

# Rationality as a Pre-requisite for Individual Choice

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## Abstract

*Both the freewill theories and our own common sense tell us that rationality is crucial to freewill, and that following our reason helps us exercise agency in our decision-making. Recent ideas in the fields of Philosophy of action and moral philosophy, however, have proposed analysis of human behavior in which reason, free will, or occasionally even both, play no part at all. The existence of reason and free will in interpreting the idea of action as opposed to events or occurrences is more crucial in today's world dominated by artificial intelligence (AI) and a mechanistic interpretation of everything going on around the planet. The purpose of this study is to examine the connection between these two key philosophical ideas.*

**Keywords:** Rationality, Freewill, Actions, Responsibility, Individual Choice

## Introduction

Before beginning research into whether or not reason serves free will, one must first determine which comes first. First, let's think about these two very significant philosophical notions whose relationship I've made my study.

## Rationality

When we try to comprehend rationality via the lens of the classical model, we arrive at the idea of a distinct cognitive capacity that causes us to take acts based on our values and priorities. The idea that rationality entails acting in accordance with predetermined norms was also seen to be crucial to its definition. However, as we will see, these assumptions are not very robust, and questions have been raised about them and similar ones. It has been stated that illogical activities are driven more by emotions and wants than by reason, and that rationality does not lay in the following of rules. Phillipa Foot expands on this premise to demonstrate the fallacy of trying to explain someone's moral behavior by appealing to their own self-interest. She argues that morality is normative as well as evaluative. Moral concerns might lead someone to behave in ways that go against their own self-interest.

He elaborates his theory by saying, "The concept is based on the fact that:

An important aspect of morality is how one's actions affect other men, for better or worse. There will be excellent cause to adhere to many morality's principles if it can be proven that we have reason to aim at the benefit of others as much as we have reason to strive at our own.

According to Socrates's view, "the world is a cosmos regulated by reason," rationality is what gives the universe its sense of purpose and structure. To be rational, one must be able to form convictions based on facts and establish causal relationships between causes and consequences. Simply said, rationality is concerned with upholding truthful and consistent norms. The term "Rationality" is usually used in an idealistic context. The one that implies disapproval or approval. A rational action is one for which there were sound grounds, whereas an irrational action is one for which there was a mistake or defect in the reasoning that led to it.

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The philosophical idea of free will, to which the phrase "free will" alludes, is fraught with a variety of contentious difficulties. The word "will" is part of the definition, but the freedom being discussed here is the freedom to act, not the freedom to think. But again, it might be debated whether or not freedom of action is conceivable without freedom of mind. Freedom and responsibility are the two most essential ideas in the study of free will. Acts that are not influenced by another's interference or are carried out according to our own will are referred to as "free actions," and "freedom" is defined in the widest sense to mean the absence of interference. However, it is sometimes argued that while we are free to do what we 'will' to in our society, we cannot be termed truly free since our will is often severely constrained even when we are not conscious of it. Even if we have the ability to 'choose' certain actions, we do not really exercise free will. Therefore, a person's free will is compromised when he or she does not have access to an environment that allows them to fully realise their potential. When I make a choice, I am committing to the presumption that I have freedom, but it does not prove that I really do have freedom, as Carl Ginet points out. After all, I may be completely wrong in thinking that one particular option is available to me.

### Individual Choice or Free will

The idea of free will may be examined from several angles, one of which being the individual's sense of responsibility. If an act is voluntarily undertaken by an agent, then that agent must bear the responsibility for the results of that act. However, we discover that our lives are heavily influenced by factors such as social and cultural milieu, parenting style, and so on. The core issue with accountability is determining how much credit or blame may be properly placed on the agent in question.

### Theories related to Individual choice or free will

Many other theories have been proposed in regard to the notion of freewill, and a cursory examination of these theories will help us get a better grasp of the concept and the issues surrounding it. In its simplest form, the dilemma of free will and determinism asks whether or not we can be considered free agents if our actions and personalities are influenced by variables over which we have little to no control. God, the natural world, scientific rules, genetics, upbringing, and peer pressure are all potential contributors. When we consider our free will, we tend to believe that our actions are the result of a conscious decision on our part and that there is no other force at work. When acting is up to us, Aristotle says, inaction is up to us as well. Once determinism is accepted, however, all of our decisions and motivations are externalized. To be sure, this disagreement is hardly the last word on the topic.

Numerous authors and intellectuals have had various perspectives. To start, there's the fundamental question of whether or not all occurrences are predestined.

### Furthermore, can free will coexist with determinism?

Both yes and no are correct responses to the first inquiry. The latter claim that recent advances in quantum physics reveal that it is impossible to know or anticipate the behavior of elementary particles. An event that was previously considered conceivable, and therefore the collapse of universal determinism. However, determinists argue that, first, we cannot be certain that quantum physics represents the final scientific conclusion, and second, even if it does, the indeterminism in the behavior of elementary particles can hardly have any role to play in the context of human behavior, which is the area of concern in freewill debates. Even if we accept the notion that random occurrences like quantum leaps or natural disasters influence human behavior, this doesn't bolster the argument for free will. Such behaviors would be as random and involuntary as blinking one's eyelids, and as such, they would be excluded from the realm of free actions.

Before attempting to find a middle ground between rationality and determinism, I'd like to bring your attention to two famous lines from two well-known philosophers. Aristotle stated, "Man is a rational animal," and Sartre remarked, "Man is doomed to be free," both of which may be seen as defining humanity. Considering the weighty value these thinkers

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placed on reason and the ability to act freely, it follows that these traits must be fundamental to what it is to be human.

The concept of free will is uniquely human, to the point that we seldom, if ever, discuss it in relation to non-humans. Because it is not a given that a rational person would always behave rationally, the issue of freewill emerges only when the agent is a rational being and uses his reasoning ability in selecting a specific action.

Taking the first scenario of universal determinism, we discover that if it is true, we can scarcely identify any role to reason in the distinct strands about determinism. If our life decisions are predetermined by forces outside of our control, it would be irrational to give them any weight in terms of praise or punishment. But if indeterminism is real and a sudden quantum leap causes an action to be taken, then again, reason plays almost no part in this.

The question of whether or not determinism is consistent with free will is central to the free will argument. Freedom and determinism are compatible, according to compatibilists. Most compatibilists claim that freedom exists when there are no limits or obstacles to our actions. They contend that as long as we are not restrained by force, we are free to behave in accordance with our own moral standards rather than those imposed by society or nature.

There's some truth to this, since we only speak about having "free choice" when we have several options to choose from. We often behave in ways that defy easy categorization as either logical or irrational. It's only that when considering such activities, the issues of reason and freewill are irrelevant. We use our reason to make a deliberate decision about what to do only when a set of options is presented to us by the activity. The concept that an action is free up to the point when the agent "might have done differently" was put forward by classical compatibilists.

However, contemporary compatibilists like Dennett and Frankfurt have sought to prove that agents are always accountable for their actions, even when they have no choice in the matter. Dennett cited Martin Luther as an example of someone who said "he could do no other" when explaining his motivation for starting the Protestant Reformation. However, Luther's claim that he was unable to stop the reformation was seen by many as an attempt to absolve himself of blame.

Frankfurt contends, "... our having a feeling for action may occasionally lead it to be the case that motions of our body are led by us in a way which reflects that reason... Because we are,

Our acts and the manner in which they fit into our life are profoundly influenced by how logical and self-aware we are.

To the free will discussion, Frankfurt brings the idea of the individual. His answer to the issue of what constitutes a person centres on the idea of free choice, he argues. His main point is that humans are unique in possessing the capacity for "reflective self appraisal," which he says sets them apart from animals. The result is a yearning for things of a higher order. As far as Frankfurt is concerned, animals are limited to first-order wants, and only humans are capable of doing such an introspective analysis of themselves. The only time our "will" can be said to be "free" is when it satisfies our "second order wants," as he calls them. Although traditional compatibilists focus on the ability to act on one's own will, hierarchical theorists like Frankfurt argue that this freedom should extend to the ability to will one's own desires.

Now, it's clear from these ideas that rationality plays a vital role here. Whether we're discussing moral accountability or self-evaluation, it's useless to discuss them outside of a reasonable framework.

The following are some further points of view: But that's only one side of the coin, and it seems like a good idea to check out the other side before we wrap up our research.

Kant argued for the importance of reason and free will in making moral decisions, and he was a proponent of the latter. But that's only one side of the coin, and it seems like we should check out the other side before wrapping off our research. Kant was a philosopher who held that humans, using just their own reason, can arrive at the foundations of knowledge and action without any outside help (even divine intervention).

He argued that free choice necessitated action from all sentient beings. That is, they should not behave as if things are predetermined, but rather let their actions be guided by what makes the greatest sense rationally. Therefore, contrary to what the name "directed" would imply, they are really just subject to the dictates of their own reason (although implicitly).

Quite clearly, Henry Sidgwick has raised an issue here by arguing that if we hold that the true rules directing our behaviour are rational and hence moral, then any wrong doing might simply prove that an agent is not rational and, thus, not accountable for the wrong done. He also argues that free will is severely limited under the doctrine of the categorical imperative.

What does it mean to claim that man is free when he is directed by reason? is the central question that needs answering. Because of Kant's intertwining of the two conceptions, it may seem that when one acts in accordance with the moral law, one is being rational. However, one cannot really be free in adhering to a rule, and if one ignores the law and acts freely, then one is not being rational.

Reason and emotion are two criteria of self that Berlin discusses in his classic essay "Two Concepts of Liberty." The rational path leads to independence, while the emotional one keeps you chained. According to him, true freedom exists when we use our reason. As a species, we are not rational beings but are ruled by our emotions, while institutions like the church and the country serve as symbols of our higher selves. It is thus justifiable to restrict an individual's freedoms in the name of freedom on the grounds that an individual's rational will inevitably leads him to behave in accordance with the will of the social total.

What it says is that these are your genuine wants, and giving in to them will set you free. Since it portrays logic as an acceptable rationale for taking away all your freedom, in Berlin's view, a "positive feeling of liberty" is a hazardous idea.

A second major split is between theoretical and applied reasoning. The former holds sway over one's convictions, while the later may be put into practice in one's daily life. Questions of practical reasoning involve determining and defining means and objectives, respectively. The 'anticipated utility theory' supplied by economists in recent times provides the most persuasive description of practical reason. According to this line of thinking, the most sane course of action is the one that maximizes one's anticipated utility, which is determined by weighing the pros and cons of each conceivable event and multiplying the result by the probability that it will really come to pass. Accordingly, the most rational course of action is the one that maximizes utility in the way described above. Once again, this does not leave a lot of room for the use of free will. If an action is to be considered logical, it must be driven by these calculations rather than our own free will.

### Conclusion

All of this theoretical and conceptual work points to a very limited place for free will in debates of ethics. If we apply the aforementioned ideas to the concept of rationality, we arrive at a very hard and fast definition that allows no room for the use of free will. But we need to reconsider our definition of rationality, and once we have a larger grasp of it, it won't be hard to see how the two ideas are so intertwined and strongly tied to the idea of moral responsibility.

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