The Philosophical Foundations of Professional Coaching I: Are Our Decisions and Actions Predetermined or Free?

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The gods bound Kingu

Condemned him, severed his arteries.

And from his blood they formed mankind.

Ea then toil imposed on man and set gods free.

There is an ancient Hebraic account of the creation of humans. The Babylonian creation-myth accords to we humans a divine status—yet assigns us work and deprives us of the freedom given to the Gods. Humankind is made from the blood of a god who has the freedom of rebellion from the other gods. Yet, ironically, our new role as toilers of the earth enables the gods to be set free to an even greater extent. Like other animals, we, as humans, are bound by the causality of the mundane universe and the capricious whims of the gods. (Jacobsen, 1949, Chapter V)

Today, within the confines of the various schools of psychology, a similar dichotomy is apparent. Some people believe that humankind is a unique, free organism—which violates or at least seems to elude the physicalist world of other organisms and physical objects. Yet others believe that the human being is seen to be a fully engaged participant in a deterministic world which allows for no freedom or, in the extreme case, volition. From the first perspective, the study of humankind is considered to be an enterprise which must be divorced from that of the study of other organisms or physical objects. From the second perspective, the study of animal behavior is considered to be a vital, if not essential, part of a meaningful understanding of human behavior.

Thus, one might conceive of the dichotomy between those psychologists who feel that the task of their field is one of understanding human behavior and those who conceive of the task as being one of studying the behavior of all organisms as residing in the more basic philosophical or theological question regarding humankind's deterministic or free nature. Whether the psychological approach precedes the deterministic assumption or vice versa is a highly speculative question and no doubt there are individual differences among psychologists regarding this point. Similarly, an approach to psychology as the exclusive study of human behavior seems related to the view of the human being as a free, indeterminant agent. Once again, the question of precedence is debatable.

The Matter of Choice and Action

Possessing the talent of self-reflection and analysis, humans have often dwelt upon the question of human freedom. We all agree that potentially we can do what we want, and that we can achieve the ends we seek. On the other hand, no one will deny that our ability to achieve a specific goal is at least to

some degree limited by our personal capacities and our social environment. Furthermore, we are likely to admit that we often feel free to choose as we want, to decide upon one course of action in preference to another. On the other hand, our freedom of choice is sometimes clearly limited.

The problem of human freedom appears to have two distinguishable but closely related components, namely, freedom of choice and freedom of action. Each of these components plays a central role in the work being done by professional coaches. Concerning the former we (as coaches) ask: "what factors are responsible for our client's decision to commit a particular act as opposed to some other act?" Concerning the latter, we ass coaches ask: "What factors are responsible for our client's ability to achieve the desired ends, once we have committed ourself to one alternative rather than another?" (Wood, 1957, p. 303)

In an analysis of these factors, Plato discriminated between the individual's rather permissive acceptance of sensory data and his active power of reason, i.e. Plato believed that certain factors directly influence us, as humans, and directly determine our course of action, while other factors were only indirectly engaged via rational processes. As a result of these differences in the "processing of information" (to use a modern term), Plato concluded that there are two kinds of knowledge: (1) opinion and (2) science.

Furthermore, according to Plato, the soul is dependent on the body, but the soul, insofar as it beholds the world of ideas, is pure reason. The body is an impediment to knowledge, from which the soul must free itself in order to behold truth in its purity. (Thilly, 1951, p. 85) Therefore, from a Platonic perspective, our actions are determined to the extent that we are governed by our bodies; we are free to the extent that we are rational. With the statement of this theme of reason (ergo freedom), Plato has set the stage for and anticipated contemporary theories and assumptions in the field of professional coaching.

The stage becomes even more littered with challenging questions with the expansion in contemporary philosophy beyond Plato's distinction between choice and action. Three components are now often identified. First, there is choice. Do we have choices over what we decide to do? More fundamentally, do we have control over anything we do? Second, there is action. Do we have the freedom to take action, whatever the cause of the decisions we have made? More fundamentally, can we have control over what we do even if everything we do is caused? A third components is added. It concerns the general nature of reality. Is everything we do caused? This third component is less personal and more about how science should proceed. (Williams, 1980, p. 3)

Atomism: Mechanism and Prediction

During the same period that Platonic thought was becoming prominent in Greek thought, there was established a counter school of thought, the "atomists". Democritus conceived of a mechanistic universe which was totally deterministic. (Avey, 1954, p. 285) He believed that everything happened in accordance with natural law, and explicitly denied that anything could happen by chance. (Russell, 1945, p. 66) Another atomist, Leucippus, stated that: "Nothing happens at random, but all things for a reason and of necessity." (Warner, 1959, p. 46)

Bertrand Russell believes that of the classical philosophers, these highly deterministic atomists most closely resemble the modern scientific attitude—reinforced by the belief of many 21st Century neuroscientists that all human behavior will eventually be explained (and even predicted) through a full

understanding of the way our neurons fire. The mechanistic question (“What pattern of neurons are firing”) is a contemporary version of the question posed by the atomist (“What earlier circumstances caused this event?"). The atomists took on the third component of the free-will/determinist argument and concluded that everything is caused.

This conclusion supposedly leads to scientific knowledge. Conversely, the teleological question ("What purpose did this event serve?") that is posed by Socratics (through Plato) supposedly does not lead to scientific knowledge (Russell, 1945 p. 66) Here is the key point: the assumption of determinism leads one to seek out and hopefully find cause. Conversely, the assumption of free will leads one to seek out and hopefully find purpose. The former is useful, in general, for traditional scientific enterprises, the latter is useful, in general, for traditional enterprises in the humanities.

Epicurus criticized the notions of the atomists, observing that free will is a "fact of experience". If the atomic world is totally determined then this free will must either be accounted for by supposing that there is something or other in the "soul" which is not atomic, or else the atoms themselves must be assumed to have the power of "free" movement. Epicurus assumes that the second alternative is the only viable one. (Warner, 1959, p. 150) Free-will is accepted by Epicurus not only because it fits into his theory of atomic spontaneity, but also because it is "less disturbing to man's peace of mind than blind fate or inexorable necessity." (Thilly, 1951, p. 125) Epicurus' first argument bears an infantile resemblance to the modern argument based on the "uncertainty" principal; his second argument still holds emotional appeal.

The Stoics, like Epicurus, postulate a form of freedom, but their "freedom of conformity to rational law is very different from the Epicurean freedom of chance or causal indeterminacy." (Thilly, 1951, p. 125) According to the Stoics, the universe is in a cycle of death and rebirth, each cycle being an exact replication of the previous cycles. Thus, everything is absolutely determined, even the human will; the universe forms an unbroken causal chain in which nothing happens by chance, but everything follows necessarily from the one first cause or mover. Humankind is free, state the Stoics, in the sense that he can assent to what fate decrees, but, whether he assents or not, he must obey. (Thilly, 1951, pp. 135-136)

At a much later date, Spinoza made a similar point when he compared the human feeling of freedom to a stone's belief as it is thrown through space that it determines its own trajectory and selects the place and time of its fall. The stone -- and each of us -- is in fact "free" in its (our) decisions, as long as it (we) desires to follow the trajectory already set for it: its lack of freedom is only appreciated when deviations are attempted. (Durant, 1926, p. 196) In this way, Spinoza appears to have countered the argument for "introspective” verification of freedom. According to the Stoics, and Spinoza (Durant, 1926, p. 196), humans are free in so far as they have logical thought, and cease to be governed by images and impulses, like the brute or animal: these philosophers of differing periods thus seem to converge on the same point to be made by Plato. Is this the solution to the question of determinism and freedom?

The last of the great Greek Philosophers, Plotinus, accepted the concept of free-will, believing that such a concept is necessary if the concept of sin or moral responsibility is to have any meaning. This ethical argument was to become prominent among the church theologians-philosophers of the Middle- Ages and found its most profound expression in the writings of Emanuel Kant. If there is an absolute command to duty (deontological ethic), as Kant proposed, then our wills must be free, for how could we conceive such a notion as duty if we are not free? ((Durant, 1926, p. 302)

The Question for Contemporary Psychologists and Professional Coaches

All of the themes found within the discussions of Classical philosophers on the question of determinism and free will are evident to a greater or lesser extent in modern psychology and professional coaching. One might even conclude that many present-day themes in psychology and coaching are but slightly modified re-statements of Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean, etc. ideas. Furthermore, the issues evolving from the question of determinism versus free-will are still unresolved to the satisfaction of most critical psychologists and coaches. Even prominent philosophers, such as Thomas Nagel, seems to find this question to be elusive. Nagel (1986, p. 112) offers the following candid appraisal:

> I change my mind about the problem of free will every time I think about it, and therefore cannot offer any view with even moderate confidence; but my present opinion is that nothing that might be a solution has yet been described.. . . . It is a case where nothing believable has (to my knowledge) been proposed by anyone in the extensive public discussion of the subject.

It is therefore not surprising that overt concern about the question is not apparent today among many professional psychologist, coaches and other human service providers. Why devote time and energy to a question that has not been “solved” by even the great philosophers.

A majority of the professional psychologists of the twentieth and twenty first century are a great deal more interested in problems of a practical nature than with those which are philosophically oriented. A similar conclusion can be reached regarding twenty first century coaches. As Gordon Allport indicated many years ago, most psychologists "skirt" the problem of determinism, for this issue serves only as consternation to these psychologists. Allport, 1955, pp. 82-83) This seems to still be the case with both professional psychologists and coaches. They both customarily proceeds within the framework of gentle determinism—focusing on ways they can help to “determine” (influence) the behavior of their clients. While most professional coaches don’t consider themselves to be strict determinists (and behaviorists)—the assumptions they make and strategies they engage tend to be aligned with this perspective.

Most professional psychologists and coaches agree with Russell. They believe that effective practice necessitates determinism -- at least an operational determinism. Thus, a discussion of the determinism/free-will argument would be viewed by some psychologists and coaches as threatening, by others as irrelevant. The question of determinism and free-will has become more difficult to avoid, however, within the last few years, numerous recent occurrences have converged to make the reentry of the question imperative:

> With the introduction of quantum physics into the mainstream of the physical sciences comes the startling recognition that, at the present time, there is a lack of causality in the subatomic realm. Subatomic particles seem to be moving in a random fashion (e.g. Willims, 1980).
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> Psychologists and coaches have taken new interest in values and the dynamics of choice—often encouraged by the work being done in the field of behavior economics (e.g. Kahneman, 2011)
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> With its focus on free-will, existentialism pervaded psychology as well as philosophy and literature during the last decades of the 20th Century and continues to have a lingering influence

(especially in Europe) among both psychologists and coaches during the 21st Century—especially as related to the role of narrative in therapy (and coaching (e.g. Drake, 2008).

There is a widening appreciation of and application of the tools of critical philosophy (and philosophically oriented cognitive sciences), hence challenging philosophically naive notions such as are held by many deterministic psychologists (e.g., Hofstadter, 2008)

Gestalt psychologists and cognitive theorists aided by the neuroscientists have postulated internal and "conscious" processes of determination and reason (e.g.g Dennett,1991; Damasio, 2021) and

Many highly respected, psychologists of the Twentieth and early Twenty-First Century (e.g. George Kelly, Gordon Allport, Jerome Bruner, Chris Argyris, Donald Schon) constructed philosophically- oriented theories and stressed analysis and clarification of psychological terminology, assumptions, and hypotheses.

As a result of these developments, professional psychologists and coaches have had to take a hard, critical look at their tacitly held deterministic assumptions. I wish to offer a roadmap regarding how this critical review might be engaged. Specifically, I offer four viewpoints on the issue of determinism and free will: (1) acceptance of a deterministic system, (2) acceptance of a system in which our behavior is a product of our own free will, (3) acceptance of a system in which at times our behavior is determined and at times free or in which we are determined or free depending upon the way our behavior is viewed, and (4) recognition of the essentially semantic nature of the argument.

Position One: Deterministic

This first stance forces us to think critically about our own thinking. We are required to explore that actual way in which we deliberate and make decisions. The deterministic participant in Williams (1980, p. 19) hypothetical dialogue puts it this way:

> It is certainly true that when we deliberate in daily life we think we can choose differently from the way we actually choose. Otherwise, we wouldn't deliberate. But thinking we can choose differently doesn't show that we can actually choose differently. What make you think is the latter and not just the former that deliberation involves?

Psychologists enter the dialogue when this challenge is posed regarding how we actually think. Furthermore, the outcome of this challenge holds major implications for those engaged in professional coaching. After all, professional coaches are involved in providing assistance to their clients when making important life and work-related decisions. Is this assistance actually nothing more than a sham? Have decisions already been made prior to (or at least independent of) the coach's intervention? We turn, therefore, at this point to perspectives offered by psychologists.

Helmholtz, Pavlov and Thorndike

While his work preceded the independent emergence of psychology as a "science," Hermann von Helmholtz typified the nineteenth century movement of the exact sciences away from a mind-body dualism and towards a deterministic monism. Helmholtz felt that mind must be accessible to empirical observation if psychology and the other fields dealing with humankind's behavior are to leave the orbit

of speculative philosophy and be placed "squarely within the orbit of ordinary natural -- that is, physical law, and of mind within the scope of the law of life." (Murphy, 1949, p. 252)

The two prominent figures in the early years of psychology were, quite significantly, both strong determinists. Pavlov was a consist dialectic-materialist utilizing the principal of determinism. (Shustin, 1951) Adopting a somewhat different stance, Thorndike noted that:

> . . . man makes the world a better home for man and himself a more successful dweller in it by discovering its regular unchangeable modes of action. He can determine the fate of the world and his own best not by prayers or threats, but by treating it and himself by the method of science as phenomena, determined, as far as he can see, by their past history. . . . Every regularity or law that science can discover in the consequences of events will be a step toward the only freedom that is of the slightest use to man and an aid in the good life. (Thorndike, 1949, pp. 347-348)

The scientist's major task, according to Thorndike, is to discover "causal" sequences and postulate laws concerning these sequences.

Both Pavlov and Thorndike felt that by studying the behavior of animals in highly controlled laboratory situations they might be able to formulate basic behavior laws which apply to all animals, including humans. Pavlov did so, at least partially, in an attempt to justify a particular ideological stance, Thorndike did so in a pragmatic effort to gain control and prediction.

Behaviorism

John B. Watson was greatly impressed by the experimental work being done by Pavlov and Thorndike and came under the influence of the mechanistic theory of Helmholtz. Watson went beyond these other researchers, however, in construing humankind as an organism which is completely controlled by those external stimuli which constantly imping upon him. In his optimistic enthusiasm, Watson declared that, given the chance to have complete control of the child's environment, he could have complete control over the child's behavior.

Clark Hull, like Watson, made the basic assumption that behavior exhibits sufficient order and regularity that lawful description of it can be made. In assuming his deterministic position, Hull does state that free-will is possible; however, any "free" efforts that might occur are so small or so infrequent as to make determinism a fruitful working hypothesis. (Logan, 1959, p. 295)

The other major psychological theorist making primary use of animal behavioral studies is B. F. Skinner, who is also a thorough-going determinist. Skinner states that: "the free inner man who is held responsible for the behavior of the external biological organism is only a prescientific substitute for the finds of causes which are discovered in the course of a scientific analysis." (Skinner, 1953, pp. 447-448) Assuming that the environment determines human behavior, even when we alter the environment, Skinner has become very interested in the problem of the control of and establishment of the environment.

His *Walden Two* expresses not only the strict determinism of the Skinnerian system—but demonstrates that the acceptance of such an assumption can have tangible effects on the engineering of a society. Most of the other psychologists who are primarily concerned with the study of animal behavior also are

essentially deterministic. They are primarily interested in the study of those forms of behavior which can be readily influenced (if not controlled), hence determined.

Psychoanalysis

There is another major group of theorists which also is essentially deterministic. Like the behaviorists, these theorists wish to describe at least certain aspects of behavior or behavioral determinants which are not exclusively human, i.e. which are not rational (Aristotle, 2001) or culturally-derived (Dobzhansky, 1955). These theorists, led by the teachings of Sigmund Freud, believe that all human behavior is determined by certain underlying dynamic processes, which have only to be laid bare via dream interpretation, free association, etc. to be recognized as the determinants. *In Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud makes the following observation of deterministic behavior:

> Certain inadequacies of our psychic functions -- whose common character will soon be more definitely determined -- and certain performances which are apparently unintentional prove to be well motivated when subjected to psychoanalytic investigation, and are determined, through the consciousness of unknown motives. (Freud, 1938, p. 150)

Similarly, in *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud speaks of the "over-determination" of elements of the dream, and in the case history of Dora he speaks of the "over-determination" of symptoms, referring in both of these cases to the multiple, but definite, cause of these activities. Freud goes on further to say that by assuming a part of our psychic functions to be unexplainable through purposive ideas, we ignore the realms of determinism in our mental life which are repressed, infantile in origin, etc.

Many people argue against the assumption of an absolute psychic determinism by referring to an intense feeling of conviction that there is a free-will. Freud believes that such a feeling of conviction does exist; however, it is not incompatible with the belief in determinism, for, like all normal feelings, it must be justified by something. Furthermore, this conviction is apparent in only certain types of decisions: in weighty and important decisions, one tends to feel driven by psychic compulsion and usually gladly falls back upon such an external force, e.g. Martin Luther's statement: “Here I stand, I can do no other." When trivial decisions are being made, however, one feels sure that he could just as easily have acted differently, that he acted on his own free will and without compelling and driving motives. This statement by Freud would seem to be among the most readily testable of those found with- in the determinism/free-will debate.

As therapist, Freud focused his interests on the drives in human personality which lay behind his awareness and conscious control; exploring the effects of these drives and charting the findings in convincing fashion, Freud seemed to have made a personal, free agent which is autonomous of Id and Libido nothing more than a fiction. Freud, as scientist, also felt compelled to be deterministic, for prediction and description presuppose order and determinism, However, like Thorndike, Freud believed that the explanation of the determined aspects of behavior in carefully mapped personality patterns served to widen rather than destroy our *effective* freedom, for recognition of dependable sequences in our emotional functioning permits adaptation and control via increasingly efficient and autonomous ego functioning.

A somewhat more contemporary expression of this point has been made by a psychoanalyst, Noel Mailloux (1953, pp. 1-11) Mailloux states that psychological determinism is not opposed to freedom, but is, on the contrary, a step toward freedom, consisting as it does in the overcoming of primitive

indeterminacy or chaos. Determinacy and order are prerequisites to normal development of personality and rationality of choice. Neuroticism arises from fear of such freedom and the responsibility involved in rational choice. Similarly, Samuel D. Lipton (1955, pp. 353-356) states that an individual only feels that he has freedom of will when his ego has developed to the point where he has mastery over unconscious impulses. Knight (1946, p. 252), a Neo-Freudian, took basically an identical stance in speaking of freedom as a subjective feeling dependent on the harmony and integration of the personality.

All of these theorists seem to converge, as did many Classical philosophers, on the notion that freedom is a state of conformity to a necessary, determined condition, that freedom increases in proportion to rationality and insight- though the Freudians would he quick to point out that insight is not sufficient.to release a patient from neurotic strivings. Thus, while these therapists and personality theorists are inclined to emphasis the nonrational nature of a great deal of human behavior, and thereby make animal research a highly valuable enterprise, they do place a great deal of value in reason, thereby leaving the door open for those theorists, e.g. the Ego Psychologists who stress the unique and free status of humans relative to the rest of the world of living organisms.

Implications for Professional Coaches

In presenting the implications associated with each of the four positions regarding determinism and free-will, I turn to a basic coaching template that I have offered with my colleague, Agnes Mura (Bergquist and Mura, 2011). We propose that professional coaching is fundamentally concerned with three domains: information (where the coaching client is right now), intentions (where the coaching client wishes to be) and ideas (how the coaching client gets from where they are right now to where they want to be). This very simple template can yield some surprising insights regarding perspective and practices associated with specific coaching strategies.

When applied to the deterministic perspectives, this template yields an emphasis on the domain of information. If our decisions and actions are determined by external forces, then it is critical that coaches and their clients focus on the identification of these external forces. This means a coaching focus on the environment in which the client is operating. The coaching enterprise, in other words, places emphasis on and leans toward reality. The coach encourages their client to spend considerable time gathering data about where they are right now and about the forces out in the world that are impacting on the decisions they are making and the actions they are taking.

A deterministic perspective also requires a search for cause. As Bertrand Russell notes, this perspective is not about purpose; rather it is about the forces that are creating the current conditions in which one's client is operating. Decisions are made and actions taken that influence or even determine further causes. It is a billiard ball universe, and the coach is of greatest value when they can help their client pit a ball in the proper spot and with the proper force so that it will yield the most beneficial outcome (other balls landing in the pocket). The purpose is already given (win the game), so the "player" can focus on hitting the ball(s).

While the pure determinist is focusing on the external environment (the billiard table), there is the "deep determinism" that I have already identified as being engaged by the psychoanalytic community. They suggest that the coach and client focus not only on the external environment, but also the internal environment within which the client is making decisions and taking action. This means a focus on unconscious processes.

With the coach's prodding and assistance, the client attends to that which drives them--yet is rarely acknowledged (or even recognized). Challenging questions are offered by the coach regarding untested assumptions (the "why" questions). Most importantly, the shallow assumption that we are captains of our own internal ship is challenged. If our client is to be truly skillful when operating in our challenging 21st Century world, then they must attend to what is happening inside themselves (especially when they are anxious) as well as what is happening in the outside world (Bergquist, 2020).

Position Two: Free-Will

Those theorists who have embraced a deterministic system are in general oriented toward or come out of a scientific or medical tradition. Those who accept a free-will position on the other hand tend to come from a philosophical-religious background or orientation. The idea of human as animal goes against the fundamentalistic interpretation of the biblical creation, and the notion of a totally determined person invalidates human responsibility for sin, hence faces a religious person with the task of reconciling a just God with a diseased, imperfect world. Furthermore, a simple, operational acceptance of a deterministic system has rarely appealed to the speculative mode of philosopher. on the other hand, the idea of a "free-lance" person within a predictable, controllable world is painful to the scientist and medical practitioner.

Thus, the arguments for free-will all are of a rather philosophical or theological bent. They may be set into the following categories: (a) the introspective-philosophical arguments, (b) the psychic and physical indeterminacy argument, and (c) empirical verification argument. Each of these arguments shall now be briefly sketched and criticized.

Introspective-Philosophical Arguments

The free-will advocate in William (1980, p. 22) suggests that:

> . . . the introspective evidence for free will is one of the strongest reasons for rejecting determinism. Our conviction that we can choose and act differently in different circumstances is based on immediate and self-evident intuitions of our ability to choose and act differently. Denying these immediate intuitions would seem to be a flagrant denial of the facts.

A similar sentiment was offered many years ago by Bordon P. Bowne (1887, pp. 219-234) his *Introduction to Psychological Theory*. He makes the basic statement that no psychologist would venture to deny the existence of "willing" as a form of internal experience; furthermore, action does not always follow immediately from some external impingement; rather, there is hesitancy, deliberation, and comparison of consequences involved before many acts are conducted. Similarly, in direct contradiction to Freud, Leslie John Adkins (1959, pp. 40=42), states that: "in crisis the individual becomes acutely aware of that part of himself which is most peculiarly 'I'. He experiences that 'I' as a self which is independent of whatever determined elements may also be at work within his Personality structure. And this independent factor often decides which determined element shall overbear the rest."

If human behavior was totally determined, not only would we be unable to make these critical decisions, but we would also be unable to engage in empirical enterprise, for, in the words of Bordon Bowne: "the attainment of truth implies the existence of a standard of truth in the mind, and the possibility of

directing our rational activity accordingly." (Bowne, 1887, p. 227) The scientist must be able to criticize his processes, repeat his arguments, and. discard misleading associations, Bowne does not believe that the determined human being can do these things.

In criticism of this argument, we may refer to Freud's counter evidence, and note that determinists do not necessarily limit their studies to external impingements and actions: internal, sequentially determined processes are studied by many determinists (e.g. Freudians and Neo behaviorists -- such as N. E. Miller and Howard Kendler). Therefore, a pause between external impingement and action in no way contradicts deterministic assumptions. Finally, we might note that a scientist must in fact not be free, for he must be determined by his data -- ideally speaking, of course; if the scientist is allowed to be free of his data, then the empirical enterprise will cease to be of any use.

The psychic and physical indeterminacy argument

Whatever the degree of theoretical determinism that the psychologist is prepared to admit regarding human behavior, it is certain that the accuracies of psychological prediction are limited; furthermore, even within the "neat" science, of physics, indeterminacy is becoming an increasingly troublesome problem.

William McDougall asserted that in all behavior there is some degree of indeterminacy which can never be completely eliminated. (Boring, 1929, p. p. 460) Humankind is always to some extent free from the confines of empirical understanding or control, if for no other reason than the fact that all of the variables related to his behavior can never be totally understood or controlled. Predictions are always limited, Cattell (1950, pp. 662-663) notes, as a result of "the extent to which the number of factors at work transcends our memory capacity, and the extent to which the speed of our communication falls short of the speed of action of factors upon the psychological event in question."

As Damnier (1942, pp. 372, 470-477), in his history of science, noted, the impact of the new wave-mechanics and quantum theory on physics has disrupted the deterministic argument at its very foundation in the physical sciences. Ledger Wood (1957, p. 311) indicates that: "If there is a real indeterminacy at the subatomic level of quantum mechanics, this affords at least the *possibility* of the physiological and ultimately the psychological indeterminacy which constitutes the freedom of the will." Not all psychologists, however, have accepted the principle of psychic indeterminacy as proof of free-will. The law of probability does not refute the determinism of psychic phenomena, for there are psychic phenomena which should be considered determined even though the determining factors are so far beyond our understanding at the time as to compel us to describe the phenomenon in terms of probability.

Over the years, Lillie (1927, pp. 167-185) and Cattell (1950) noted that the behavior of human beings can in fact be predicted via statistical operations by studying a large number of people. This is what is now commonly called the *nomothetic stance* regarding knowledge: we can “know” in large quantities via equitable sampling of the phenomenon being sampled. However, the human being as an isolated individual cannot be considered determined, for this person is inaccessible to the tools of statistics and probability. This is the *ideographic stance*: we can only “know” with regard to the study of a single individual’s history and behavior as this individual is located in a specific situation.

Lillie points out that the physicist, in considering the behavior of the atom, is working with a great number of these entities and is determining the "statistical regularity" of the atoms’ behavior. He must

consider a. great many atoms in order to be able to accurately predict the movement of any one of them. There would thus seem to be no room for the study of the isolated individual—a study which Skinner (1959) and many others believe to be highly valuable in a deterministic system, unless like Freud we wish to make highly speculative generalizations about human behavior.

Empirical Verification Argument

Many years ago, Mercier (1944, pp. 252-261) speculated that an empirical justification for the free-will position could be posed. He states that if freedom of the will can be defined as the capacity to conceive universals, and apply these universals to choices of behavior, then the freedom of the will can be empirically studied via the study of case histories in which universals are employed.

Mercier seems to be appealing to the same introspective data as characterized the free-will argument, yet he proposes that the study of case histories might be a more useful way to approach the issue, Certainly, a study of the way in which people make use of general constructs or universals would be valuable, but it is hard to see how this would prove anything more than that the human being can abstract and employee abstract concepts in the process of evaluation and decision-making,

There are two very important schools of psychology which generally adopt a free-will position: ego-psychology and existential psychology. They do not align easily with any of the four fundamental arguments. In concluding this discussion of free-will, I will briefly consider the perspectives presented by each of these two schools.

The Ego-Psychological Perspective

Heinz Hartmann, Robert White and other ego-psychologists have argued that Freud did not place enough emphasis upon the functions of the ego in the behavior of the individual. Furthermore, they feel that the ego is autonomous of the libidinal energy force and is not strictly determined by unconscious, dynamic primary processes or motives. The growth of ego functions differentiates humans from other animals and allows us to break free in many instances from "instinctual" confines. (Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein, 1946, v. II, p. 19)

Furthermore, we are not solely motivated by the need presses of hunger, thirst and sexual gratification, but seeks to gain "competence" or mastery of the environment. (White, 1959, pp. 297-330). Thus, we are free agents, able to confront our environment via adaptive modes of independent ego functioning which are motivated by self-imposed demands, The therapy conducted by the ego psychologists, in addition, is generally more demanding of independent functioning on the part of the patient. then is traditional psychoanalysis,

The Existential Perspective

Jean Paul Sartre (1949, pp. 433-553)), the leading exponent of existentialism, and a frequent participant in the fine art of psychological theorization, believed that every human act is the product of free choice. To assume that every act is determined is to be confronted with an infinite progression—and is to be dealing not with actions but with a series of "movements" --"the existence of the act implies its autonomy." (Sartre, 1949, p. 477) Sartre arrives at this strict nondeterministic position as a result of his noted preoccupation with the isolated individual. He considers the individual experience to be entirely unique. It is incapable of analysis or evaluation. To consider the studies of rats, let alone the studies of a

general population of men, to be relevant to the understanding of the behavior of any individual. would be absurd from an existential point of view.

Numerous psychotherapists have found the existential philosophy of Sartre and his predecessors (notably Heidegger) to be quite in line with their own interests in the individual patient in his unique, "existential" predicament. The most noted exponent of this trend, at least in the US., is Rollo May (1953). On the issue of freedom, May states that if we were not self-conscious or self-transcendent then we would be determined and driven by instincts as is the rest of the animal kingdom. However, human beings possess this ability to be conscious of self, hence are free. With our unique capacity, we can remember past events, and can profit by these experiences. Thus, each of us may consciously allow past events to influence present events or decision. In addition, we have the capacity of imagination, hence can allow past events to influence future happenings. Thus:

> Consciousness of self gives us the power to stand outside the rigid chain of stimulus and response, to pause, and by this pause to throw some weight on either side, to cast some decision about what the response will be. (May, 1953, p. 161)

May is not implying that there are an unlimited number of possible choices to be considered or that there are only a limited number of deterministic influences in one's life. Rather he is saying that there is a margin in which the living human being can be aware of what is determining him, and that he will react to the deterministic factors with freedom to the extent that he is cognizant of these factors.

Thus May, like numerous determinists, sees freedom couched within a deterministic context: each of us is free to the extent that we can appreciate and understand our deterministic world. Yet, we might ask is such a "freedom" meaningful? Are we not left with a rather pessimistic view of humankind as Spinoza's stone? These questions become the critical point in the third category of approaches to the matter of determinism and freedom.

Implications for Professional Coaches

When applied to the free-will perspectives, this template yields an emphasis on the domain of intentions. If our decisions and actions are determined by internal forces, then it is critical that coaches and their clients focus on the identification of the dynamic processes occurring inside the client's head and heart. Reality is constructed by us and the reason lying behind our construction of reality must be discovered. This means a coaching focus on what the client is thinking and feeling when making a decision. The coaching enterprise, in other words, places emphasis on and leans towards the client's aspirations and toward the way in which they define the nature and trajectory of their life and work.

The coach encourages their client to spend considerable time exploring what they want to achieve. This often means constructing a narrative of success. The coach is also likely to help their client identify how their aspirations align with forces out in the world that are impacting on priorities being set and, subsequently, the decisions they are making and the actions they are taking. The client is not to just accept these forces (which would be a betrayal of their own aspirations).

From a free-will perspective, a client is "freely" choosing to accept or reject the outside demands. An appreciative perspective can effectively accompany this decision regarding how to regard external forces. (Bergquist, and Mura, 2011). The coach guides their client toward recognition of times in the past when they have been successful in meeting important goals – and often thwarting oppositional

forces in their environment. Put quite simply, the coach helps their client "catch themselves when they are doing it right!"

A free-will perspective requires a search for purpose to accompany the appreciation. As Bertrand Russell notes, the free-will perspective is not about cause; rather it is about the reason one's client is operating in a specific manner. Decisions are made and actions taken that influence or even determine a specific outcome. It is in the appreciative recognition of past successes that our client often discovers the underlying purpose. To return to the billiards game, the question is not how do we hit the ball; rather it is why are we playing the game of billiards and what difference does it make (if any) that balls are going in the pockets? Is the game being played for entertainment, to cement a relationship, to win some money, to teach someone else how to play the game – or simply to consume some idle time?

While the pure free-willist is focusing exclusively on the internal environment (why the game of billiards is being played), there is a "deep free-will" perspective to be derived from what that I have already identified as being engaged by the psychoanalytic community. They suggest that the coach and client focus not only on explicitly held aspirations, but also on aspirations that might be much more elusive (those that are held in the client's unconscious). These aspirations can come from much earlier in the client's life (even their childhood).

Most importantly, these unruly aspirations can sabotage actions taken if they are not acknowledged by the client. These embedded (tacitly held) aspirations do not have to be given priority (for they may be immature, impractical, out-of date, etc.). A critical element of free-will is the ability (and "authority") to discern: to turn down (as did the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages) that which is not from God (or our best self) but instead from Satan (or our most immature and fearful self). However, a coaching client does have to acknowledge this critical discernment, while making decisions and taking actions in a complicated world.

With the coach's prodding and assistance, the client attends to that which provides them with gratification and satisfaction. These motives (and even needs) are rarely acknowledged (or even recognized). Challenging questions are offered by the coach regarding unacknowledged aspirations. These are "if" questions: "what would happen if this project was successful?" "What if you were actually happy?" Most importantly, the disheartening assumption that we are rarely or never captains of our own ship is challenged. If our client is to be truly skillful when operating in our challenging 21st Century world, then they must attend to what is happening inside themselves with regard to their hopes and dreams (especially when they are anxious) as well as what is happening in the outside world (Bergquist, 2020).

Position Three: Compatibilism (Both Determinism and Free-Will)

Most of the psychologists whom we have already dealt with were not primarily concerned with the problem of determinism or free-will, but found that they had to make certain assumptions about freedom and determinism in order to proceed in their work or found that, upon introspection, their interests were based upon attempts to at least indirectly justify their position on this issue, or found that their professional experiences lead them to accept one or the other position. Within this third category we find psychologists who were more directly concerned with the issue of determinism and free-will and sought to reconcile the two extreme positions in some way, demonstrating the necessity for both viewpoints.

Developmental perspective

A developmental approach has been taken in dealing with the issue. Andras Angyal (1941, pp.365-73) postulated the "gestalt" nature of the life course. As life proceeds it becomes progressively more deterministic. At the early stages the infant is a rather diffuse whole with many vague possibilities {the Lockean *tabula rosa*). With increased maturation the individual becomes increasingly crystallized and the ran0e of possibilities decreases. This process might be compared to the gestalt phenomenon of "closure" -- the individual's life becomes increasingly "filled in".

Constructive perspective

Other theorists have stressed the freeing potential of personality and intellectual development. Adkins (1959, pp. 40=42) speaks of the creative "I" factor which develops with age, while George Kelly (1955, pp. 19-22) proposes that to the extent that the individual has cognitively matured he will be free. Kelly couches this idea of relative freedom in terms of superordination-subordination. Kelly sees our cognitive and physical universe as a series of superordinate-subordinate object-relationships. That which is superordinate is free from and determines that which is subordinate. The higher any object is situated on the scale the freer it is from other objects and the more power it has to determine the course of action of other objects.

Similarly, a concept (construct) is superordinate--to the extent that it is applicable in a number of differing situations, i.e. to the extent that it can be used to predict or control a number of events; the construct is subordinate to the extent that it is controlled by or is ignorant of the dynamics of these events. Thus, to the extent that we are able to construe our circumstances, to the extent that we can create superordinate constructs about the environment, then we can find freedom for ourself from the domination of these circumstances and environmental objects. However, we can also enslave ourself to our own ideas, or set them up as superordinate to ourself. In such a case, we can find freedom only by "reconstruing" our life.

A comparable point is made by Jerome Bruner (1957, pp.41-69) when he speaks of going beyond the information given." To the extent that the individual is able to divorce himself from the specific data of experience and categorize or code and develop heuristic models in regards to, this data -- to the extent that he can do this—he will have in his possession strong, adaptive powers of cognition which place him in a position of freedom and of control.

To some extent, the preoccupation of professional psychologists with behavioral changes have dulled their sensitivity to these remarkable attributes of humans; only with the emergence of the study of cognitive processes as a major area in psychology are these aspects of human behavior being acknowledge and engaged. Yet, less we go too far in the other direction, let us take heed of our limitations as a rational being, for as Bruner (1956, pp. 355-358) points out in criticism of Kelly, we must constantly be aware of the passions we possess which never allow us to be entirely rational.

Decisional perspective

William James attempted to deal with the factors of determinism and free-will not by speculating about the truth or falsity of the respective arguments but by describing the conditions under which people actually "feel" free or compelled. James describes five different types of decisions which individuals make. First, there is "the reasonable type' which are those cases in which the arguments pro and con

"seem gradually and almost insensibly to settle themselves in the mind and to end by leaving a clear balance in favor of one alternative." (James, 1893, p. 531) One feels no coercion, though being a rather passive observer of the decision-making process. Second, there is a decision which one feels is determined from without, and which he indifferently accepts.

Third is a decision based upon determination from within, yet a determination which is as arbitrary as that in number two. Such a decision is compulsive and is exemplified in the decisions of Luther, Napoleon and other figures with strong emotional tenor. A fourth type of decision results, as a consequence of some externa1 experience or some inexplicable inner change, in a rapid transition from "the easy and careless to the sober and strenuous mood"(James, 1893, p. 533), in an abandonment of trivial or light unresolved problems and a concentration on problems of a "higher" level. These decision-experiences might be termed "mystical". Finally, a fifth type of decision involving the feeling that "the evidence is all in, and reason has balanced the books." James characterized this process as "the slow dead heave of the will". (James, 1893, p. 53).

James placed a great deal of emphasis upon the effort involved in the decision. Freedom is associated with a greater amount of effort, determinism with ease or acquiescence. A great majority of the decisions made by humankind are of the variety which require no effort; therefore, most of our decisions are determined by external objects or forces. However, the fifth type does exist, and forms a base for the development and growth of civilization. Hence, we appear to be capable of freedom.

James believed that we can never resolve the problem of free-will and determinism—at least psychologically—for we can never know the nature or extent of the effort made. After a certain amount of effort has been given to an idea it is manifestly impossible to tell whether either more or less of it might have been given or no ; consequently, when one makes a decision we can never know if the effort exerted in making the decision as the maximum possible, thus making the decision free, or if it was short of maximum, thus making the decision to some extent determined.

Comprehensive perspective

Finally, we return to the insights offered by Gordon Allport on determinism and free-will which he presented in his small book, *Becoming* (Allport, 1955*)*. The four points which Allport makes seem to quite effectively sum up many of the ideas made by the other psychologists in this third category.

Allport first notes that it is essential that we distinguish the viewpoint of the observer from that of the acting person. The observer is in a position where they may regard all of other people’s actions in terms of a wide perspective; the observer sees a multiplicity of factors regarding all actions and is not limited to immediately relevant factors, Consequently, they gain insight into the deterministic nature of the other actor's decisions. However, in studying the acting person in this manner, the observer has adopted a frame of reference which differs from that of this acting person.

Allport offers an analogy in making this point:

> The situation is much like that of the watcher from the hilltop who sees a single oarsman on the river below. From his vantage point the watcher notes that around the bend of the river, unknown as yet to the oarsman, there are dangerous rapids. What is present to the watcher's eye still lives in the future for the oarsman.

> The superior being predicts that soon the boatman will be portaging his skiff -- a fact now wholly unknown to the boatman who is unfamiliar with the river's course. He will confront the obstacle when it comes, decide on his course of action, and surmount the difficulty. In short, the actor is unable to view his deeds in a large space-time matrix as does an all-wise God, or the less wise demigods of science. From his point of view he is working within a frame of choice—not of destiny. (Allport, 1954, pp.83-84)

For the individual (boatman) seeking to return home·-the immediate decision is paramount. The viewpoint of the observer is immaterial, i.e. "the way a man defines his situation constitutes for him its reality." (Allport, 1955, p. 84)

Given this phenomenological perspective, the psychologist can only begin to understand psychological humankind when he leaves the grandstand and enters onto the playing field, When the psychologist does so they will find that each of us (or most of us) feels that choices are being freely made. Hence, we are inclined to perceive ourself as free. If we do not, then there is cause for concern—and remediation.

Allport makes a second point. He proposes that all psychologists, regardless of deterministic persuasions, will concede that certain conditions ma.ke for relatively greater or lesser freedom within the individual, Deterministic psychoanalysts like Freud, Mailloux and Lipton have pointed to the greater "effective" freedom which can be gained from increased understanding and insight into the nature of humankind. Psychoanalysis and most other modes of psychotherapy give hope that a corrected self-image, a more rational assessment of one's limitations, and a clearer insight into one's determined behavior will reduce compulsions, induce order and free channels of development in accord with chosen aims and objectives. Thus even a scientific psychologist must con- cede that "self-knowledge may lead to a relative freedom." (Allport, 1954, p. 84)

A third point is made by Allport: paradoxically, the greater the number of determining tendencies which the individual harbors within his psychic system the greater will be his freedom. Stated in another manner, relative freedom depends upon the individual's possession of multiple determinative possibilities for behavior. Thus, the dogmatic intolerant individual who seriously considers only one alternative is less free than the "open-minded" individual who considers a number of alternatives. Consequently, even the omnipotent political or social leader who appears to have complete freedom of action may be the most confined and determined, for he frequently is committed to one limited cause or belief which dictates his every move. He no longer is "superordinate" -- to use Kelly's terminology -- to the cause which he created, but is now "subordinate to it, and hence determined by it.

Finally, Allport states that "psychology knows that there is relatively greater freedom in certain modes of choosing than in others." (Allport, 1954, p. 65) The individual who directly combats an impulse will often be unsuccessful in his venture, for the denial of fulfillment of this impulse will itself act as an impetus to further strengthen the impulse, if the individual instead considers the impulse regarding ultimate goals or desires, i.e. if one asks himself whet "on the whole" this is the course of action he wants to take, than he will be more successful, with less strain.

All of these psychologists within this third category tend to agree on several points. They all conclude that determinism and free will are actually two sides of the same principle. Determinism necessarily implies the possible presence of freedom and vice versa, They would also tend to agree that we are free to the extent that we make use of our unique ability to understand, transcend and reflect upon ourself

and our environment -- and we would of course be joined at this point by a chorus of determinists and free-willists from classical and modern ages.

These psychologists within the third category recognize that the position which one takes concerning freedom and determinism depends upon the way one looks at the problem; however, they do not feel that the discussion of these concerns is meaningless. The logical empiricist in the fourth category, however, do not believe that the terms "determinism" and "free-will", nor a discussion of the conceptions lying behind these terms, are meaningful, nor are these terms useful or necessary in the scientific and therapeutic enterprises.

Implications for Professional Coaching

When applied to the compatibilist perspectives, the coaching template yields an emphasis on the domain of ideas. It is all about moving beyond deliberation to action. It is fine to be clear about the current environment and about one's aspirations—but it is time to build the bridge between the world that now exists and the world that is waiting to unfold. Our decisions and actions are determined by a interplay between internal and external forces. Reality is created by us through our actions. This means a coaching focus on the client' creative processes.

The coaching enterprise, in other words, places emphasis on and leans towards the client's capacity and willingness to be divergent in their generativity—expanding the options they are considering and operating outside a specific conceptual box. The coach then places emphasis on and leans toward the client's capacity and willingness to be convergent in this generativity—honing in on the option that is best aligned with what they know about the world (information) and what they would like the world to be (intentions). .

A free-will perspective requires a search for purpose, while a determinist perspective requires a search for cause. An appreciative perspective can effectively bring together purpose and cause, when it accompanies an exploration of alternative options. (Bergquist, and Mura, 2011). The coach guides their client toward recognition of times in the past when they have been successful in engaging specific options. What "caused" their success and how did this success relate to the purposes for which the client originally engaged in action? How is the environment in which our client is now operating similar to and different from that operating when they have been successful in the past. What would a narrative of successful action look like today and how would it differ from that which existed before?

With the coach's prodding and assistance, the client attends to that which moves them forward. This might mean considering potential changes in circumstances (both positive and negative). Contingency planning is important, so that one's client retains control (free-will) in addressing changing conditions in the world where they are operating (determinism). Challenging questions are offered by the coach regarding what steps to take immediately and in the near future. These are "how" questions: "how will this work if everything is favorable for you?" "How will it work if you encounter major obstacles?"

Most importantly, the disheartening assumption that we are rarely or never captains of our own ship is met by determining how best to take command of the ship and retain this command. If our client is to be truly skillful when operating in our challenging 21st Century world, then they must generate several alternative plans regarding how they intend to operate in this world. This agility of action is especially important to engage when our clients are anxious. This anxiety is best metabolized by taking action.

(Bergquist, 2020). Our coaching clients no longer remain frozen in place, but instead fight fiercely, yet strategically, with the “lions” they are facing.

Position Four: Semantics (Neither Free-Will or Determinism)

In considering the logical empirical point of view we must recognize that the argument regarding free-will and determinism is basically philosophical and not psychological in nature. However, the logical empiricist feels that his critique of various "scientific" terminology and assumptions is directly applicable to the sciences involved. As a matter of fact, his main concern is not with the traditional forms of philosophy, i.e. "speculative" philosophy, which he considers "meaningless", but with the critical analysis of all so-called "scientific" or "empirical" statements.

Furthermore, the weight of logical empirical analysis has been felt throughout the psychological world. Before stating the logical empirical position on the free-will/determinism problem we shall offer some background material which will give this viewpoint some perspective. As we have implied, the logical empiricist differentiates between two types of philosophy, "speculative" and "analytic" or "critical". The former gives one a total synthetic viewpoint of the world, the latter analyzes the key concepts which appear in any science – it follows alongside of and behind science, attempting to clarify and unify the terms and concepts of various scientific disciplines, thereby retaining the goals of its predecessor, logical Positivism. "Speculative" philosophy is scientifically "meaningless" for it is composed of statements which are non-verifiable, nonpredictive and frequently noncommunicable. Consequently, in our present complex and basically scientific world, critical philosophy dominates.

The nature of beliefs and truth

The basis of such a form of philosophy may be found in its definition of "knowledge": the possession of beliefs which are correct, and which can be justified by reference to a method. A belief is correct if it corresponds with what is in fact in the outside world. Truth, *per se*, is an absolute and is incapable of change. It is contained in propositions rather than empirical evidence. Humankind can only approach truth, but can never be certain of it, for, in order for a statement to be scientifically acceptable, it must be open to both proof and disproof. Hence all so-called "truths" are only approximations of the actual truth and are always subject to modification or disproof. A belief is "justified" and considered to be “correct” only if the method employed offers evidence which can be verified, and which could be proven false with later evidence.

There are two types of statements which one can make: "synthetic" and "analytic”. A synthetic statement is one which is true or false, tells one about the world is corrigible, and depends upon future experience for verification. An analytic statement, on the other hand, is one which is neither true not false, tells one nothing about the world, but instead tells one about words, is incorrigible, and is independent of future experience. The former is an empirical, scientific assertion, the latter is a definition.

Analytic arguments

The logical empiricist believes that such statements as: "All human behavior is determined by previous happenings" or "Much human behavior is free and an expression of the individual's volition" are analytic

for the declarers do not accept evidence which would contradict their statements. The advocate of free will declares that the first statement is invalid because he can commit an act, such as raising his arm, which is of his own volition.

The determinist doesn't accept this evidence, because he states that even the act of raising one's arm is determined by numerable past events which, when considered at the particular moment of the arm raising, compel the individual to raise his arm rather than perform some other action. The determinist states that all decisions and actions are made and performed on the basis of past events whether these events be known or not. Therefore, any decision or action which appears to be free is actually determined by some as yet unknown agent. Therefore, the first statement is analytic. Similarly, the second statement is analytic: the determinist can offer evidence to show how a particular act was a resultant of a number of previous events.

However, the free-willist rejects this evidence, because decision-making is one sufficient condition for an action. We need not proceed further. The individual at the particular moment of decision or action actually chooses between several alternatives. Furthermore, the determinist can't enumerate every previous event which influenced the decision, therefore leaving room for free choice. We can see that this disagreement is as meaningless as the previous one. Both sides will accept no evidence to contradict their stands. Neither side seems to meet the standards imposed by logical empiricists regarding a verifiable, empirical statement.

This is particularly devastating for the determinists who consider themselves to be the bastions of empirical thought. As one of the participants in Williams (1980, p. 11) hypothetical dialogue notes:

> I don't see how you [determinist] can say both that "Everything that happens has a cause" is an empirical statement and that there aren't any possible observations that would show that a happening doesn't have a cause. If there aren't any possible observations that would show that a happening doesn't have a cause, then determinism would not be refutable in principle, in which case it would not be empirical.

Furthermore, the logical empiricist in analyzing the terms "determinism" and "free-will" as they are variously defined, concludes that there is actually very little difference between them. The main point of disagreement seems to hinge about the concept of internal and external determinants. The free-willist states that an individual's actions determined. The determining factors are all *internal*, i.e. they all arise from the individual's "will!'. The determinist states that all of one's decisions are determined ultimately by factors; they may at times appear to be determined by immediate internal factors, but inevitably these factors can be traced back to external origins and influences. However, is the determinist's position really the converse of the willist's position? From where do the internal factors within the will arise? What gives birth to them? Does this lead to an infinite progression back to determining factors.

Are not the internal factors the products of past events? Even if we engage in an infinite progression (or regression) we are required to recognize that past events determined these internal factors. Conversely, don't the determining factors have to always be internal at the moment of decision? Therefore, aren't external factors always secondary? Confronted with this seemingly unresolvable dilemma we can do one of two things, either live with the dilemma or consider the terms "internal" and "external" to be arbitrary and thereby eliminate the distinction between the determinism and free-will arguments.

After all, where does the internal environment leave off and the external begin? The point of differentiation seems to be arbitrary: we look up the street and see "internal" causes and hence free-will, we look down the street and see "external" causes and, hence, determinism. Consequently, we may conclude that the determinist and free-will advocate are actually standing on common ground and only need to realize such to be able to work together effectively.

Practical expedience

Some determinists and freewill advocates go so far as to agree with the logical empiricist up to this point; however, they believe they must uphold their position as practically expedient or, frequently, necessary. The empiricist, however, states that since both positions are scientifically meaningless, they are of little pragmatic value. Instead, the psychologist should reconstruct his theory of determinism to read: where we have an event and want to predict this event and gain knowledge about the event, then we must find a functional relationship between this event and a preceding event. The psychologist should reconstruct their theory of freedom to read: within our daily existence, we assume that our actions are the products of our own decisions, which in turn are consciously and rationally willed by each of us.

Each of us must assume this freedom if we are to feel the weight of responsibility and the joy of influence, creativity and productivity. We must assume freedom if we are to retain a self-identity, just as, in another respect, we must assume determinism if we are to reside in a nonchaotic world and have some conception of a predictable future. Both the term "freedom" and the term "determinism" thus become part of a more general resolution: we shall consider ourselves and our fellow men as independent, unique entities which make use of past events and agents to decide upon future actions which may influence or determine the course of other beings, thoughts, etc. Thus, the terms "determinism" and "free-will" become unnecessary--yet the use of the concepts which underlie these terms, as uncovered by the logical empiricist, become extremely useful -- even more useful then when they were covered over by speculative, naive terminology.

Implications for Professional Coaches

When applied to the semantics (logical empirical) perspectives, the coaching template yields an emphasis on the discernment that I have already identified—a second look at all of the conclusions reached about the domains of information, intentions and ideas. As coaches we can encourage and help guide a critical examination of all three domains. What do we really know? What are reasonable intentions? What is a good idea? What is coming from the Gods (our “best self”) and what is coming from Satan (“our fearful and distorting self”). Under conditions of diffuse mid-21st Century anxiety, this slowing down of our client’s head and heart is critical.

It is all about deliberation rather than moving prematurely to action. Our decisions and actions are too often determined by an inadequate or distorted view of the forces operating inside ourself, as well as those operating on us from outside. We can too easily create narratives that justify our actions rather than represent what is really happening in the world and/or what we really hope to achieve. While an optimistic, appreciative perspective can be motivating and can move us out of a frozen position, it can also lead us to foolish action that can yield unintended (even undesirable consequences). As coaches we provide some of our most valuable assistance when we encourage our client to reverse the usual advice: “don’t do something. Stand there for a few minutes and think!”

From the semantics perspective, we should encourage our client to test the alignment between their own beliefs and the outside world: what is valid and useful in the information they hold—and in what area(s) do they need to gather additional information. Our client should also be encouraged to spend time sorting out the source(s) of their intentions. Are their goals really what they want to achieve or have they been imposed (or at least influenced) by someone else. Are their aspirations out-of-date (old dreams that are no longer relevant)? Are their aspirations realistic (something more than "pipe-dreams" that are safely unattainable). Clients should also be encouraged to focus on the interactions between their own cognitive and affective processes. As Jonah Lehrer (2009) has suggested, when faced with highly challenging, and often stressful decisions, our coaching client must make the difficult, but critical, choice between the wisdom ("intuition", "hunches") inherent in their older mid-brain and the rationality ("reasonable," "thoughtful") inherent in their younger pre-frontal cortex.

With the coach's prodding and assistance, the client reverses their usual focus. They attend to that from which they are attending rather than focusing on that to which they are attending—which means that they identify and test out their own assumptions, beliefs, theories, heuristics and habitual practices. Challenging questions are offered by the coach regarding the source, force and validity of the attentive frame. These are "what" questions: "what is the basis for the conclusion you have reached?" "What leads you to make this choice?" Most importantly, the disheartening assumption that we are rarely or never captains of our own ship is met by recognizing that this is an assumption—and that there is no ship and no captain. There is only the real world with the actual challenges to be met bravely and skillfully—often with the help of a professional coach. The real world operates more like a busy intersection in a large city rather than as a ship on a stormy sea. A coach can help their client look both ways (or many ways) before traversing the intersection.

Locus of Control

There is another way in which we can frame the debate between free-will and determinism. Like the third (and fourth) perspective I have just offered, this alternative way of viewing this debate might be of greatest value for a professional coach when assisting a client in making a major decision that involves both internal and external forces and factors. This alternative way involves the examination of the assumptions we (and our clients) make about the sources of control in our life.

In setting the stage for an exploration of this alternative, I return to the insights offered by Sigmund Freud—the advocate for unconscious determinism. Many years ago, Freud discovered (or did he invent?) the Ego. As I have already noted, Freud had already discovered that unconscious elements of the human psyche profoundly influence how we view our world. However, Dr. Freud was not satisfied with just examining intrapsychic, unconscious processes. He also wanted to analyze the relationship between internal and external events. While we are growing up, Freud proposed, we must confront the fact that the external world doesn't always meet our immediate needs.

Our Viennese doctor suggested that we require some mechanism (which he called the "Ego") to balance off intra-psychic impulses and needs with the realities of life in a demanding and restrictive society (and Vienna society was certainly demanding and restrictive). In recent years, we have come to see that the Ego which each

of us has formed often comes with a bias. For some of us, this bias is toward the intra-psychic demands and potentials of life. For others, the external demands and potentials hold great sway. In the former case, we often assume an *internal locus of control*, while in the latter case we assume an *external locus of control*.

What exactly do these two terms mean? In brief, an internal locus of control is based on a cluster of assumptions (often untested) that lead us to believe that we are capable of strongly influencing or even controlling our own behavior and the impact which our behavior has on the world in which we live. We are ultimately responsible for the impact of our decisions and our actions in the world. We are assigned the opportunities and burdens of free will. By contrast, an external locus of control is based on a cluster of assumptions (often unacknowledged or unconscious) that suggests our thoughts, feelings and actions are strongly influenced—perhaps even dictated—by external forces over which we have little or no control. We lived in a world that is determinative of our decisions and actions.

As the determinist (and many of those who criticize this perspective) have noted, we can't be held wholly responsible for our decisions and actions, nor for the consequences of these decisions and actions, for we are the recipients (benefactors) or victims (at least in part) of fate. This external fateful force may be identified as the vicissitudes of life or as God's will. It can be identified, instead, (through use of social-psychological terms) as a powerful stimulus in our environment, a powerful societal force, or an all-determining shift in the economic, political or cultural reality of life. Freud or his sometime colleague, Carl Jung, would remind us that we are influenced or controlled by the physiologically based (Freud) or collective (Jung) thoughts, feelings and images that seem to operate like alien, occupying forces within our personal psyches.

Internal Locus of Control

I will return to the rather simplistic metaphor to distinguish an internal locus from an external locus. When an internal locus is assumed, we declare that we are captains of our ship. Furthermore, we declare that we are often (if not always) the motor that propels our ship through the water. We are not sailboats that depend on the fickle influence of the wind, nor are we whitewater kayaks that must cooperate with the powerful forces of turbulent water.

As captains and ship's motors we power ahead, oblivious to our environment. We expect external forces to capitulate to our will (captain of the ship) and energy (motor of the ship). This compelling, forceful and ultimately optimistic orientation is uniquely American. It rests firmly on the ideology of pragmatism and activism: "All right! What can we do about it! Let's roll up our sleeves and get started!" It also resides firmly on the democratic (and individualist) assumption of free will and personal freedom. Emphasis is always being placed on the right of all citizens to exert an influence over—even determine—the course of their personal lives and the path being taken by their society.

We find that the assumption of internal locus of control resides in many different ideological camps. At one extreme, we find entrepreneurial capitalists who proclaim an internal locus through their emphasis on free markets, dog-eat-dog competition and individual achievement. Several studies cited by Marshall Goldsmith, a prominent executive coach, suggest that corporate executives who are highly successful will usually hold an internal focus: they attribute much greater importance to their own role in achieving success than seems warranted. This bias is widely evident in books written by highly visible corporate tycoons who identify "the ten

reasons," "five keys" or "seven secrets" that have enabled them to make their company successful—usually ignoring fortuitous marketing conditions, favorable governmental rulings, or independent efforts made by their subordinates and predecessors.

At the other extreme, we find humanists and existentialists—those whom I have already identified as embracing a free-will perspective. They also are inclined toward an internal locus of control. They focus on the isolated and courageous human beings who must acknowledge and live with the consequences of their individual actions and free will. An internal locus for these philosophers, novelists and psychologists translates into something much more profound than that offered by corporate tycoons. Humanists and existentialists honor the dignity and responsibility that accompany free will and relate this engagement of free will to the fundamental processes of thought. Rollo May (1969, pp. 204, 230), for instance, indicates from his free-will existentialist perspective that:

> I have had the conviction for a number of years . . . that something more complex and significant is going on in human experience in the realm of will and decision that we have yet taken into our studies. . . . . Cognition, or knowing and conation, or willing . . . go together. We could not have one without the other. . . . If I do not will something, I could never know it; and if I do not know something, I would never have any content for my willing. In this sense, it can be said directly that man makes his own meaning.

Existentialists (and humanists), such as Rollo May, see human beings as constructivists, who create their own meaning and purpose in life. In parallel fashion, they identify an internal locus of control as an opportunity (and challenge) to act in an ethical manner. We are architects of our own fate and soul. We can't assign blame to anyone else in the world—past or present. We stand convicted of our own actions and the consequences of our actions.

There are many critics of the internal locus of control, both within and outside American society. An all-consuming arrogance is often associated with the internal locus. It is evident not only in the indifference of many corporate executives to those who work for and with them, but also in disdain for the environment that is evident among many Americans (and non-Americans). An internal locus of control requires that we have access to information from inside ourselves—especially with regard to personal values and life purposes.

People who assume full responsibility for their actions need time for reflection. However, depending on our personal preferences and styles, we may not choose to take time for this reflection. People with an internal locus often are inclined to "power" ahead in an unreflective manner, assuming that they are in control. They run over other people, other species, and the natural world in which they live. Those of us with an internal locus are inclined to be defiant: we know we are right and force others in the world to come around to our point of view. It's "man against nature" or "man over nature." It's "every man for himself." Many of our global problems can be attributed in part to rampant individualism and an attendant assumption that we have the right to control or change anything in our world.

There is a second level of criticism with regard to internal locus of control. It concerns the existential despair that can accompany individualism and the courage of autonomy and responsibility. Soren Kierkegaard (1980) describes this as sailing alone on a stormy sea, with many fathoms of dark and unknown water beneath us. We

ultimately live in isolation from other people and from the assistance of an external benevolent force when we assume an internal locus of control. Kierkegaard was able to find an external, caring God in the midst of his existential analysis. Victor Frankel (1997) similarly found this external divine presence—in the midst of a grotesque, externally dominated experience of the World War II concentration camp. Many other proponents of existentialism can't find this balancing presence of an external spiritual presence. They sink inevitably into despair or a nihilistic perspective on life that is pure internal locus, but also pure hell.

External Locus of Control

There are other forces that propel our ship—and we have to contend with and interact with powerful, external forces that have something to say about our course of travel and our destination. We live on sailboats—not motorized boats. The winds, currents, tides and weather have much to say about the direction and speed of our travel. Our ship has many co-captains. Many external forces move our ship. Someone or something else is pulling us [God/Fate]. We are like the ship coming into the harbor that is being pulled by a tugboat. The tub boat (and its captain) provides both the energy and the direction. Energy and direction are both derived from external sources.

There is a second option with regard to the nature of external forces impacting on our ship. Someone else is coming on board our ship and steering it into the berth. This is the harbor captain (or the parent or mentor). We are dependent on someone else for direction, though we provide the energy. Thus, there is a mixture of internal and external locus of control.

A third option concerns the setting in which someone or something else is offering information to us. This person or object operates like a lighthouse. It doesn't control us or even tell us what to do. It only provides information (that is hopefully accurate). We must decide what to do with this information. We might choose to ignore the information and crash on the rocks. That is our choice. It is up to us to discern and interpret the external information. This is an even more powerful and complex blending of internal and external locus of control. The external world is influencing us, but we are still in charge.

As in the case of an internal locus of control, there are multiple perspectives regarding external locus. One of these perspectives is offered by the behaviorists. From a thoroughly behavioral perspective, one would conclude that our actions are primarily determined by the settings in which we find ourselves and the events in which we participate. Reward systems (state) rather than enduring personality characteristics (trait) predict behavior. Variations among individuals in similar settings are minimal (error-variance). Show me what is being rewarded and I'll show you what people are going to do.

In his widely read book, *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell (2000, p. 160) moves this statement further, by pointing out that many of us are vulnerable to the Fundamental Attribution Error that I mentioned above:

> . . . a fancy way of saying that when it comes to interpreting other people's behavior, human beings invariably make the mistake of overestimating the importance of fundamental character traits and underestimating the importance of the situation and context. We will always reach for a "dispositional" explanation for events, as opposed to a contextual explanation.

While Gladwell's observations are well-taken, I would like to note that he fails to mention the other half of the Fundamental Attribution Error. The second half of the error concerns our tendency to attribute our own personal behavior not to character or disposition, but rather to context. I assume that I act like I do not because of some enduring personality trait, but because of the specific setting in which I am operating and specific role I am asked to play or have chosen to play. In other words, we are inclined to external locus of control when observing and analyzing our own behavior and to internal locus of control when observing and analyzing the behavior of other people.

Back to the external locus of control. Even when we are captains of our own ship, we need other people to help us operate the vessel—unless it is very small. Furthermore, if we choose to venture very far from port, we must be mindful of winds, tides, currents, changes in the weather and so forth. Only the very foolish mariner will proclaim his independence from the environment into which he is venturing. Unless we will never leave port or choose to remain very isolated and "small," we must be mindful of our external world—both human and nonhuman. From this vantage point, an external locus of control seems to be very appropriate.

Taken to the extreme, the external locus of control leaves us eternally vulnerable to the exigencies of the world in which we live. As people with an external locus of control, we hunger for information about the outside world. We are consummate readers of newspapers each day—or we look at our daily horoscope. Our ship often seems to lack a rudder or even a compass. The wind, tide or current carries us to an unknown destination. We have very little influence. We are cast adrift and, like Ishmael, are at best the fortunate survivors of great, often tumultuous events (the Moby Dicks in our lives). We survive not because we are competent, but because we are fortunate. We get where we want to go not because we plan ahead of time, but because we seize on the opportunity to mount our sails when the wind happens to be blowing in the right direction.

Just as the internal locus of control is very American (a country that has never experienced a successful invasion from an external army), the external locus is prevalent in societies that have often experienced massive, traumatizing invasions—and this includes most non-American societies in our world. Repeated, intrusive life events leave one skeptical about the capacity to influence that which is occurring around us. There is an old saying that life is a bit like "sitting on the edge of the dock, trying to control the flight of the seagulls fluttering around us."

Conclusions

A colleague of mine, who comes from a country in Eastern Europe which was invaded eight times during the 20th Century, strongly aligns with this saying. He feels like he can control very little in his life. He can't control the people or events who are fluttering (like seagulls) around his head. My colleague finds it absurd to plan for the future. When I asked him (soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union) what he hoped his son would do when he grew up, my colleague said that he had "no idea" and no longer even had "hopes" for his son. He knew (or at least assumed) that these hopes would soon be shattered by massive world events over which he (and his son) have no control. Those of us who live in the United States gained a more intimate sense of this pessimism (or at least a passive perspective on life) after the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. We glimpsed a reality which frightened us. We weren't in control. We probably will never again, as a society, feel like we can control either our personal or collective destiny—or at least be certain of our personal and collective security.

The external locus of control, at one level, seems more "realistic" than the internal locus. It is very European and Asian—and is often pessimistic (or at least cautious). We are told to be reflective rather than rash, to observe before plunging in. Instead of declaring the usual American imperative: "Don't just stand there, do something" we are given the opposite instruction: "Don't just do something, stand there!" We must understand the situation before plunging in and trying to change everything. The widespread European critique of many, unilateral and often poorly conceived US interventions exemplifies this perspective. An external locus, however, also evokes a troubling dynamic of "self-fulfillment." When we are passive and wait for external events to direct us, then, sure enough, the outside world begins to have a profound impact on our lives. We accept a deterministic world view in which everything operates like a finely crafted Swiss Watch. We soon lose any sense of personal agency or personal responsibility.

John Calvin, the monumentally influential Swiss lawyer and theologian, saw the world as just such a finely crafted and divinely created Swiss watch. Like the American behaviorists and other determinists, he looked primarily to external sources when examining and explaining human behavior. He didn't look to the environment, however, as did the behaviorists. Rather, Calvin looked to a Protestant God. He believed that each human being was placed on the earth to act out some pre-destined drama.

The Calvinist task was (and still is) to discover God's plan. It would be arrogant, foolish and ultimately sacrilegious to design and enact our own individual plans. We see comparable perspectives on the externally determined human destiny in many Eastern religions and philosophies. Contemporary businessmen in Taipei, Taiwan, for instance, venture from their office buildings at lunchtime to discover something about their fate and future (through the *I-Ching*). Mahatma Gandhi (Erikson, 1993) met with his enemy (and childhood friend) every afternoon during a nonviolent strike in India to ensure that each party to the conflict played out his predestined role in this great, pre-ordained historical drama.

The external locus of control situates us on a much larger stage and provides us with assurance that we are not alone. Yet, ultimately, we are alone—and we must somehow stand outside the steam of history so that we can feel accountable and engage in the courageous act of seeking to improve the human condition. We do have free will. Despite precedence, dominant mindsets and the powerful societal, political and economic forces of our society, we must exert our free will and do that which is unexpected, brave and transforming.

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