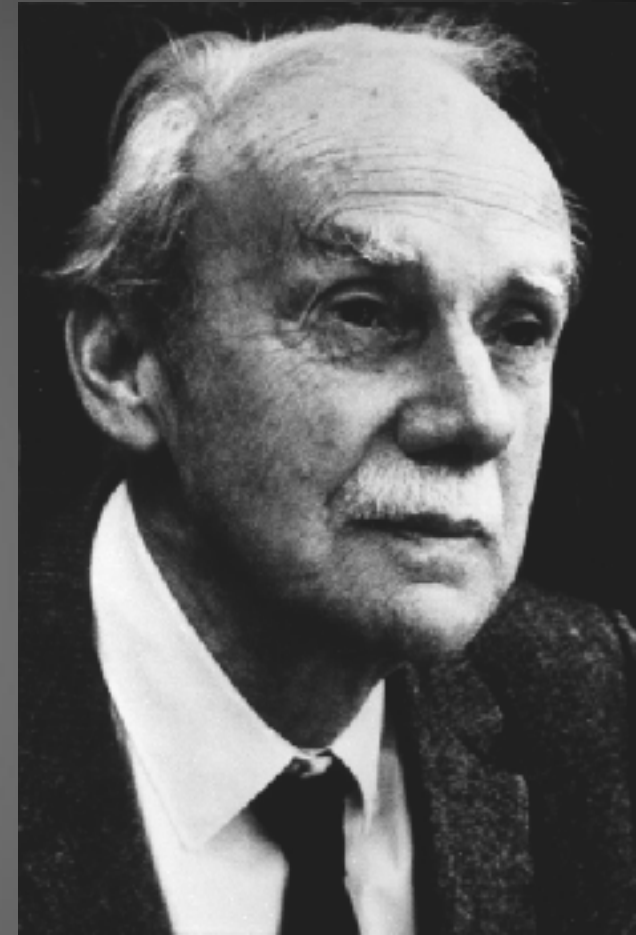
Could it be that they were just given by Upper Reality to those who deserve
them?

Artists point to muses, prophets – to God, but let's recall a scientist's confession.

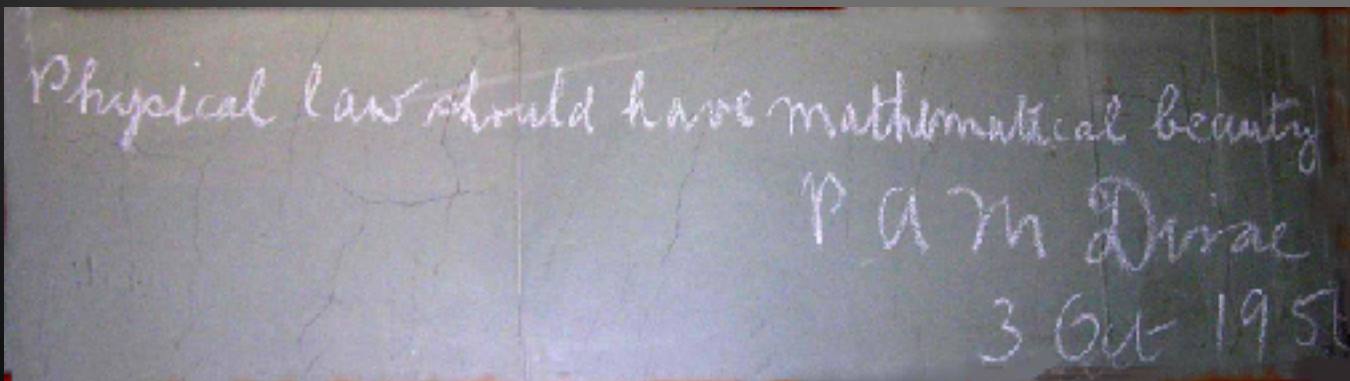
Mystic Experience

“If you are receptive and humble, mathematics will lead you by the hand. Again and again, when I have been at a loss how to proceed, I have just had to wait until I have felt the mathematics lead me by the hand. It has lead me along an unexpected path, a path where new vistas open up, a path leading to new territory, where one can set up a base of operations, from which one can survey the surroundings and plan future progress.”

P.A.M. Dirac, *unpublished note*, 1975.



1902–1984



The Active Mind of Aristotle's *De Anima*, III, 5

After characterizing the mind (*nous*) and its activities in *De Anima* iii 4, Aristotle takes a surprising turn. In *De Anima* iii 5, he introduces an obscure and hotly disputed subject: the *active mind* or *active intellect* (*nous poiêtikos*). Controversy surrounds almost every aspect of *De Anima* iii 5, not least because in it Aristotle characterizes the active mind—a topic mentioned nowhere else in his entire corpus—as ‘separate and unaffected and unmixed, being in its essence actuality’ (*chôristos kai apathês kai amigês, tê(i) ousia(i) energeia*; *DA* iii 5, 430a17–18) and then also as ‘deathless and everlasting’ (*athanaton kai aidion*; *DA* iii 5, 430a23). This comes as no small surprise to readers of *De Anima*, because Aristotle had earlier in the same work treated the mind (*nous*) as but one faculty (*dunamis*) of the soul (*psuchê*), and he had contended that the soul as a whole is *not* separable from the body (*DA* ii 1, 413a3–5).



384–322

Christopher Shields,

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-psychology/active-mind.html>

The Active Mind of Aristotle's *De Anima*, III, 5

Since in all of nature something is the matter for each genus (and this is all those things in potentiality), while something else is their cause and is productive (*poiêtikon*), by producing them all as a craft does in relation to the matter it has fashioned, necessarily these same differentiations are present in the soul. And one sort of mind exists by coming to be all things and one sort of mind exists by producing all things, as a kind of positive state, like light. For in a certain way, light makes colors existing in potentiality colors in actuality.

And this mind is separate and unaffected and unmixed, being in its essence actuality. For what produces is always superior to what is affected, as too the first principle is to the matter.

[Actual knowledge is the same as the thing known, though in an individual potential knowledge is prior in time, though it is not prior in time generally.][4]

But it is not the case that sometimes it thinks and sometimes it does not. And having been separated, this alone is just as it is, and this alone is deathless and everlasting, though we do not remember, because this is unaffected, whereas passive mind is perishable. And without this, nothing thinks. (*De Anima* III, 5)

Striving for a dance

Belief in a certain unity of the highest levels of the human mind with the Mind of God played a key role in the birth and establishment of mathematics and physics.

Discovery, as it may be seen in *De Anima*, is a creative intervention of the eternal, productive mind into the temporal matter of my passive mind.

Dirac, for the same thing, uses a somewhat different language, reminding a couple dance, where one leads, and the other follows.

In both descriptions, the active mind is a leading mysterious guest, not really me.

However, creativity is felt as the utmost freedom.

If the active mind is not really me,
what is my role in this dance,
my part in this act of ultimate freedom?

Maybe though, that AM is rather an elixir than an external actor or partner. If God created man in His image and similarity, it should be so.

When I am not sleeping in the PM state, but trying to solve a problem, I always receive something.

To get AM as a normal state, you should wakeup, turn to it, liberating yourself from trivialities of PM.

This awakening can only be an act of freedom: a determinant, creatively liberating from the determinants, is inconceivable.

*Is Your Will Essentially Free?
And What Does It Mean for You?*



Some Questions

Why do I care? Isn't it a pseudo-problem?

If I do care, what is, precisely, the point of my concern?

If my will were totally caused by the laws of nature and QM random chances, would I still consider it free?

What is the will which is not free?

If the will and duty are nothing but (partly random biochemical) programs, why ought I sacrifice for the duty?

Is the 'free will' question scientific in principle?

If not, on what ground can it be resolved?