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So if you enjoy what we're doing here, please consider becoming one. As always, I never want money to be the reason why someone can't get access to the podcast. So if you can't afford a subscription, there's an option at Sam Harris, Doug, to request a free account. And we grant 100 percent of those requests. No questions asked. I have said and written a lot about free will over the years, and I wanted to get all of my thoughts or my most effective thoughts all in one place.

[00:01:12.090]

Many of you find my argument against free will to be very provocative and even off-putting and many of you mistake it for a philosophical argument that doesn't make contact directly with experience. So I want to see if I can do this all in one pass and actually bring some of you along with me into the end zone here. So here's the starting point. Most people believe that they have a self which enjoys something called freedom of will. And in fact, this feeling of self and the feeling that we have free will are really two sides of the same coin.

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But here, I'm going to focus on free will because in many ways it's easier to deconstruct. Now, I found to my surprise that this is a very sensitive topic, and so here I want to offer the usual disclaimer. If it makes you uncomfortable to think about these things, you need to be the judge of whether this discomfort is healthy and worth pressing into or whether it's actually bad for you. And in the latter case, just skip this journey with me.

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And it's probably not an accident that many people find the prospect that free will might be an illusion to be provocative. Because the idea of free will seems to touch nearly everything people care about morality, law, politics, religion, public policy, intimate relationships, feelings of guilt and personal accomplishment. Most of what is distinctly human about us seems to depend on our view in one another as agents who are capable of free choice. And I say seems to because I don't think it does really, but it can take a little while to see this.

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Now, most people believe that the challenge is to reconcile a subjective fact, the fact that we experience free will with objective reality, the way physical causes and events arise in the universe. But I want you to examine this. What I hope to impress upon you is that the illusion of free will is itself an illusion. There is no illusion of free will and there are no subjective facts about it to reconcile with the truths of physics and neurophysiology. In fact, our conscious experience is perfectly compatible with a scientific picture of reality that does not stop or change character at the boundary of our skin.

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Many people worry that the consequences of dispensing with free will must be negative. Now, obviously, this wouldn't suggest that free will actually exists, but generally speaking, this claim about negative outcomes isn't true either. Losing one's belief in free will can actually have very positive consequences. For one, it removes any rational basis for hating people. And we'll explore that later on. Let's begin at the beginning. The popular conception of free will rests on two assumptions.

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The first is that each of us was free to think and act differently than we did in the past. We chose to, but we could have chosen B.. He became an accountant, but you could have decided to be a firefighter. You had chocolate ice cream last night, but you could have picked vanilla. It certainly

seems to most of us that this is the world we're living in. The second assumption is that we are the conscious source of many of our thoughts and actions in the present, your sense of deciding what to do in each moment seems to be the actual origin of your subsequent behavior.

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You feel you want to reach and pick up an object, and then you do the conscious part of you that wants and intends and perceives seems to be in control of at least some of your thoughts and actions. However, there is every reason to believe that both of these assumptions are false. Of course, there's very little disagreement over the fact that events have causes, everything that arises seems to be born into existence by some previous state of the universe.

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Now, maybe there's some place to stand where all of this proves to be an illusion. Maybe there's some way to view the cosmos as a whole or reality itself and to say that nothing has ever actually happened. Right. That change itself, the process of cause and effect itself is an illusion. But let's leave that possibility aside for the moment. Most of the time, things certainly seem to happen. Lightning strikes a tree and a fire starts a few lines of computer code cause your phone to ring.

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And people are born, they grow old, and then they die. Everywhere we look, we see patterns of events and all these events have prior causes, which is to say they depend materially and functionally and logically on other events that preceded them in time. And most relevantly, for our purposes, all of our conscious experiences, our thoughts, intentions, desires and the actions and choices that result from them are caused by events of which we are not conscious, in which we did not bring into being.

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You didn't pick your parents, you didn't pick your genes, therefore, and you didn't pick the environment into which you were born. And yet the totality of these facts determines who you are in each moment and what you do in the next. And even if you think that you have an immaterial soul that somehow animates this machinery, you didn't pick your soul. The next thing you think can do can only emerge from this totality of prior causes and it can only emerge in one of two ways lawfully, that is deterministically like one domino just getting knocked over by another or randomly.

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Now, randomness is a very interesting concept, and it's not clear how pervasive it might be. There are arguments against determinism, especially in quantum mechanics, that suggest that subatomic particles themselves make, quote, free choices, which is to say there's nothing in the prior history of the universe that tells them what to do next. And if what a particle does next doesn't depend on the past, well, then there's no theory that can predict what it will do next.

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I'm not taking a position against this at the level of particles. But I am claiming that this kind of independence from prior causes would not give people the psychological freedom they think they have here for two reasons. The first is that there's every indication that larger systems, like human brains, behave more deterministically. But more important, randomness of any sort would not give people freedom of will. There is no will in randomness. If you ever did something that was truly random, that had no relationship to prior states of your brain, if it literally came out of nowhere, that wouldn't be what you or anyone means by free will.

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You would think, what the hell did I just do? Right and why did I do it? Such an action would be precisely the sort of thing we would deem out of character, because it would be by definition out of character. To be in character is to be discernibly in line with prior tendencies where it follows a pattern. Something truly random would be on analyzable. Right. There would literally be no answer to the question of why you did it.

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With true randomness, there is no why. That's not what we mean by Will, much less a free one, right? That is not psychological continuity through time. The problem is that neither determinism nor randomness nor any combination of the two justifies the feeling that most people have that goes by the name of free will, the feeling that they're free to think and do more or less whatever they want in the present in a way that allows them to be something other than a mere concatenation of causes or mysterious influences.

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To be something other than a natural phenomenon, people don't want to believe that they are in any sense like a wave breaking on the shore, but this is how causes propagate or seem to propagate. Many scientists and philosophers have acknowledged the problem here, but most appear to think that we must live with the illusion of free will or euphemize about it. And I'm arguing that this is a mistake. So what do most people mean by free will? Well, there's controversy over this among philosophers and scientists, but I think the Central Falls intuition is pretty clear and it results from how our subjectivity is structured or appears to be structured.

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Again, the feeling of having free will is directly connected to the feeling of being a self. With respect to free will, it amounts to this most people feel that the conscious part of their minds, the one that is experiencing their experience, thinking their thoughts, feeling their feelings, is in control of their mental life and behavior in some real way. They feel that they are the source of their intentions and actions, not merely that these mental and physical states are arising in their bodies somehow, but that they are initiated by their conscious minds in some way.

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The fact that something is happening in a person's body isn't really the point, right? People do not feel free to beat their hearts or to stop beating them. They don't feel that they're causing their cells to divide or to metabolize energy. They don't feel they're in control of their lives, right, but they do feel that they're the source of their thoughts and voluntary actions. And at any given moment, they feel that they are free to think and do something else.

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Now, perhaps you feel this, perhaps you feel that if you could rewind the movie of your life and return the universe to the precise state it was in a moment ago, you could think and behave differently. I think there's little question that most people presume this about themselves and about other people, not philosophically but implicitly as a felt sense of how they exist in the world. This seems to be the very essence of what it means to hold ourselves and others morally responsible for our actions.

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If someone does something to harm you intentionally, you feel they shouldn't have done it right? They could and should have done otherwise and you have a grievance against them that is very different from how you feel about a malfunctioning piece of machinery or a gust of wind that might produce the same harm. So the reason why discussions about free will are so fraught is that declaring free will to be an illusion strikes at the very heart of what people feel is true about their own subjectivity in each moment.

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And it seems to have implications for a wide variety of moral norms. As we'll see, the implications are not what many people think, I'll argue that our morality actually improves once we recognize that free will doesn't make any sense. But again, the consequences of believing in free will or not are quite separable from any claim about what is true when simply can't argue for the reality of free will based on the imagined good effects of believing in it and with respect to what's true.

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The problem is there's absolutely no reason to believe that free will exists. There's no objective reason and there's no subjective reason either. In the end, a belief in free will is analogous to believing that if you rewound this piece of audio, I might finish this sentence some other way. As I said,

traditionally, this has been viewed as a philosophical impasse, we know we have free will because we experience it directly, but we just can't see how to make sense of it in terms of physical causation.

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But as I hope to show you, there is no impasse because there's no experiential reason to believe in free will either. The experiential you, the conscious witness of your inner life, the one who's hearing these words right now, you aren't the author of your thoughts, intentions and actions, rather thoughts, intentions and subsequent actions simply arise and are noticed. But this doesn't mean there's no difference between voluntary and involuntary behavior. There is. Let's take a closer look at this.

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Reach for something and pick it up now. And pay attention to what the experience is like. Now, whether you're aware of it or not, voluntary behavior is structured by intention and expectation, your brain produces a forward looking model of what's about to happen. And if the model is violated, you'll notice, you know, what it's like to reach for something and to accidentally knock it over. For instance, the successful manipulation of an object feels different than just banging into it and produces different results.

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And voluntary actions can be consciously interrupted, which is to say, we can experience an impulse to stop them and this impulse is effective. And of course, they can be deterred by other people and by legal penalties. An involuntary action such as a muscle spasm or a reflex or a seizure or tripping and falling can't be deterred. So there are many differences here in what someone does voluntarily says more about him, about what he wants, for instance, and about what he's likely to do in the future than an involuntary action does.

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Doing something on purpose reveals something about one's purpose in life, we don't need a concept of free will to notice these differences. And as I'll make clear later on, most of our ethical judgments remain unchanged when we give up the illusion of free will. But not everything remains unchanged. And a few things that do change are actually quite important. Again, I want to flag what is novel about my argument here. Most philosophers and scientists believe we have an experience of free will that is undeniable and the challenge is to make sense of it in terms of a picture of causality that seems not to allow for it, whether that's deterministic or random.

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I'm claiming that we don't have the experience we think we have. There is no experience of free will. So let's look more closely at our experience. Considering how your thoughts arise, because they're the basis for most of your complex behavior, certainly your most deliberate behavior. If you pay attention to the process of thinking, you'll see that your thoughts simply appear in consciousness very much like my words. In fact, you can observe that you no more decide the next thing you think, then you decide the next thing I say.

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Mean, what are you going to think next? You don't know yet your thoughts determine what you want and intend and do next. Your thoughts determine your goals and whether or not you believe you've met them, they determine what you say to other people and what you don't say. In fact, thought determined almost everything that makes you human. Now, most people feel that they are the thinker of their thoughts and therefore their author. And this is one way of describing the feeling of self.

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Subjectively speaking, as a matter of experience, there's no thinker to be found in the mind apart from thoughts themselves. There's no subject in the middle of experience. Everything, including thoughts and intentions and counter thoughts and counter intentions, is arising all on its own. And the feeling that there's a thinker in addition to the flow of thought is what it feels like to be thinking without knowing that you're thinking. It's the feeling of being identified with the train of thought that's passing through consciousness in this moment.

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But if you pay attention to how thoughts arise, you'll see that they simply appear quite literally out of nowhere and you're not free to choose them before they appear. That would require that you think them. Before you think them. So here's the question, if you can't control your next thought, if you can't decide what it will be before it arises and if you can't prevent it from arising, where is your freedom of will? At this moment, you might be thinking, what the hell is he talking about?

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Here is what I'm talking about. You didn't choose that thought either. If you're confused by what I'm saying, you didn't produce your confusion, you didn't decide to be confused. Conversely, if you understand what I'm saying and you find it interesting, you didn't create that state of mind either. And if your mind is just wandering to thoughts of lunch and you missed half of what I just said, you didn't choose to be distracted. Everything is just happening, including your thoughts and intentions and desires and most deliberate actions.

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You are part of the universe and there is no place for you to stand outside of its causal structure. And as we'll see, there's no one to stand there either. You're not a self in the end. You're certainly not a subject in the middle of experience or on the edge of it, you're not on the riverbank watching the stream of consciousness because as a matter of experience, there is only the stream and you are identical to it. This is not a metaphysical statement, I'm not talking about how consciousness relates to the physical universe.

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I'm talking about your actual experience in this moment. As a matter of experience, you are not having an experience from someplace outside of experience. There is only experience. You're not on the edge of your life looking in. You're not sitting in the theater of your mind watching a life movie. And the feeling that you are the feeling that you can stand apart from everything that's happening and this feeling of being free to choose the next thing you do or the next thing you notice, the next thing you pay attention to.

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This feeling is itself part of the movie, yet more appearances in consciousness. There's just consciousness and it's contents in this moment. Again, this isn't just a philosophical point, most people think that free will really exists, it's just hard to map onto the physics of things or it doesn't exist. And we just have to admit that we're living in the grip of a powerful illusion. But that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying free will doesn't exist. And in fact, it's such an incoherent concept that it's impossible to say what would have to be true of the world for it to exist.

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There really is no way for causes to arise that would make sense of this notion of free will. But to make it a much more fundamental claim about the nature of conscious experience, I'm saying there is no illusion of free will. If you pay attention, you can see that your experience is totally compatible with the truth of determinism or determinism, plus randomness. Let's run a little experiment. Just close your eyes. And take a few deep breaths. And now think of a movie, it can be one you've seen or just one you know the name of.

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It doesn't have to be good. It can be bad. Whatever comes to mind doesn't matter. And pay attention to what this experience is like. A few films have probably come to mind. Just pick one. And pay attention to what the experience of choosing is like. Now, the first thing to notice is that this is as free a choice as you're ever going to make in your life. You are completely free. You have all the films in the world to choose from.

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And you can pick anyone you want. And you can pause this audio and take as long as you want. Now,

let's do that again. I want you to become sensitive to this process, so forget the first film and choose another. And again, pay attention to what you actually experience here, what is it like to choose? What is it like to make this completely free choice? He got a new film. Do it one more time.

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Right, just clean the slate. Think of a few more films and choose one. Did you see any evidence for free will here? Because if it's not here, it's not anywhere, right, so we better be able to find it here. So let's look for it. Well, first, let's set aside all the films you've never seen or heard about and whose names and imagery are unknown to you, right? Needless to say, you couldn't pick one of those.

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And there's no freedom in that, obviously, because you couldn't have picked one of those if your life depended on it. But then there are many other films whose names are well-known to you, many of which you've seen, but which didn't occur to you to pick. For instance, you absolutely know that The Wizard of Oz is a film, but you just didn't think of it. And if you thought of The Wizard of Oz, apologies, but you get my point.

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You can swap in the Seventh SEAL or Mission Impossible or the Deer Hunter there. And if you're hearing this for the first time and you thought of all those films, well, then we really are living in a simulation. And it's all about you, apparently. So consider the few films that came to mind, right, in light of all the films that might have come to mind but didn't. And ask yourself, were you free to choose that which did not occur to you to choose?

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As a matter of neurophysiology, your Wizard of Oz Circuits were not in play a few moments ago for reasons that you can't possibly know and could not control based on the state of your brain. The Wizard of Oz was not an option, even though you absolutely know about this film. And if we could return your brain to the state it was in a moment ago and account for all the noise in the system, adding back any contributions of randomness, whatever they were, you would fail to think of the Wizard of Oz again and again and again until the end of time.

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Where is the freedom in that? It's important to see that whether the universe is fully determined or it admits of randomness, the picture is the same determinism gives you no freedom. Obviously, it would just be mere biochemical clockwork, but randomness gives you no freedom either. If you knew that your next choice of a film would be the result of a random process, some quantum roll of the dice, that would be the antithesis of what most people mean by free will.

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There's no will in that, and if that same random influence appeared a trillion times in a row, just by chance, you would think of the same film a trillion times in a row, just by chance. I mean, no matter how we think about causation, whether things are determined or random or some combination of the two, there's no place for you. Is the conscious subject to stand that isn't downstream of causes that you can't inspect or anticipate?

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Everything is just appearing in consciousness. Again, focus on the experience here, you can forget about the metaphysics, free will is an enduring problem for philosophy and science for one reason. People think they experience it. They feel they have it. Do you experience. Again, if it's not here, it's not anywhere are the only constraint you've been given is to think of a film. And you can pick anyone you want and you can take as long as you want.

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It is likely that every other choice you have made in your life has been more constrained than this one. What job to take, who to marry, whether to have kids who to vote for most choices in life are much more obviously constrained by other variables than this one. So if you're not free to simply pick a film

right now. I don't know where you're going to find free will anywhere in your life. So really, pay attention to the experience, do it one more time, pick a film, any film.

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OK, so. We can use my films here to describe the experience I thought of Chinatown and Once Upon a time in Hollywood and Alien. And let's say I thought I'm going to go with Chinatown, right, but then at the last second I thought, no, I'm going to go with Alien. This is the sort of decision that motivates the idea of free will he go back and forth between two or more options and then you settle on one without suffering any obvious coercion or pressure from the outside world?

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It's just you and your thoughts and you appear to be doing everything. So I pick Alien over Chinatown, I appeared entirely free to make that choice. But when I look closely, I can see that I'm in no position to know why these films occurred to me in the first place or why I chose Alien over Chinatown. I mean, I might have some additional story to tell about my choice. I might now think, well, everyone says Chinatown is a great film, but it's actually a little boring.

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So I picked Alien, which is not boring. But of course, we know from a vast psychological literature that these sorts of explanations are often pure fiction, and when people are manipulated in a lab, they seem to always have a story about why they did what they did. And it often bears no relationship to what actually influenced them. It's simply a fact that our judgments about the causes of our own behavior are often unreliable. Generally, this comes courtesy of the left hemisphere of the brain.

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But even if I'm right in this instance about why I picked Alien over Chinatown, I'm in no position to know why my memory of Chinatown being boring had the effect that it did. Why didn't it have the opposite effect? Why didn't I think I'm going to go with a classic, whether it's boring or not? The thing to notice is that you, as the conscious witness of your inner life, are not making decisions, all you can do is witness decisions once they're made, no matter how many times you go back and forth between two options, no matter how many other thoughts arise to give color to this process, giving way to one option or the other.

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The process itself is irreducibly mysterious from your point of view, and whether these mental events are fully determined or in part random, the experience is the same. Everything is just happening on its own. I say pick a film and there's this moment before anything has changed for you, and then the names of films began percolating at the margins of consciousness and you have no control over which appear. None and really none. Can you feel that? You can't pick them before they pick themselves.

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Someone else might as well be whispering the names of films in your ear for all that you did to some of them. And the same can be said for the process of choosing among the candidates that do appear. Even if you go back and forth between two choices for an hour, eeny, meeny, miny, mo, you can't know why you stop on the one that you finally choose. If you pay attention to how your thoughts arise and how decisions actually get made, you'll see that there's no evidence for free will.

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Not only no evidence, it's impossible to make sense of the claim that free will might exist. What could it refer to? Forget about the physics of things, what in your experience could it refer to? Everything is simply springing out of the darkness. What will you think or intend or want or ignore or forget and then suddenly remember next? Our experience of being an active in the world is totally compatible with the truth of determinism or determinism plus randomness, and this has implications not only for our sense of self, but for our ethics and our view of other people.

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And this insight can be extraordinarily freeing psychologically, it can lead to much greater compassion both for other people and for ourselves, and far from causing us to become passive and insight into the illusory ness of free will can allow us to behave much more intelligently in life, as we will see. I've been arguing that there's no such thing as free will. So what is there? Well, there's luck, both good and bad, and there's what we make of it.

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Actually, that's not quite true, what you make of your luck is also just more luck. Once again, you didn't choose your parents, you didn't choose the society into which you were born. There's not a cell in your body or brain that you the conscious subject created, nor is there a single influence coming from the outside world that you brought into being. And yet everything you think and do arises from this notion of prior causes. So what you do with your luck and the very tools with which you do it, including the level of effort and discipline you managed to summon in each moment, is more in the way of luck.

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I mean, how do you explain your capacity for effort? How do you explain when you're lazy? How do you explain when you're lazy, but then you suddenly get inspired and make great effort? The you that experiences sudden inspiration or a doubling of effort or a failure of nerve, the you that rises to the occasion or chokes isn't in the driver's seat in each moment. There's a mystery at your back and it's producing everything that you can notice, your thoughts, intentions, desires, inhibitions and all of the behaviors and course corrections that follow from them.

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This is an objective truth about your subjective experience. You can't inspect your causes. Now, most people resist this idea seemingly at any intellectual cost, and yet this single insight is the antidote to arrogance and hatred, and it provides a profound basis for compassion, both for other people and for oneself. It's the basis for real forgiveness, again, for other people and for oneself, it is literally the path to redemption and it's the only view of human nature that cuts through the logic of retribution, this notion of punishment as justified vengeance.

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And it allows us to simply consider what actually works in changing people's behavior for the better so that we can achieve outcomes in the world that we actually want. But before we get into the ethics, we need to clear away some more confusion. At this point, many people begin to wonder about the importance of choice and decision making if there's no free will. How do we do anything and why do anything? Why not just wait around to see what happens?

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There is no free will, but choices matter, and this isn't a paradox, your desires, intentions and decisions arise out of the present state of the universe, which includes your brain and your soul. If such a thing exists, along with all of their influences, your mental states are part of a causal framework. So your choices matter whether or not they're products of a brain or a soul, because they're often the proximate cause of your actions. Imagine that I want to learn to speak Mandarin.

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OK, how is that going to happen? It's not going to happen by accident only to attend classes or hire native speaking tutor or travel to China. I'll need to study and practice and this will entail a lot of effort. I don't get frustrated and embarrassed by my failures, and I have to overcome my frustration and embarrassment and keep learning my decision to learn Mandarin and all of the efforts that follow, if they persist long enough, will be the cause of my speaking Mandarin at some point in the future badly.

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I'm sure it's not that I was destined to speak Mandarin regardless of my thoughts and actions. Determinism isn't fatalism, Choice's reasoning, discipline. All of these things play obvious roles in our lives, despite the fact that they're determined by prior causes. And again, adding randomness to this machinery doesn't change anything. But the reality is, is that I show no signs of making an effort to learn Mandarin. It simply isn't a priority for me. Am I free to make it a priority?



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Well, in some ways, yes, but not in the crucial way that the common notion of free will requires. I can't account for why I don't want to speak Mandarin more than I do. I can't decide to make learning this language my top priority when it simply isn't my top priority. And if I suddenly became the most important thing in my life, I wouldn't have created this change in myself. I would be a mere witness to this change.

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It would come over me like a virus. If I read an article tomorrow that convinces me that the best use of the next few years of my life is to become competent in Mandarin, I will not be able to account for why this article had the effect that it did.

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I've already read articles like that and they haven't moved me. If the next one does, where is the freedom in that? It would be like being pushed off a cliff and then claiming that I'm free to fall. The fact that I might enjoy the feeling of the wind in my hair doesn't change the situation. And so it is with any other influence. A conversation with another person or indeed a conversation with oneself simply has the effect that it has and not some other effect.

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I mean, you are free to do an almost infinite number of things today, free in the sense that no one will try to stop you from doing these things or put you in prison if you do them. But you're not free to want what you don't, in fact, want or to want what you want more than you want it. You're not free to notice what you won't notice or to remember what you've truly forgotten. Again, consider your experience in this moment.

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Are you going to spend the rest of the day and tomorrow and the day after that and onward for days uncountable, struggling to master a skill that you don't happen to care about, are you going to learn Mandarin with a violin or fencing or are you going to take up rock collecting? Why aren't you more interested in rocks? There are people who are all in for rocks, why aren't you one of these people? If you suddenly became one of these people and began spending all of your free time looking for interesting rocks, freely doing what you most want to do, you're now rock collecting to your heart's content.

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Where is the freedom in that? And if your interest suddenly dissipates such that you no longer care about rocks, where is the freedom in that? You are being played by the universe. But choices don't matter because causes matter, change matters and a capacity to make change matters. Biological evolution and cultural progress have increased our ability to get what we want out of life and to avoid what we don't want. A person who can reason effectively and plan for the future and choose his words carefully and regulate his negative emotions and play fair with strangers and participate in various cultural institutions is very different from a person who can do none of those things.

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But these abilities do not lend credence to the traditional notion of free will. People sometimes ask, well, if there's no free will. Then why are you trying to convince anyone of anything? People are just going to believe whatever they believe. You're very effort to convince them that they don't have free will is proof that you think they have it. Again, this is confusion between determinism and fatalism. Reasoning is possible not because you're free to think however you want, but because you are not free.

[00:41:04.810]

Reason makes slaves of us all. To be convinced by an argument is to be subjugated by it is to be forced to believe it, regardless of your preferences. Think about what it's like not to know something and then to know it, to learn something despite your prior ignorance or presuppositions to the

contrary. To be placed in the grip of an argument that is valid and true, to be led step by step over foreign ground. Without spotting an error, without seeing any place to put a foot or a hand to arrest your progress, to then be delivered to the necessary conclusion is the antithesis of freedom.

[00:41:53.880]

You're about as free as any prisoner who has ever led to the gallows. It's the lack of freedom that makes the reasoning possible. That's why I know an argument that worked on me should also work on you, and if it shouldn't work on you, it shouldn't have worked on me either. Reasoning is all about constraints. Two plus two equals four. Where is the freedom in that? It matters that two plus two equals four and it matters that we each can be made to understand that by being forced to think under the same logical constraints, are you free not to understand that two plus two equals four?

[00:42:38.220]

Not if you do, in fact, understand it. Are you free to understand it if you don't understand it? Again, no, right, not until the understanding itself dawns in your mind, so whether you understand something or not isn't under your control. But the difference matters. Absolutely, and knowledge on all fronts matters, absolutely. It's every bit as important as we imagine it to be. In fact, it's probably more important than most people imagine it to be.

[00:43:11.070]

The physicist David Deutsch has argued that knowledge can produce any change in the universe compatible because of a change in. If you'd like to continue listening to this conversation, you'll need to subscribe and Sam Harris network, once you do, you'll get access to all full length episodes of the Making Sense podcast, along with other subscriber only content, including bonus episodes and Amma's. In the conversations I've been having on the Waking Up app, the making says podcast is ad free and relies entirely on listener support.

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