**Does Rejection of Free Will Necessitate Rejection of The Categorical Imperative? (17 votes)**

[**BenChida**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1330541)*a day ago*

Posted by: tfurze

I find Kant’s Categorical Imperative to be a very compelling moral framework. However, all that I have read in Psychology, Neuroscience and Artificial Intelligence forces me to conclude that free will is an illusion. As Kant’s framework requires free will, I am forced to reject it, despite finding it compelling in most other aspects. Has anyone ever built a similar moral framework that does not require any notion of free will?

Tim

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(this post is about [Live Question and Answer Session with Professor Sandel, Part 2 / Top Vote-Getting Questions](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/jump_to/i4x:/HarvardX/ER22x/discussion/6efbd5d53d5241b6bf99409448272104))

1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**hitokiri51**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/988781)

*about 20 hours ago*

The most beautiful piece of art can´t claim any virtue.

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* + art is not open to moral judgement, but all moral judgement is based on emotions, on the relative ugliness of actions.

*–posted about 19 hours ago by*[Mr\_Phil](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/909485)

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**EdSilha**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1032045)

*a day ago*

Is free will really an illusion? Is there indisputable evidence to support such a claim beyond the simple experiments that have been performed (e.g, the timing of a finger movement versus the thought with which it is associated? Has it been unambiguously determined that the electrical impulse to move a finger is not an early part of the decision to move the finger?

There are simple things we do that may be initiated by our subconsciousness and we have preferences and biases that surely influence our choices. However, it is clear that we consciously evaluate options when making serious decisions or tackling complex problems.

Is it a little early to make the determination that free will does not exist?

If there is no free will, can anyone be held responsible for his actions?

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**ceebeegeebee**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/1857383)

*about 19 hours ago*

My understanding of cognitive science now is that the brain has multiple centres of thought that often conflict. So while it isn't easy (is anything in life?) there is always opportunity to understand and train yourself to use your brain correctly, just like you can train your muscles. - Carolyn Gibson, England

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1. [0](javascript:void(0))[**CarolynH**](https://courses.edx.org/courses/HarvardX/ER22x/2013_Spring/discussion/forum/users/627269)

*about 16 hours ago*

My view is that acting freely and acting morally can be considered differently, even in light of developments in neuroscience, discovering biological predispositions to behaviours and influences of environment. These are predispositions and influences, choice still remains, which I would say is freely at the will of the individual rather than determinism.

However, it does raise some interesting questions for me about making choices, about the information we have on making conscious choices and the determinants of how people behave. Even with sub-conscious actions, conscious effort can influence behaviour change. Decisions can be coerced, manipulated by external factors too but if someone acts counter to their conscience does this mean they did not have free will?

I guess it could be argued making choices considering categorical moral principles is based on having a conscience. That it is a web of neural activity giving an intuition on how to be with respect to others. So, in the absence of a conscience it wouldn't be possible to be moral.

In criminal justice would that mean those diagnosed with psychopathy have a justifiable defence of diminished responsibility because they don’t have the neural capability to evaluate such decisions?

Does society have some responsibility for exposing such personalities to an environment that exasperated their predisposition to immoral behaviours? Noting that so-called pro-social psychopaths can appear to work within a moral framework.

Do we all have diminished responsibility if we’re determined by our neurological make-up? My view is no. The majority have a moral intuition, a recognition of the categorical imperative and our discussion here is articulating what that means in the world. (My view might change though. I guess that’s free will)

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