

Free Will

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*“Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”*

Viktor Frankl

There is something interesting about the Periodic Table..., all the elements are combinations of each other except for one. That one, Hydrogen, is known for its simplicity and also for its expansive potential.

Earth is one combination of each of these Periodic elements. Every natural element that exists was refined in the forge of a star's heart, and even mankind's creations are combinations of the simplest element – the Hydrogen molecule.

Churning through heat and pressure and time, all the other elements (Beryllium, Argon, Helium...), are the result of the life and death of Hydrogen-burning stars. Hydrogen molecules transform through a spectrum of matter and structures into other elements. In any star's dying moments, its simultaneous explosion and implosion alters the rhythms of physics, throwing the ingredients of the world into existence with a force of creation similar to the Big Bang itself.

All that majestic existence is not transformative, just transforming. One could blame gravity on the happenings of stars, and determine similarly that the elements behave only in the way they would, should, and will – ultimately transformation would be a misnomer, times' passage colored a pallor of grey even when the space within is brimming with shapes and beings and rainbows. Ultimately we must ask if time has branches, if destiny is fated or if there are avenues through which people's choices transform the journeys they are on.

As humans we acknowledge gravity, and a world of sound reality. But with molecules moving all around you and beyond your sight, there is little certainty your actions aren't hydrogen reactions, and not an exercise of free will. With inanimate things, there is no choice, just reactions. Things remain as they are until there is a collision.

With humanities' qualitative sense of free will, we operate assuming there are many different positive outcomes, even if we are uncertain of consequences. Choice, the instrument of change in the human world, fuels action, and actions certainly create differences. Intentions matter less than consequences after the action occurs, but the phenomena that follow are owed to the certainty that inspired action. Choices in life are dependent on how certain the future seems

and the likelihood that actions will catalyze the change one wants. But if those choices are rooted in circumstance can they really be called transformative?

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle dictates there to be a parallel existence of multiple outcomes until a certain action occurs. To say transformation and real choice is happening (and not merely reactive actions), humans have to solve the matter of conflicting yet absolutely true realities, one a destined and inanimate world - the other living, full of choice, balancing transformation between intention and consequence. Otherwise the source of transformation won't depend on free will.

Among humans, there is choice. Choices are more than consequential combinations; they are explosions into futures that have not happened yet. We work to explain a reaction when it occurs, but before the reaction itself, there is a founding certainty in circumstance. Avenues of change are considered valuable by human observers due to the multitude of potential outcomes available through free will, but do humans choose with free will if the avenues of change available are determined by circumstance?

With the infinite directions free will implies, people's words and actions are different when they are certain about their intention and circumstances. Regardless of truth or consequences, certainty will drive a person towards a conclusion and certain actions as surely as a hydrogen atom would be transformed by circumstance into another element. So perhaps certainty is a fundamental force as big as the universe, hidden, but parallel to it always. Certainty flexes across reality the instant hydrogen combinations coalesce into their new form, as fundamental as gravity, not "attached" like molecules might be.

Whether talking about gold or iron or hydrogen, there is certainty locked into each element's past and future. There is certainty on a falling rock and certainty in the decisions of men and women. But does that mean the stars themselves have intention? No – nor does it mean people have no choice and are actually being acted on by gravity. Rather, imagine certainty as a force that compels actions, settling over us like gravity, and free will the expansive possibilities that surround us as molecular beings.

So, how certain are you in what to do next? Are you ready to start asking, and observing the difference?