

The case that neuroscience [or science of the brain] shows free will does not exist. Neurons make "decisions" not you.

Science works by a methodology of falsification. A theory comes up but it is more important to look for evidence and proofs that overthrow it than evidence that will confirm it. You cannot really have evidence for free will for beings that are programmed to feel and act free are still not free beings. The programming needs to make them think that otherwise there is no point. So any evidence for free will can also be evidence for this simulation.

There is no way to test free will to see if it is really free will anyway even without that.

Science has to keep seeking evidence that the theory of free will is wrong. It cannot turn free will of any sort into a scientific theory for there is no evidence with which to justify a theory. Theories in science are not just ideas but how the evidence seems to point to an explanation. Science is the enemy of God for if God is real, it is said that God is so good that if we do wrong it is because of free will.

Science is certain that we live in a cause and effect universe. In quantum mechanics you see this deterministic framework disappear. However this only affects the quantum level and is infinitely tiny. It means nothing to us or our lives. Plus what is seen is randomness. Randomness is not freedom. Random fate is still fate. What is set in stone is as rigid and unfree as the random and vice versa. Random looks more like freedom which is purely deceptive. We cannot expect science to show there is free will when the most important science of all, physics, does not show it.

Neuroscience is not about physics but physics has to be there in the background.

Experiments

Research at the University of Freiburg in Germany published results of experiments in the journal *Experimental Brain Research* in 2013. Tests were done to see if brain waves were going up – negative – and going down – positive – and how that impacted on the subject pressing a button or not pressing it. Just as you would expect the brain to program the person to choose ice cream on sunny days in fact it can happen on cold days too. So though you would expect subjects to press the button when the brain is in the negative state a significant number do not. And when you expect the brain in positive state to have the person not pressing a significant number do. The lesson is that the brain can resist influences. The influences make us more likely to do x but there is nothing programming us to do x.

The error is in thinking that urges alone program you. There is more to it than that. It is like saying turning on a computer is all you need to do to produce a letter. And our programming can create urges we are programmed to resist. It feels bad having to respond to urges all the time so that is the reason.

THE LIBET TEST

Benjamin Libet (1916 to 2007), who wanted to check out free will in terms of his knowledge of neuroscience, and his colleagues carried out quite a famous experiment.

The subjects were under the watchful eye of EEG electrodes.

They were told to press a button when they realised they had an urge to press a button they were holding. The time they pressed was noted by them.

It was found that the brain knew they were going to press the button before they consciously did. The time was a third of a second at the very least.

This explains why we feel free without being free at all. It shows brains and neurons can look like free will but that is all they do - they just look like it. Decisions are made before we "make" them so making them is an illusion. The brain is aware of the "choice" before we become aware of it.

OBJECTIONS TO THE VALIDITY OF THE RESULTS

#We all experience free will. The experiment accuses all of us of being delusional.

BUT

No it says we are mistaken or just going along with a simulation without really caring about that bit. Its very personal to you. So it is not necessarily a mistake or we can keep going from one to the other.

You can just look and see that you don't experience being free but the feeling that you are. The problem is how we can forget that a feeling cannot make us free or tell us we really are free. It becomes a delusion when you make too much of it and start thinking God gave you free will so that all the evil and suffering in the world is our fault and is not just something that happens. That is a way of being arrogant. It is arrogant for the same reason as thinking your evil is the most important evil ever would be arrogant. It is arrogant to boast of being good or evil.

The religious position that God has free will is merely assumed. Nothing can be said to make it credible. No step can be taken to make it reasonable.

If there is a God this free will is his most personal and important power. We are told he cannot create without free will for that would mean some force in him rather than him made all things. If that is the case then you don't need God as a possible explanation for the existence of the universe.

And also, it would be more important to prove God's free will than our own.

And how can we be sure we are free when we cannot even understand God's free will or make sense of it? If God gives us free will then he should have it himself otherwise he is not a God and we would have freedom that he cannot have. We cannot have a religious or philosophical or rational experience of being free - in other words we cannot think our way to seeing we are free. We would need to see or discern God's free will by thinking. But God cannot be detected for us to do this. If God cannot be detected he can still find ways to let us detect him. Scientific instruments would be able to discover him then! He won't give us anything that might pass for evidence of divine free will! Science does not find God's free will so science does not find God.

#When the people participating in the test were told to just sit there and let an urge come to press the button by itself they could have a subconscious urge to push it and had decided once they would feel an urge they would respond. So it was not a choice that was detected but an urge appearing subconsciously and then passed into the consciousness.

BUT

But how do you know it was the urge and not the choice? Why didn't they resist the urge for none of them wanted to get evidence that free will was bunkum?

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BUT

Also you make the choice and then check the time that is going to leave a gap of milliseconds.

Again its a matter of interpretation. The subjects felt the decision was made before they "made" it.

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BUT

A test by John-Dylan Haynes and his colleagues learned that if you measure metabolic brain activity you can see what hand a subject will press a button several seconds before they decide which hand it will be. But the accuracy of the predictions was 60 per cent which is hardly any better than chance.

We are not talking about that test. What if the brain resists finding out it is programmed? It is something few people want to find out. The test was inconclusive but that is all.

An objection is that the tests have nothing to do with free will when it is interpreted as just following your wants even if your wants are programmed into you and are fixed the way a computer response is fixed or determined. [Fixed or programmed or determined or ordained mean the same thing].

BUT

That is an abuse of the term free and of will as well. It equates feeling free with free will though clearly the two are not the same. You can be free without feeling free. If you could make a robot feel free that would not give it free will. Drug addicts with access to drugs whenever they want them feel free. The emphasis put on feeling free making you a responsible agent is insulting to them and free will is not worth degrading vulnerable people over.

#Another objection says that a decision is not taken in a moment but is a process. One decision can be spread over several moments.

BUT

That contradicts how we experience decisions. We argue with ourselves and we just do something and that doing is decided in a moment.

Some believe you can have free will as in a will that is not pre-ordained or fixed for science has proven there is randomness at the quantum level. But randomness there does not mean it will affect the human will.

BUT

If the quantum world is random (quantum indeterminacy) and that gives me free will then that will is down to random forces and cannot really be called free will. It may explain why a person does surprising things out of the blue as if they have free will. But that is not free will. It is like rolling dice.

It is argued that the quantum world is too small to affect us but chaos theory argues that a change that is infinitely tiny can result in mammoth effects beyond our comprehension and imagination. It does not matter how large the effect is or how small - randomness cannot facilitate free will.

PERHAPS WE DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IN FREE WILL AS MUCH AS WE THINK WE DO

Let us ask, if I seem to act free because of a roll of a dice or because I am programmed then in which scenario would I be closest to free will even if neither of these is free will? In fact we want to believe that free will is self-programming and don't like the thought of people being capable of literally anything for that implies we don't know anybody at all or know ourselves. The random thing mean that random forces can have a say in the programming or reverse it. The two views are compatible. The end result is that both views are bad and despicable and there is no way of getting away from either of them.

As Daniel Dennett argued that fake free will is the only kind of free will we really want or that is worth wanting for we enjoy feeling we are free and thinking we are free. Fake free will is something we want to have for we enjoy feeling free. The fans of free will are liars. They are fans of fake free will.

Arthur Schopenhauer the philosopher needs to be cited: "Man can do what he wants, but he cannot will what he wills." That is not just philosophy but science for it was what we can test easily.

Finally

Your famished belly can make you feel you freely tuck in but in reality it makes your brain make - ratifying can feel like making - the "decision" not you. That principle shows how neurons may make our choices for us without us feeling programmed.

The scientist cannot explain how free will can work or how it works for that is not subject to testing. For that reason science cannot say on scientific grounds that free will is possible. It may guess at it but guessing is not part of science. It cannot say, "It is possible!" It can only say, "We guess that it might be possible but we are not saying that as scientists. Scientifically there is no reason to take free will seriously." While science does not allow you to guess that free will exists it does allow you to admit that all you can do is guess. There is a distinction.

Free will is so core to the God idea that science cannot be called supportive in any passive or active way to religion. The free will question is enough to show that.

John Loftus correctly observed in How to Defend the Christian Faith, Advice from an Atheist, "Brain science shows that none of us have cognitive faculties that are functioning properly, or more specifically, they don't function correctly to a

large degree." Free will then means very little if it is real. Somebody acting on a pack of lies is not considered responsible so it is clear - we do not have the faculties to use free will if we have it.