

## ON FREE WILL

Ever since Homo sapiens discovered their differences from other living beings on our planet, free will has been the central question of moral philosophy and can be defined as the freedom of choice among different alternatives which directs a human beings' actions without the influence of any constraint.<sup>1</sup>

Envisioning our answer through Kierkegaard's stages on life will lead us to a more acceptable conclusion. As the first stage on Life's Way, human beings make their choices according to their desires and only the situations that look more aesthetically pleasing to their eyes.<sup>2</sup> In the second stage, called the ethical, human beings make their choices by reaching a conclusion through a filter in the aspect of the common good or the bad of humanity.<sup>3</sup>

"The choices are shaped by people's emotions" as J.P.Sartre phrased, and people make these choices according to the aesthetic stage.<sup>4</sup> To illustrate, we can take an example of how a child who spends all his time with his mother since birth is influenced by his mother's thoughts and where he was raised, becomes a part of his life because he always sees his mother during that time. The conclusion we want to reach here is that people's actions depend on their feelings (desire, emotion, reaction) and therefore what people decide by living in the aesthetic stage is not to fall within the scope of free will.<sup>5</sup>

Subsequently, according to the second stage, we will look at the extent to which free will plays a role

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<sup>1</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia . free will. *Britannica*. 23 Nov. 2017.

[<https://www.britannica.com/topic/free-will>. last accessed: 4th January 2022].

<sup>2</sup> undefined. The Aesthetic as the First Stage on Life's Way. *SparkNotes*.

[<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/kierkegaard/themes/> last accessed: 4th January 2022]

<sup>3</sup> undefined. Ethical Stage. *Kierkegaard: Three Stages of Life*. [<https://kkhsou.ac.in/eslm/E-SLM-forLearner/6th%20Sem/Bachelor%20Degree/Philosophy/Philosophy%20MP/Philosophy%20Block%202>

%20(E)/Unit%2010.pdf last accessed: 4th January 2022].

<sup>4</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Varoluşçuluk (existentialisme)*. Istanbul: Turkey, 1985: 75

<sup>5</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Varoluşçuluk (existentialisme)*. Istanbul: Turkey, 1985: 74-76

in human decisions. Our brains have brought us to Homo sapiens, to the current stage of evolution, and one of the most significant reasons we call ourselves "human" is our ability to evaluate events on an interrogative level. Are we, then, entirely free in these choices? Unfortunately, we are not.

For the choices we make depend on the conditions we decide on. The prefrontal cortex, as the place that the behavior to be revealed is decided, is the most developed part of our brain that we can observe in the evolution of living beings.<sup>6</sup> This is where all the information is organized and combined, and it makes the choices according to the influences of the external environment, our reflexes, and instincts.<sup>7</sup> The period in which people live, the geography, the other people with whom they spend time, in brief, the actions we do the whole of life, are among the circumstances that influence our choices. As individuals, we cannot interfere with those choices. We are living beings connected to our past, and our previous actions and experiences are embedded into our treasure of imagination.

The phrase "All human actions have one or more of these seven causes: chance, nature, compulsions, habit, reason, passion, desire" expressed by Aristotle, is an expression that guides our thesis regarding the absence of free will.<sup>8</sup> Because in these seven items, not a single reference to free will has been made and what we try to clarify will prove it is an illusion.

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<sup>6</sup> Vanderah, Todd W and Gould, Douglas J. Cerebral Cortex. *Nolte's The Human Brain*. 2021: 513545

<sup>7</sup> undefined. KNOW YOUR BRAIN: PREFRONTAL CORTEX. *Neuroscientifically Challenged*. 17 May 2014. [<https://neuroscientificallychallenged.com/posts/know-your-brain-prefrontal-cortex> last accessed: 4th January 2022].

<sup>8</sup> Courtney-Brown, Tina. Aristotle: The Original Marketing Guru. *SixEstate*. 26 March 2014. [<https://sixestate.com/aristotle-the-original-marketing-guru/> last accessed: 4th January 2022].

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