

Peer Review

Review of: "Free Will: Reality and Perception"

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Reading this paper brought me back to one of the most important decisions I ever made. When I finished college nearly forty years ago, I faced two options that implied very different career paths: applying to clinical psychology programs or pursuing a research-oriented PhD. A clinical career was the dream of most of my friends, and I assumed it was my dream as well. At the same time, I knew that I enjoyed working on research puzzles and that I was relatively successful at it. Professor Amnon Rapoport, who taught the most interesting course I took as an undergraduate, strongly encouraged me to pursue a research career. He also mentioned that he was moving to the University of North Carolina and would support my application there.

I decided to take a year off to reflect and to travel in the Far East. Around that time, a friend from my student job as a night guard, who knew about my dilemma, gave me a translation of the *Zhuangzi* by the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zhou, one of the two foundational texts of Taoism. He thought the book would enhance my travels and perhaps help me reach a better decision.

He was right. I deeply enjoyed the book, and it did help me decide. I chose the academic path—a choice I now believe was a very good one—although at the time I could not fully explain why the Taoist text had such an influence on me. Krueger's paper helped me understand this effect in retrospect.

The paper begins with a clear and elegant analysis of the shortcomings of different interpretations of free will. It shows that the libertarian version of free will posits a third force beyond necessity and chance, a force that is not empirically testable and thus resembles belief in God more than a scientific hypothesis. The paper then reviews research challenging the pragmatist interpretation of free will, according to which belief in free will enhances individual performance. While early studies seemed to support this claim, more recent work has failed to replicate those findings.

In the second part, the paper offers a compelling explanation for the enduring popularity of belief in free will—one that also resonates strongly with Taoist ideas. As I understand it, the belief in free will may be socially beneficial even if it does not reliably help individuals maximize their immediate performance. This perspective helps clarify why texts like the *Zhuangzi* can be both liberating and motivating without endorsing a strong metaphysical notion of individual agency.

I have only one suggestion for improvement. The paper would benefit from a discussion of its relationship to B. F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, which raises closely related concerns about free will, moral responsibility, and the societal consequences of maintaining these beliefs.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.