

Review of: "Free Will Stands When Properly Explained and Correctly Defined and Neuroscience Shows This to Be the Case"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper is an interesting contribution to the debates concerning Libet-style experiments and their putative impact on the issue of freedom. The Author tries to back her discussion with a battery of classical approaches to the problem of freedom of the will (Aristotle, St. Augustine, Locke, Hume, Kant), as well as some 20th century takes on the same (Frankfurt, Nozick, Donaldson). Her main thesis seems to be that Libet experiments, far from undermining our intuitive notion of free choice, rather, if interpreted properly, lend support to it. The crucial point, according to Atina Knowles, is the interpretation of the lack of any neural correlate of the *veto* we are able to put on our desire-driven decisions, which enables a free choice basically between two options: either to follow our desires or to exercise our freedom based on rational considerations. This lack of suitable RP correlate of such choice the author proposes to interpret as a sign of there being our freedom at work.

I think it a valuable observation of Atina Knowles that a great deal of contemporary discussions concerning free will distort the problem by redirecting it towards such issues as intentionality, causality, determinism, and compatibilism/incompatibilism. But I would also like to observe that a similar distortion can already be found in Kant, who consistently formulated the problem of freedom in terms of "causality of freedom" (*Kausalität aus Freiheit*) and eagerly defended what could be considered a version of compatibilism. I think the closest to a metaphysically undistorted conception of freedom of the will is to be found in Hume who programmatically refrained from any strong causal claims in terms of causal powers. In this respect, I must disagree with the author, who seems to consider Locke's and Hume's conceptions of the will as nearly equivalent, while, in fact, nothing could be farther from Locke's categorization of the will as a power than Hume's conception of it as an impression.

Generally speaking, I think that for the purposes of her discussion of Libet-style experiments, it was not necessary to engage in a detailed analysis of classical and contemporary philosophical approaches to freedom of the will. When it comes to interpreting Libet, much of the earlier discussion concerning metaphysics of freedom is just screened off. What remains at work is a fairly simple but powerful idea of freedom as an ability to choose between different sorts of motive competing to control our will – among others, sensory desires on the one hand and rational and moral considerations on the other. One does not need the heavy artillery of Kant to grasp this intuition of freedom. The rather extensive discussion of Kant's theory of freedom that the reader is given, while unnecessary for the main purpose of the paper, occurs at the cost of engaging in never-ending quarrels regarding correct interpretation of literally every point of Kant's practical philosophy, and thus unnecessarily distracts the reader's attention.

Regarding the author's example concerning different attitudes of employees of a company towards the COVID vaccine, I would like to observe that for her analysis to be convincing it should be supported by at least one of the following (or similar) assumptions: (1) All employees strongly disbelieve the vaccine's effectiveness; (2) While admitting some degree of effectiveness of the vaccine, they believe that it is potentially (and highly probably) extremely harmful; (3) They doubt the reality of COVID and consider it to be false news; (4) They believe that the vaccine doses contain microchips that can be used to control people who took the vaccine, etc. Needless to say, in order for the author's "Kantian" analysis of this example to work, we should add the clause that beliefs under (1)-(4) or similar were rationally justified, and not, for example, based on a conspiracy theory in which the employees blindly believe without ever having tried to independently verify it. Without this or similar clause, the author's claim that the employees who refused to take the vaccine were acting on rational considerations is hardly meaningful. But the acceptance of at least one of (1)-(4) plus the clause concerning the reasonability of the relevant beliefs puts us, I think, in a strongly counterfactual world...

In the first paragraph of section I.1 the author gives two quotations from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, wrongly attributing them to the 2nd *Critique*. The first quotation has wrong page numbers. Instead A 533-B 561 should be A 532-B 560. This needs to be corrected, even if it is perfectly harmless.

Regarding the main point of the paper by Prof. Knowles, that is, her discussion of the Libet results, I think that her analysis, however interesting, is not fully conclusive. At most we can say that among the neural processes investigated by Libet there are no obvious correlates of an act of free choice. But insofar as we – together with the Author – refrain from strong metaphysical commitments such as the commitment to indeterminism, we are entitled or even obliged to look for neural correlates of the said choice, e.g. on the level of metacognitive processes involving uncertainty.