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

Veli-Matti Karhulahti[1]

1 University of Jyväskylä

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Starting with a disclaimer: I hesitated to agree to review this manuscript, as I'm not an expert on free will. Despite a background in philosophy, I have not followed the literature since the early 2000s. But I was curious about the manuscript and there's a chance that my comments could be helpful, so below are a few remarks.

I was surprised to see so many classics being discussed at length. I know that's how many philosophers write, but I would assume there are piles of more recent takes on these debates -- including them would likely help to prevent the "reinventing wheel" scenario. I can also be wrong, in which case my suggestion is simply to shorten the first parts and emphasize the discussion on Libet's studies.

It felt that some gaps in Libet's studies are not fully tackled (I have no citations, but relevant scholars must've addressed this). For instance, the experiments focus on motor action, whereas human decisions are diverse in form and kind. "Shall one quit their job?" A person may entertain this question for years, revisiting the idea from different perspectives in various emotional states (often unconsciously). It seems appropriate to consider will (and freedom to execute choices) also beyond the decisive act and/or further discuss how such acts -- again, not always conscious in the moment even when carefully planned in the past -- build up over long periods of time.

I would then suggest reframing the exposition, as it currently promotes neuroscience in the title and starts the abstract: "The paper examines how free will is analyzed by philosophers, psychologists, neuroscientists". However, I did not find the paper fully addressing psychology and neuroscience. There's a wide-ranging literature on executive functions in both psychology of neuroscience (beyond Libet), but investigating these did not seem to be the goals of the manuscript.

To give a final example, affective neuroscience (mainly by Panksepp) presents a theory of multiple simultaneously competing systems, where "free will" is not a binary yes/no but a (tertiary-level) mechanism that has different degrees of presence depending on how much a person is currently affected by various emotions. The manuscript touches on such ideas, and these interesting points of theory overlap could be further discussed.

In general, I enjoyed reading the manuscript and agree that pursuing a better understanding of free will as a construct

seems like the right approach. Detailed cross-disciplinary discussion (as in the present manuscript) is needed to reach this goal. I wish the author the best of luck and hope my comments have some helpful content. I apologise if some of the feedback is not relevant due the topic falling a bit out of my main scope of expertise.