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

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I don't have the competence to review the predominant part of the Knowles paper which deals with different conceptions of will, free or otherwise, in the history of philosophy. The following is not meant as an evaluation of the paper, but as a simple report of some disjoint thoughts and recollections that came to my mind while reading it.

I appreciate Knowles's attitude to deal with the notion of free will by always asking the question of "free from what". According to her, one can define will as the faculty of an agent which executes his/her volitions by means of actions or inactions. Since in the description volitions are neither actions nor desires, urges, wishes, etc., their nature escapes me. The sequence will-volition-action seems somewhat cumbersome to me. Most authors use will and volition interchangeably, others use the adjective volitional to qualify voluntary movements that are made outside of consciousness, for example in the post-hypnotic state (e.g.Schlegel et al, Consciousness and Cognition, 33, 196, 2015). In short, a more precise definition of the term volition would be helpful. The reference to thirst as an influence on volitions is clumsy and misleading insofar as it mixes the regulatory, homeostatic role of thirst in water assumption for the maintenance of the water-salt balance (an urge indispensable to life) with the individual preferences for different beverages, which may vary from innocent gustatory inclinations to dangerous addictions like alcoholism. The term conditioned should be qualified as well, since it may mean caused, influenced, manipulated, learned, etc.

As to free will, Knowles writes that we can define it as "a will unencumbered by impulses and inclinations which forms and executes volitions driven by rational considerations". As I understand, in her opinion a will is free (conditioned by freedom) when it issues rational volitions only which make agents resist to and oppose the influence of their desires, impulses, urges, etc., on their conduct or choice of action and inaction, where rationality is essentially evaluated in transcendental and eventually moral terms. I disagree. Choices of action and inaction can be regarded as rational even when they are in full agreement with present urges and desires. For example, a search for water by a thirsty, water-deprived human individual seems to me fully rational, if rationality is defined by objective rather than transcendental knowledge. By objective I mean based on evidence, experience, and trust in science. Whether such actions are free or not should be evaluated within the frame of the general problem of the possibility of freedom of action in a mechanistic world, independent of moral considerations.

Because of her emphasis on suppression of urges and desires, Knowles is attracted by the famous experiments by Libet and his free vetoing or free won't hypothesis. She writes that Libet-style experiments may not rehabilitate free will

conclusively, but they certainly raise questions about neuroscientists' claim that such experiments refute the possibility of free will, for nothing can be conceived of which can impede our choice of action or inaction. She should be aware of a recent psychological and neuroscientific literature (e.g. Kihlstrom, Psychology of Consciousness, 4, 324, 2017; Sanford et al., Consciousness and Cognition 94, 103171, 2021; Braun et al., Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, ,128, 182, 2021; Neafsey. Consciousness and Cognition 94, 103171, 2021) demonstrating serious or even fatal methodological flaws in the original Libet experiment, such as to justify the statement that it is time to lay it to rest because it has nothing to say about free will and conscious agency. She may also be interested to know that like a decision to move. a decision not to move has been reported to be preceded by a similar electroencephalographic signature (Kihlstrom).