



## The Free Agent, Luck, and Character

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### Abstract

Whether we are free agents or not and to what extent depends on factors such as the necessary conditions for free will and our definition of human agency and identity. The present article, apart from possible alternatives and the causality of the agent regarding his actions, addresses the element of inclination as a necessary condition for free will. Therefore, an analysis of these conditions determines that even though in some circumstances the range of alternatives the agent can choose is very limited or the agent chooses an action without having the inclination to choose it; however, this does not make the agent forced; rather, free will has levels and every individual possesses a certain extent of it in different conditions. Just the fact that the ultimate choice is made by the agent himself and has voluntarily performed the act himself ultimately is sufficient for being free. As a result, even though the influence of external factors on human actions cannot be disregarded; however, because the action is ultimately not outside his control, accordingly, there is neither such a thing as a compelled agent and nor are our actions left to luck. The character of the agent that is voluntarily formed through our actions plays a determinant role in our choices and actions due to the epistemic and motivational components they possess.

Research Article



### Keywords

free will, free agent, possible alternatives, causality, character, luck, desire.

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## Introduction

The question regarding whether we are free agents or not and whether the actions that we perform are free is a long-standing one and it seems unlikely that it will end due to its connection to different areas of philosophy and questions arising from modern science.

Despite all the efforts that have been made regarding free will; however, there is still no consensus about the issues related to it. Some consider its existence necessary for justifying moral responsibility and the rationality of moral, legal, and jurisprudential duties, and some, with a phenomenological view, take it to be an objective matter known through introspection<sup>1</sup>, and both groups strive to defend it in the most rational and justified form. Free will is discussed in this article as a phenomenon whose existence is proven intuitively.

The present article strives to analyze three topics in free will: the free agent, luck, and character, and their relationship to each other to see to what extent we are free agents. Are our actions under our control or a result of luck? To what extent do our characters play a decisive role in our choices and actions? And do we choose our characters with our own will or not?

Let me first mention that in view of the fact that the agent, action, and agency are conceptually and metaphysically dependent on each other, if having free will is a condition of agency,<sup>2</sup> then no one can be an agent unless they have free will; therefore, the word “free” in the term “free agent” is superfluous and there is no such thing as a coerced agent. Effectually, the meaning of determinism would be limited to instances where one would not be able to be an agent by any means due to antecedent causes, laws of nature, or biological and neurological factors, that is, neither is he able to have rational choice nor is he the cause of his actions. Otherwise, we have neither coerced actions nor coerced agents.

Judgment regarding who is a free agent and whether or not we are free<sup>3</sup> depends to a great extent on our interpretation of human identity so that it is first determined whether we can have free will or not. That is to say, do the approaches raised in the philosophy of mind (including reductionist

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1. Many philosophers consider having free will as necessary for justifying moral responsibility and the rationality of duties. There is no doubt regarding the truth of this; however, presently, our discussion is not normative; rather, it is descriptive and we want to know whether we are free or not considering our reality and environment.

2. The agency intended here is human agency and we will not discuss whether or not animals can be considered agents and how at this time.

3. I have offered an explanation of agency and action in the article Agency and Virtues (2019).

physicalism or non-reductionism and dualism) accept the possibility of the human being possessing free will or not?

On the other hand, our definition of free will and the necessary conditions for its actualization are other factors that affect our judgment regarding the meaning of the agent being free and whether a coerced agent is possible or all human beings are in some sense free.

Two conditions have been mentioned for free will; namely: having alternative possibilities and that the agent is the cause of his own choice and action, in other words, he has control over his actions and does not perform actions under the compulsion of any external or internal factor. Therefore, free will means our choices and actions are “up to us”. Although some philosophers deny the necessity of alternative possibilities for free will, it is a condition for having moral responsibility (for example Frankfurt, 2003 & Dennett, 1984a; 1984b); however, apart from moral responsibility, mostly those who accept free will, also consider alternative possibilities as one of its conditions. And some others raise the issue of luck by refuting our causal control over our actions.

The present article considers both conditions to be necessary for having free will and shows that, based on these two conditions, we are all free agents in a sense and our intuitions show our freedom, and if we perform an action, it means we have both conditions. According to this, determinism has a very limited meaning and the coerced agent has a specific meaning.

However, if we consider the element of desire or inclination as a necessary condition for the freedom of the agent (as some philosophers such as Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.6, p.307 and Tabatabaie, 1416 have considered), in this case, agents who perform actions without desire are coerced agents. We will show in this article that firstly, this coercion is psychological, not causal. Secondly, if we accept that desire also consists of levels, then we all will still be free; however, in varying degrees.

The role of the character of the agent in choosing and performing an act is one of the other issues that we will address in the article. To what extent do we build or, in other words, choose our own character with our free choices and actions? And whether our character has a decisive role in the performance of our actions or not is also one of the controversial topics among philosophers and we will explain our stance in this regard. Finally, it will be determined to what extent the freedom of the agent is dependent on the character that we have built with our choices and preferences; preferences that make us a moral individual free of internal factors or one bound to them. Therefore, the meaning of the free agent is considered in addition to the aforementioned conditions, considering moral and rational values.

## The Agent and Free Will

If having knowledge and will are conditions for considering an activity an action, then an agent must possess these two characteristics to be called as such. The a priori condition for an agent to possess these two characteristics is that he must have the ability to possess them; otherwise, it is not figuratively correct to apply the term agent to him even if he performs an activity. On the other hand, considering that the meaning of agency is itself dependent on the meaning of action, therefore, the meaning of agency and consequently, the agent will also change depending on whether we consider actions as voluntary, rational, or intentional activities. Moreover, depending on whether we limit actions to overt actions or consider them to include mental and overt activities, the meaning of the agent will also be different to mean someone who must perform external actions or he would also be qualified for the title of an agent merely due to mental activities.

Based on the condition of ability, activities that the physical parts of our body like the heart or brain perform are not considered actions and our heart and brain cannot be the agents who perform actions. Accordingly, reductionist physicalists who reduce human beings to physical elements cannot explain human behavior by relying on bottom-up causality. And agents who have the ability to possess knowledge and will are called free or voluntary agents if they can make conscious choices and their actions stem from their will and they are the causes of their own actions. Rationality is the condition of both choice and action regarding a voluntary agent. Thus, choice (voluntariness) is sometimes interpreted as the rational will.

If human agency is conditioned to possessing free will semantically and ontologically, as a result, being free would be the constructing element of an agent, and dividing human beings into free and coerced agents would not make sense. The result of this is that all human beings who are agents possess free will and their actions are free. Despite this, attaining this result which itself has consequences is dependent on how we define free will and what conditions we consider necessary for its actualization.

Two conditions are usually proposed for the possession of free will; one is having alternative possibilities and the other is that the person must be the cause of his own actions or, in other words, the source of action must be within the agent himself. Alternative possibilities mean that an individual could have (or can) choose something else at the time of choosing and perform another action. Thus, the choice that he has made was not determined for him from before and neither was he coerced by someone to perform that action. Rather, through rational deliberation and considering the goal he has in mind, the agent must choose the best alternative from those before him which is

suitable for him to attain his goal. However, if the choice is determined, the agent would have only one possibility before him.

Both conditions have been much discussed. Some do not consider the condition of alternative possibilities for free will which is necessary for moral responsibility to be a necessary condition (for instance, Frankfurt and Dennett), some consider free will to be bound to having alternative possibilities and final responsibility (such as: Kane, 2002; 2007b; 2011), and some also consider knowledge and inclination or knowledge and will as conditions for an individual's freedom or voluntariness (Mulla Sadra, 1981; Tabatabaei, 1416).

Similarly, regarding the condition of causality, despite the consensus, some believe that empirical evidence shows that we lack control regarding our actions; thus, they raise the issue of luck (Nagel, 1993; 1976). Nagel's words do not concern the conditions that are necessary for free will; he accepts these conditions. Rather, he means that in reality, or objectively, we all lack free will. Accordingly, the free agent is one who must necessarily have causality concerning his own actions or, his actions should not be outside his control.

In my view, both conditions are necessary to possess free will. Even though in some instances the agent may not have alternatives to choose from and therefore, in a sense, he has no alternative but to choose that option; however, at the same time, because his choice has not been determined through antecedent causes, natural laws, biological, or divine factors, he is not of the category of a manipulated agent either who is unconsciously under the influence of an external agent and chooses and performs an act without understanding. And on the other hand, considering he decided to perform that act in these conditions himself, consequently, it is worth pondering whether he should be called a coerced agent or not. If we accept this, there is no need to eliminate the condition of alternative possibilities to defend moral responsibility.

We intuitively perceive that we can choose between alternatives. The hesitation that we sometimes face while acting and deliberating over which of the two alternatives we should choose and that we subjectively perceive that we make the choice ourselves and are the cause of our actions, show our free will; a characteristic that has naturally been instilled in us. However, while acting, sometimes conditions arise that limit our options and in these conditions, we feel that even though we make a choice and perform an action, we have not done so completely freely, as when external conditions (mostly external conditions are currently considered), compel me, in a sense, to perform an act which I would not choose if not for these conditions, that is, which I would not choose in normal conditions. Many instances of this kind

arise in all of our lives: Sarah decides to give all her savings to someone who threatens her or her child's life; Dara decides to give in to her neighbor's demands to escape her harassment and shovels her garden every day; Mary resolves to drink the bitter medicine and would not have done so if she were not ill. All of these are disinclined agents who are not considered fully free as they have very limited choices and in some cases, only one choice to make.

The question is, is such an agent coerced? If we consider the two aforementioned conditions to be necessary conditions for the freedom of an agent, in these instances, the agent is not coerced because the agent can still choose the other alternative (not accept the money, not shovel the garden, not take the medicine, etc.), that is, he can abstain from that which has been asked of him and because he performs these actions himself, with his own will, therefore, why do some consider disinclined agents to be coerced? (For instance, Tabatabaie, 1416, p.175). The distinction between a free and disinclined agent is the element of desire which some philosophers consider as the condition of the freedom of the agent apart from the above conditions. As a result, the free agent desires to choose one alternative and perform that which he chooses; something that the disinclined and distressed agents lack. Therefore, the element of desire, alongside conscious or voluntary choice, can better determine the distinction of the instances that we mentioned as examples. A free agent is not defined only by rational or voluntary choice; rather, he must also have the desire to perform an act. Now, in a disinclined or distressed state, the agent naturally has no primary desire or inclination to perform such an action even though he obligates himself to choose that one alternative due to rational interests or the conditions that have occurred. If we consider desire as the boundary and factor that distinguishes the coerced from voluntary, naturally, such individuals are coerced. However, again, because due to rational reasons they prefer to choose and perform that which has been asked of them in the new conditions, they are free agents only from the aspect that they have accepted, even grudgingly, to perform this action. That which compels the disinclined agent to choose and perform an action here is psychological, not causal coercion<sup>1</sup>. That is, the agent himself decides, despite his heartfelt inclination, to perform and does perform that action due to some considerations. This coercion that the agent forces upon himself can be the product of rational deliberation and an individual decides to perform this action due to rational preferences of caution such as escaping from further harm for himself or others. However, this coercion does not cause the agent to be compelled; rather, the possibility of performing the other alternative and

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1. I mean the psychological factors have not causal efficacy.

abandoning this act still exists. For this reason, the disinclined agent is free but his freedom is relative. From the aspect that he has not made such a choice due to his primary inclination; rather, it is due to secondary inclinations that guide him to a certain choice and act. Even though it is more accurate for us to not call them free due to their choice but to consider them free agents due to their actions<sup>1</sup>.

Desire refers to the inner inclination and interest that motivates the agent to choose one alternative and perform it. This kind of inclination which is a sign of the freedom of an agent is not any kind of psychological inclination; rather, it is a rational inclination that consists of levels based on the extent to which the agent is rational and moral. As it were, the inclination to perform the right action in a virtuous Aristotelian agent is more than the inclination of an enkratic agent who is tempted to perform a bad act alongside an inclination to good actions;<sup>2</sup> however, he triumphs over his temptation and performs the right act. The inclination of an individual who himself takes the initiative to help others is more than that of someone who forces himself to perform an act to make others happy or benefits them due to the conditions that have arisen and if it were left up to him and he and his conditions were normal, he would not have made such a decision. Thus, in these instances, he is really not a free agent in one sense; however, he is not coerced in the terminological sense either because he ultimately accepts or decides to act upon this particular instance. Therefore, if desire is a sign of the freedom of an agent, one can still believe in degrees of freedom and if this is right, we still won't easily have a coerced agent. Disinclined agents also have a degree of freedom even though there is a great difference between their freedom and that of free agents. If we reflect, we will learn that we perform acts every day to which we are not inclined; however, we still perform them due to certain interests such as escaping from further harm.

In religious cultures and some moral theories, the free agent is someone who is free of the influence of internal factors that can affect the choice, inclination, and motives of the agent and cause him to make a wrong choice or action that does not befit a moral agent. Therefore, the free agent is not someone who is free of the limitations of external factors; rather, it is more someone free of negative internal factors<sup>3</sup>. Such an agent makes a choice

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1. Tabatabaei and Mulla Sadra call these kind of actions coerced ones. They divide volitional actions into voluntary and coerced and place these kind of actions under forced actions (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.2, p.222; Mulla Sadra, 1354, p.252; Tabatabaie, 1416, p.175).

2. For the difference between these two kinds of agents, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book. 7.

3. See, for example, Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.9. In this work he divides people into free and slaves.

himself and makes the right one, and acts himself and performs the right action as well. In fact, he chooses himself, that is, his character through his choice, motivation, action, etc. - an element that has a decisive role in our choices.

## **Causality and Free Will**

If causality is the second condition for possessing free will and, consequently, agency is free then those who accept free will must also consider causality as a necessary condition for it. From the three groups of determinists, compatibilists, and libertarians, the determinists definitely refute causality because they have fundamentally refuted free will. According to them, antecedent, biological, natural, and divine causalities play an essential role in the performance of human actions; however, the two groups of compatibilists and libertarians, who are also non-compatibilists, both accept the causal role of human beings with the difference that compatibilists also believe in the causal role of other factors and try to establish compatibility between these two types of causes regarding human actions, while libertarians place the main responsibility of causality on human beings even though they are not unaware of the role of other factors as well and do not completely refute them (for instance, Kane, 2002).

Overall, two questions can be raised regarding our causality regarding our actions: Are we really the causes of our actions or not? And if we are, what actually is the cause?

I will first explain the answer to the second question. I will give the reply based on the libertarian view even though compatibilists who also accept human causality can provide a similar interpretation to the same extent. Libertarians choose three stances in this regard: event causality (such as Kane, 2002; Clarke, 2007), agent causality (such as Hasker, 1999 and Swinburne, 2013), and non-causality (for instance, Goetz, 2010; Ginet, 1990). The third group accepts human agency concerning one's actions to defend free will but does not accept the person's causality. They refute every kind of causality for the agent and believe only non-caused actions are free (Goetz, 2010, p.394). Despite this, according to Goetz, the agent performs actions based on suitable reasons and consciously during the time of action but he is not the cause (Goetz, 1988, pp.303-304). And even, according to Ginet, the agent produces this action directly without being the cause (1990). In Ginet's view, basic acts are uncaused mental acts, like making a decision.

Based on event causality, an individual is the cause of his choices and actions; however, that which is considered a cause here is a mental state or



mental event such as a motive, belief, desire, purpose, etc. that is the reason for one's choice. In other words, based on this approach, free decisions and actions must be the effects of mental states such as beliefs, desires, intentions, etc. in an undetermined manner and an agent actualizes free will when his mental states actualize decisions and actions without compulsion, manipulation, and coercion. Kane has taken such an approach in his previous writings (1999; 1996; 2002, etc.) and although we do not see the defense of this position in his recent works (2019; 2016), he still believes that the agent is not an immaterial substance such as the soul or agency which Kant states; rather, according to him, mental states are, in fact, achieved after the neural activities of the brain and cerebral activities have causality with respect to creating these states, and after these states are created, they are the cause of creating our choices and thereafter, are the causes for the performance of our actions.

Agent causality is that if all our decisions and actions were only the result of events and processes (i.e. mental states), then the agent is not self-governing as a self or person. Therefore, they say that the agent is more than or distinct from beliefs, desires, and values and argue that free decisions or actions must be the effects of the agent himself not mental states. In this approach, which dualists such as Hasker (1999) and Swinburne (2013) believe in, the agent is understood as an immaterial substance, that is, the soul. What is important is that the agent who performs free actions is a substance that possesses an active power to determine decisions and actions. It is through this that the non-compatibilists who believe in agent causality state that free will requires an ultimate source and the agent contributes to his own decisions and action independent of past events.

The proponents of agent causality have also offered different explanations regarding the manner of the causality of the agent, the meaning of the agent, and whether he performs actions utilizing mental states or causal powers (Clarke, 2003; O'Connor, 2000; Pereboom, 2001; 2014) or is directly (Chisholm, 1982; Taylor, 1966) the cause of actions; however, what is important is that according to them, events cannot be causes on their own; rather, there is necessarily a need for a substance. The different interpretations of self cause different approaches regarding the instances of causes to be formed. I will not discuss the details of these views, the arguments regarding each, and their criticisms; however, I will indicate that first, some of these differences arise from the metaphysical discussions regarding substances and accidents and the relationship between the two and second, if we accept an interpretation like Mulla Sadra's in which he considers accidents to be from the levels of substances such that neither can substances be considered without

accidents and nor vice versa, then these differences will be fixed to a large extent (Mulla Sadra, 1981; 1382 Sh). Despite this, some of these views arise from the view of philosophers in the philosophy of mind and the relationship between the body and soul which we will address elsewhere. However, because our discussion was about the free agent, the agent must be able to be a cause and actions must be in his control.

The next question, however, is do we really have causality regarding our actions? Since some refute causality and raise the issue of luck, in the next section I will write about this.

## Free Will and Luck

Luck means that human beings do not have causality regarding their own actions and actions are outside their control (Nagel, 1993, p.59; Zimmerman, 1993, p.219). Now if we consider the causality of the agent regarding actions as a condition for being free, the issue of luck threatens the freedom of the agent and it would be an argument in benefit of determinism. This type of luck that is known as moral luck is divided into four types: constitutive, resultant, situational<sup>1</sup>, and causal. In this article, our discussion is mostly regarding causal luck and after that, constitutive luck. The former is that antecedent factors and natural laws influence human actions and, consequently, our moral judgments regarding the moral status of the agent and his praise and blame (Nagel, 1976). Constitutive luck is that a person has no role in the formation of his character; rather, the constituent factor was present in him antecedently (such as inheritance, etc.) and he was born with a determined character (1976, pp.144-145).

By believing in the distinction between the two aspects of subjective and objective, Nagel considers free will to be the requirement of the subjective perspective but moral luck to be the requirement of the objective perspective (1986). From an objective perspective, no individual is free; rather, the traces of the four types of luck or out-of-control factors can be found within him. As a result, no human action is voluntary and moral responsibility is refuted as well.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Resultant moral luck occurs where an action has two different results due to luck. For instance, two people with the same intention and motivation decide to kill a person; one is successful, however, the other cannot kill the person due to a bird flying in the path of the bullet, that is, the intervention of an external factor outside his control. Environmental luck considers environmental conditions that are out of the control of the agent and influence the decisions or actions of the agent.

2. For more information regarding moral luck, see: Khazaei & Tammadon, 2018.

However, from the subjective perspective, he believes that we assume we are free. Hence, according to his belief, reality shows that human beings lack the necessary freedom in life but on the other hand, they see that we constantly evaluate ourselves and others, and thus, in his view, human beings face a paradox called moral luck.

Domsy (2004), like Nagel, defends luck and accordingly, denies free will and defends determinism. In contrast, Zimmerman (2002), Richards (1993), and Thomson (1993) oppose Nagel. If moral luck is proven, moral responsibility will be eliminated and ultimately, we will neither be evaluated for our choices and actions and nor do we have the right to evaluate others because actions are out of our control.

The objection of luck is one of the objections that has been made based on Kane's libertarian interpretation of free will from the aspect that he believes in undetermined causes in the explanation of free will. Levy (2011), Mele (1999), Haji (2000), Pereboom (2007) and Murday (2017), are some of the philosophers who have challenged Kane regarding luck and he has defended his stance in 2002; 2007a; 2016 and 2019. We do not intend to enter into the discussion of challenges and defenses here but to be clear regarding what the problem is and whether the objection to luck applies to the definition of free will generally or not, I will first point out Kane's view.

Kane is one of the most famous libertarian philosophers who has written numerous works regarding libertarianism<sup>1</sup>. According to him, free will means: The "power of agents to be the ultimate creators (or originators) and sustainers of their own ends or purposes" (2002, p.223).

In the definition of free will, he accepts the condition of having possible alternatives; however, he believes that this condition cannot be a sufficient condition alone for free will and a sufficient reason to defend incompatibilism. Thus, he adds the condition of ultimate responsibility (UR) of actions. If it is to be that the agent is ultimately responsible for his action "the agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient reason (condition, cause, or motive) for the action's occurring" (2002, p.223).

Kane claims that the agent is free and performs actions freely because the ultimate responsibility for actions rests upon the individual himself because the action that A performs rises from his character that is formed through his choices, motives, reflection, and the actions produced by these. Considering that the actions through which we build our character are voluntary, therefore, we are responsible for our own characters. "UR does require that we could

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1. For example: 2002, 2007b, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2019.

have done otherwise with respect to *some* acts in our life histories by which we formed our present characters. I call these ‘self-forming actions’ (SFAs)... or at times self-forming willings” (Kane, 1999. p.107).

As a result, we are responsible for those choices and, consequently, of voluntary actions which form our character (SFAs) and perform them of our own will (Kane, 1996; 2002, p.225; 2007b; 2009). The important point is that when Kane speaks of actions that constitute the character, he believes that those actions are undetermined, that is, they have not been determined for us by antecedent factors and every individual chooses it considering the goal they have. Therefore, until the agent has not made a choice, it is unclear what decision he will make and the choice is undetermined.

It has been protested against Kane that if the choice is undetermined, it necessitates that actions are out of the control of the agent and are performed luckily or randomly because based on Kane’s view, it is unclear why the agent chooses B instead of A. In other words, the factor that caused him to choose A is undetermined and it means that the agent has no control over his choice and his choice was made luckily. In reality, that which forms the luck objection is the lack of a constrative explanation for choices that are raised in Kane’s view (SAFs), an explanation that can clarify the difference between two situations which, despite all the similarities, one leads to choice A and the other to choice B. the luck that is involved in undetermined choices undermines both our freedom as well as our moral responsibility.

Clarke, in “Freedom of the Will” (2007) gives the example of Isabel who is unsure of whether she should keep her promise or break it. On one hand, she knows that she should keep her promise for moral reasons and due to self-interest understands that she must not keep it.

Isabelle, has been deliberating about whether to keep a promise or not. She judges that she (morally) ought to keep it, though she recognizes (and is tempted to act on) reasons of self-interest not to. She decides to keep the promise, and her decision is non-deterministically caused by her prior deliberations, including her moral judgment. But until she made her decision, there was a chance that her deliberative process would terminate in a decision not to keep the promise, a decision non-deterministically caused by Isabelle’s reasons of self-interest; everything prior to the decision, including everything about Isabelle, might have been exactly the same and yet she might have made the alternative decision (Clarke, 2007, p.384).

However, that which takes the issue of luck forward is that all Isabel’s conditions may have been the same before her decision but despite this, she

decides to keep her promise. Because this act is not under her control, therefore, it is luck (Clarke, 2007, pp.384-385).

Kane says that this indeterminacy is due to the indeterminacy of the agent's efforts from the perspective that it is not determined what decision he will ultimately make (1996). On the other hand, the agent has two groups of reasons and he may act according to one of them. This very indeterminacy of the agent's choice is the reason of his free will. Kane states when the effort is undetermined, the two are not the same and therefore, luck is not right (2002, p.232). However, Clarke believes that despite the difference of efforts, there is still a problem (2007, p.385).

I will not delve into the objections and will first address Kane's solution. Kane strives to defend his view through the difference he places between a random and undetermined act, and the act that has no cause and its cause is undetermined. He clarifies that indeterminism is an obstacle for deterministic causation not that it is an obstacle for any type of causation. By indeterminism he means that the cause is undetermined; rather, it is a probability where the result is not necessary; not that it is an uncaused thing (Kane, 2002, p.232). In reality, what Kane is doing is that by raising undetermined causes he seeks to defend free will and he means that before making a choice, the agent may choose act A considering reason H or act B due to reason F. The examples that he gives express this reality. In reality, an individual has two alternatives. He is tempted to perform A or B. Depending on whether an individual is moral or seeks to be, he chooses to perform A or B, therefore, he has control over his choices, his action is voluntary, and this act constitutes the character.

Therefore, this tension that the agent is in means that at every moment it is possible for the agent to choose A or B. As a result, the choice is undetermined because it is not precisely decided based on which reason the agent will choose A or B. "Thus, as suggested for SFAs generally, the indeterminism arises from a tension-creating conflict in the will" (Kane, 2002, p.419). Therefore, everything depends on the agent himself and he, in reality, chooses himself with this choice and according to Kane, with this action he forms his character.

Many philosophers believe that we make our character with our own choices and actions<sup>1</sup> or, according to existentialists, an individual chooses himself with his choices; now, he can choose himself as an authentic individual or he can lose himself. These types of choices, which are seen mostly in the words of Kane, refer to moral and prudential choices and

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1. For example: Kant, 2002 & 2009; Moody-Adams, 1990, p.11; Jacobs, 2001; Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.9, p.85; 1386 Sh, p.347; Farabi, 1405, pp.30-1; Tusi 1356, pp.101, 151.

decisions that cause the character of the agent to be constituted. This is why he states that the ultimate responsibility of actions is up to him.

Kane's words that the choices we make and actions we perform constitute our character and thereafter it is this character that determines what choices I will make (1996; 2002; 2011) is correct. However, this character is not formed in one stage and through one type of specific action and choice; rather, it is formed gradually from the past till the present and future through our choices and actions and in every level, it is this very semi-formed character that determines our reasons and motivations. In normal actions, the extent of the agent's rationality and in moral actions, moral values that are also rational play a determinant role.

However, because our character is not yet complete or, according to Aristotle, not yet virtuous, and practical wisdom is not yet so strong in the agent that he would not waver in the next choice, thus, in every choice, he may be afflicted with the same tension and until it is not determined what decision the agent will make, the choice is not determined because the agent may act according to selfish or moral reasons. As a result, the causes for action are still undetermined. But this same incomplete identity has been constructed through previous actions and choices to an extent. And thus, if we look back and study the narrative identity of these individuals, that the reasons and motivations that caused the decisions of the agent will be clear. Therefore, our actions are not the result of luck unless we don't accept that we form our own character through our own voluntary actions.

Another point that must be indicated here is that the freedom of choice and action does not necessarily depend on tensions and hesitations in which the agent finds himself; rather, from a character perspective, the agent may be at a level where he is not tempted during decision-making and chooses the right action swiftly and without deliberation and easily and swiftly acts upon it as well (such as Aristotle's virtuous agent) but this very free act makes his character more stable and firm.

However, a question that arises is whether it is possible for someone else to be the cause of the performance of our action? I said that another agent can limit our choice, that is, place us in a situation where we would be forced to choose a particular action (such as the disinclined agent which was addressed in the previous section) but if that is to be the cause of our actions and choose in our place, he must be able to control our system of cognizance in a way that, for instance, naturally human essence must be such that there is nothing known as choice and free will; rather, that which is there are merely activities at the neural level of the brain which we see in the form of choice, like what Harris believes (2012), or we must be designed in a way that we are

considered manipulated agents (Mele's Zygote Argument 2006, pp.184-196) or someone who falls under the influence of the propaganda of others for another to choose instead of him without him becoming aware or one even claims, like in divine determinism, that it is only God's knowledge and will that is the cause of the creation of all existents including our actions. However, none of these are correct. Even if I have no rational reason to prove human agency and nor a logical reason to refute determinism, I intuitively understand that I am the cause of my own choices and am also the agent who performs them.

### **Character and Action**

Two questions are raised regarding the relationship between the character of the agent and free will; to what extent does human character play a role in our choices and actions? And do we play a role in forming our character? In other words, do we choose our own characters, or is the construction of our character out of our control and is determined through other factors? In this case, our character is the result of luck rather than ourselves.

Wolf (2012) and Trianosky (1990) are among those who believe that our character is determined through external factors and we do not play a role in forming it. If this view were correct and we still accept that our character has a decisive role in our choices and actions, due to the determinacy of the character, naturally our choices would also be determined and free will would be negated. As a result, we would not be free agents. However, if we believe that we form our character through our own voluntary actions as many philosophers state, then we are free agents even though this does not mean that the factors that are out of our control do not play a role in the formation of our characters. We cannot, in any case, ignore the effect of the factors of inheritance, upbringing, and environment on the formation of the character; however, this does not mean that our characters are pre-determined as because if they are, certainly, with the assumption of determinacy, the change or reformation of character would be impossible.

If mental states such as goals, desires, and beliefs intervene in the performance of actions, considering that these states may be under the influence of the character of an individual, then external actions are under the influence of our character, that is, we have characteristic attributes that form our decisions and dispose them to act in certain ways just as our decisions and actions also play a role in the formation of our characters.

Therefore, the character that is formed through our free actions has a causal role in determining the choices and actions of the agent; however, the

requirement of this causality is not that we are coerced in our actions and cannot act against our character. Rather, despite the determinacy of the character, we can still make other choices and perform other actions due to free will. If we consider the set of factors that play a role in the performance of an act, free will is the last part that can complete the cause. Depending on what extent my character is complete and to what extent rationality governs me and my values and motivations are right, moral, and rational, the relationship between the character and actions will be stronger; however, this does not indicate the inviolability of character; rather, the agent is free to choose whatever he wants and acts upon it.

Even the virtuous agent regarding whom it is said that he chooses actions without reflection and easily performs actions, it does not mean that the relationship between his character and action is necessitating, in the sense of compulsion; rather, the relationship between his character and action is contingent and the agent can make another choice and act differently whenever he wills even though as long as he possesses this same character he would not do so and, naturally, but not based on rational necessity or causal determinism, he makes a choice compatible with the character and performs actions according to it.

As a result, despite our character playing a decisive role in our choices and actions, it does not necessitate that our choices and actions are determined.

## **Conclusion**

Who can judge better than ourselves whether or not we are free agents and to what extent?

The present article strove to show that considering the necessary conditions for free will, there is no such thing as a coerced agent. Even if the conditions require that the agent not have multiple alternatives before him to choose the best from among them, or even if he does have the primary desire, that is, inclination, towards choosing an act; however, because he ultimately chooses that particular act himself and willingly performs it, although it may be due to some considerations; he is free. From this, we concluded that free will consists of levels and each of us possesses some degree of it depending on the conditions we are in and considering all the factors that can influence our choices. Free will is a kind of ability that has been placed in our. Even though - due to the kinds of choices we make, that is, due to the values and motivations that lead to choosing an action - the character that we willingly form can be different from the character of another, to a certain extent, we determine the limit of our own freedom ourselves. This character itself plays a



decisive role in determining our next choices and actions due to the epistemological and motivational components that it possesses. In religious approaches and some moral views, apart from the mentioned conditions, the more the character of the agent is free of internal obstacles such as temptations, and character weaknesses, the freer he is and he would make more rational and moral choices. As a result, the free agent is not merely someone whose actions are not under the control of external factors; rather, even if internal obstacles hinder conscious and rational choices or lead to choices or actions that oppose moral and prudential values, even though the agent may be apparently free; however, in reality, he is a captive and enslaved. I will not say he is coerced because in any case he himself chooses and acts of his own will and if he cannot perform the right action due to his weak will, it is another issue, the discussion of which has no place here.

Ultimately, overall we are neither coerced nor manipulated agents (in the sense that Mele mentions in the zygote example); rather, we are free agents; but the freedom of our will is not absolute, in the sense that we choose and perform whatever we want at any time and under all conditions, and it cannot be taken away from us; rather, each person has different degrees of freedom according to his internal and external states. Human will is considered the most ultimate part or cause beside other factors that may influence our actions and in this set of causes, it can have the last word, that is, make the final decision.

In this article, we have not discussed the role of God's foreknowledge and will in the performance of our actions and will address this in another article even though there will be no difference in the conclusion of the discussion, that is, overall, God's foreknowledge and will do not hinder free will and free human agency. Moreover, there are still other topics that can be addressed regarding the causal role of the character in our choices which we will address elsewhere.

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