

Commentary

Degree with Comparison of Freedom of Will

Mst. Atiya Ibnat* 

Department of Philosophy, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh

Abstract

This article explores the idea of "Freedom of Will" from a philosophical viewpoint, comparing key theories like Fatalism, Determinism, Indeterminism, and Self-Determinism. It starts with the age-old question: are humans truly free to make their own choices, or is everything in life already decided? The article looks at this debate by examining how fate and freedom interact. Drawing from Western philosophy, it discusses ideas from famous thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Locke, showing how they contributed to the understanding of free will. It also includes insights from Islamic philosophy, focusing on the Jabariya and Qadariya schools of thought, and how they view the balance between divine control and human freedom, supported by Quranic interpretations and scholarly analysis. The article goes further by looking at how free will plays out in real life-within families, societies, and political systems-where people's freedom is often limited by external pressures. It also touches on the link between free will and morality, suggesting that true freedom should come with a sense of responsibility to do what is right. In conclusion, the article compares different views on free will, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. It emphasizes the need for a balance between personal freedom and social responsibility, highlighting how understanding free will shapes our lives and communities.

Keywords

Freedom of Will, Determinism, Self-Determinism, Ethical Responsibility, Islamic Philosophical Thought

1. Introduction

Every human prefers to make decisions willingly about his or her life. As rational beings, individuals express their essence through their actions. However, sometimes obstacles arise in their way, leading to fundamental questions: Are we truly free? Do we make decisions willingly? Do we have the freedom to choose? To find answers to these questions, one can turn to philosophy, a discipline that explores fundamental questions about the world, life, existence, ethics, and more. The term "philosophy" is derived from the Greek words "*philo*", meaning "love," and "*Sophia*", meaning "wisdom," and thus literally interpreted as "a love for wisdom" [1]. Therefore, philosophy seeks to find solutions to the funda-

mental problems of the universe. According to Bertrand Russell, "Philosophy is the No-Man's land between science and religion (theology)" [2]. In our everyday lives, many people believe in fate, thinking that everything that happens is pre-determined. They believe that God has already fixed their path, and they often use expressions like "What will be, will be" or "It was meant to happen" to justify events in their lives, attributing everything to fate. This way of thinking is known as fatalism.

The problem of free will is a fundamental issue in philosophy, and philosophers cannot ignore it. Muslim philosophers have also addressed this topic in relation to the teachings of

*Corresponding author: atiyaibnat2018@gmail.com (Mst. Atiya Ibnat)

Received: 23 November 2024; **Accepted:** 5 December 2024; **Published:** 25 December 2024



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2024. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

the Qur'an. In this article, I will discuss the concept of free will, comparing its implications in personal, social, and political contexts, and explore whether this belief leads to a dogmatic mindset.

Will refers to the unconscious mind being influenced by sensory perception, which leads to a craving for certain activities. Traditionally, the will is understood as the faculty of choice or decision, through which we determine which actions we will perform [3]. Freedom, on the other hand, means the ability to act without obstacles, signifying that there are no constraints preventing action. Freedom is the power of a sentient being to exercise its will. Desiring a particular outcome, people direct their thoughts and efforts toward achieving it-toward a specific goal [4]. The relationship between freedom and will, as Locke sees it, is significant in the question, "Whether a man be at liberty to will which of the two he pleases, motion or rest" (E1-5 II.xxi.25: 247) [5]. The debate on free will traces its roots back to the Golden Age of Greek philosophy. Plato (429-327 BCE), one of the earliest Western philosophers to discuss free will, presents two opposing theories on the subject. His first theory suggests that human beings are free to form belief systems, which then create the necessary conditions or causes for asserting the will. Many philosophers have tackled the issue of free will, including major figures in Western philosophy such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, and Kant [6]. Notably, Plato was one of the first Western philosophers to address the concept of free will.

2. Philosophical Views

There are four main theories about free will (Figure 1) [7]: According to Fatalism, everything that happens in the universe is pre-determined by a higher controller. Fatalists deny causal relationships and believe it is impossible for humans to change anything without the creator of fate. Everything that happens is inevitable, and what will happen is preordained. In this view, humans cannot alter their fate. There is no freedom or transcendence for human beings, and their fate is already determined. For example, if you are submerged in water, whether you live or die is already determined, much like fate.

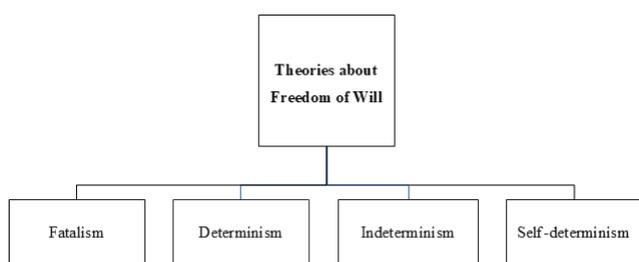


Figure 1. Philosophical View.

Determinism, on the other hand, is the belief that our ac-

tions are controlled by our desires and motives. The term "Determinism" was first used by Hamilton. In everyday life, we often refer to determinism in various activities. In philosophy, determinism is based on causal relationships. Many people mistakenly believe that Fatalism and Determinism are the same, but this is not correct. The key difference is that Fatalism does not support causal relationships, while Determinism is based on them. According to William Lillie, "Both determinists and indeterminists think between mind and body they accept the common view of interactionism" [8].

The question at hand is whether mental processes-particularly the process of setting oneself into action-are free. As Professor Broad suggests, "The fundamental properties of a substance, or those aspects that cannot be altered, restrict the substance's possible states to a limited range. However, within this range, there is still some degree of flexibility or freedom" [9].

There are several arguments regarding determinism, such as psychological and human activity related to fate. In the psychological argument, there are two perspectives: the psychology of voluntary action and the prediction of human conduct. According to the psychology of voluntary action, human activities are controlled by desires and motives. Any motive depends on preconditions such as the person's environment, character, and physical state. The prediction of voluntary action argues that the human mind determines the cause of human conduct, and therefore, they do not support free will. Metaphysical arguments also support this view, including causal relations, the law of conservation of energy, materialistic arguments, pantheism, and religious perspectives.

Indeterminism is the opposite of determinism, and it also supports the concept of free will. According to this theory, humans are born free. When faced with critical situations, they can control them through rational activities because of their freedom. Indeterminists do not believe that actions are controlled by causal relations or preconditions. Several arguments support this theory: First, humans are rational beings, and self-consciousness is a fundamental characteristic, so their actions are guided by reason. Second, there is a distinction between materialistic world activities, which are controlled by rules or causal relations, and mental activities, which arise from the freedom of the mind. The third argument is evolutionary; the materialistic world is not free, so human beings must strive to establish transcendentalism. Finally, because morality is relative to the human mind, there is free will.

The theory of Self-determinism rejects Fatalism, Determinism, and Indeterminism. Self-determinism combines the ideas of self and determinism, asserting that our willingness controls our actions, but it is derived from self-consciousness. Abdul Matin suggests that, based on our current understanding, the most reasonable perspective is likely a blend of Determinism and Indeterminism, which can be referred to as "self-determinism" [10]. According to this view, human be-

ings are free, but their freedom is not absolute. There are some limitations, and not everything is determined by humans. This belief is known as self-determinism.

3. Muslim Philosophers View

Muslim philosophy is a philosophy where philosophical thought is proven by Quran and Hadith. Muslim philosophy based on Islam religion. Its discussion is realistic. They have strong proved of their opinion these are The Quran and The Hadith. Muslim Philosophy also consists of different school of thought in Islam. All different sector like political, theological, metaphysical and mystical fall within its scope. It is a wider name of philosophy but limited scope based on Quran and Hadith.

Muslim Philosophy is the philosophical study of interpretations and knowledge derived from the Quran, the Hadiths and other significant sources of teachings of Islam [10].

In Islam, there are four main problems for origin of some school. Among these problem one of the problems was freedom of will. Human being take decision of his own or instructions By God? "According to the Quran and the Hadith Allah is the supreme source with infinite powers, but human being also has been given some power in shaping their destiny" [10]. Somebody believe that Man is the architect of his own fate. Another believes that because of supreme power of Allah control human being fate. These two opposite thinking there was two contradictory views of Jabariya and Qadariya. The Jabariya believe to predestination and on the other hand The Qadarias believe on free-will. Both of them proved their thought by *Ayat* of Quran.

The Jabariya is a school that founded by Jahm ibn Safwan (123 A. H./745 A. D). The word Jabariya comes from the word 'Jabr' that means fate, predestination. "Shahraastani defines 'Jabr' as "the denial that actions really come from man, and the attribution of them to God" [12].

According to this view, it is believed that Allah holds supreme power and acts according to His will, meaning that humans are not free, and their will is not independent of Allah's will. People have no freedom, liberty, or choice in their actions. Jahm ibn Safwan expressed this idea by stating, "God creates action in man, and he is entirely a helpless, working machine [11].

This theory aligns with determinism, asserting that humans have no freedom of choice, and everything is dependent on the will of the Creator. According to this view, humans lack autonomy, and thus, rewards and punishments after death are also subject to Allah's will. Allah grants punishment or reward according to His desire. Shahraastani identifies three subgroups within this school: Jahamiya, Nazzariya, and Zirariya. Although these subgroups do not differ significantly in their belief in free will, their views on it remain consistent. The Jabariya school attempted to support their theory by referencing Quranic verses that emphasize the absolute nature of God's will. These verses include:

- 1) "And God guided into the right path whomsoever He willeth" (XIII, 31)
- 2) "And Who created all things, and determined respecting the same with absolute determination" (XXV, 2)
- 3) "Verily God accomplishes what He ordains. He hath established for everything a fixed degree" (LXV, 3)
- 4) "He will pardon whomsoever He will and He will punish whomsoever He will-God is Supreme, Sovereign" (III, 284)
- 5) "Say thou: O God, Sovereign Disposer of domination, thou givest dominion to whom Thou wilt; Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt and humblest whom Thou wilt: all good are at Thy disposal; verily, Thou art a Supreme Sovereign" (III, 26).

The Qadariya is a theological school that believes in free will. It was founded by Ma'bad al-Juhani (died 82 A.H./699 A.D.). The term "Qadariya" comes from the Arabic word "Qadr," meaning power. This school holds that human beings have the freedom to choose and select their actions. Each person is responsible for the decisions they make, based on their own reasoning and skills. According to this belief, individuals are rewarded or punished based on the choices they make.

Human beings are considered the best of God's creations, and responsibility and morality are fundamental characteristics. Because of these traits, humans have the right to make decisions on their own. They act according to their conscience and reason, and as such, possess both the freedom of will and the freedom of action. The Qadariya school grants supreme power to humans to decide what is good or bad, right or wrong. However, human knowledge is limited, so decisions about what is good or bad, ethical or unethical, are relative and changeable.

The Qadariya school supports its theory using Quranic verses that emphasize the absoluteness of free will. Some of these verses include:

- 1) "And whosoever gets to himself a sin, it is solely his responsibility." (IV. 31)
- 2) "And when they (the sinful) commit an act of shame, they say: 'We have found that our fathers did so, and God obliges us to do it.' Say (the Prophet): 'Surely, God requires not shameful doing.'" (VII. 28)
- 3) "So, whoever follows the right path does so for his own good, and whoever goes astray, bears the responsibility for going astray."
- 4) "Verily, God does not change what concerns any people until they change what is within themselves..." (XIII. 11)
- 5) "Whoever acts virtuously does so for himself, and whoever acts viciously does so for himself."

It is often argued that the Qadr school originated due to external influences. However, Wensinck has definitively demonstrated that the development of these ideas was not influenced by foreign sources but was, in fact, indigenous [13].

We see that two opposing groups present their beliefs based on their interpretations of the Quran and Hadith. However, it is important to recognize that each verse (*Ayat*) is revealed in the context of different events, thus, claiming that one perspective is entirely correct while the other is erroneous oversimplifies the nuanced interpretations. It would be more accurate to say that neither view is fully definitive. The concept of free will remains central to our daily lives, and both the Jabariya and Qadariya schools contribute significantly to shaping our understanding of it through their differing perspectives.

4. Personal Observations

An analysis of these views, including those of philosophical and Muslim philosophers, allows us to define concepts related to our reality. In our everyday lives, we sometimes have the freedom to make decisions about our activities, while at other times, we do not. Therefore, I believe there is a comparison of free will in different sectors of our lives, such as personal, social, and political life. I have provided a chart below.

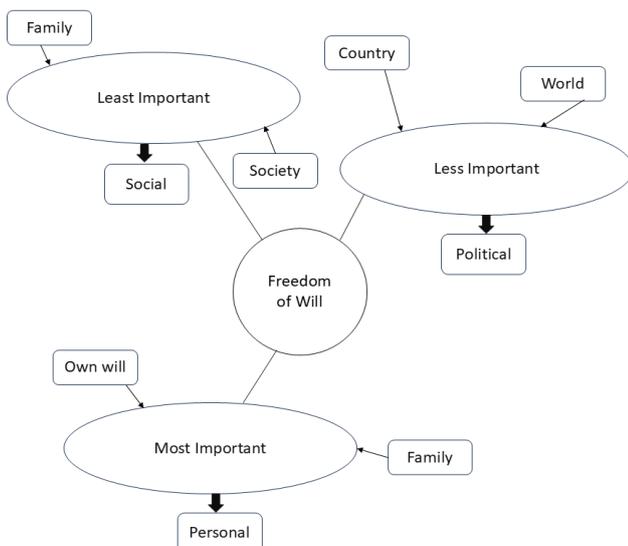


Figure 2. Freedom of Will across Different Life Sectors.

In our personal life, we see that many of our decisions are influenced by our family, but there is also some freedom. Sometimes we have it, and sometimes we do not; it depends on our own will. Free will is crucial when it comes to securing our decisions and ensuring the success of those decisions. It is especially important because it concerns personal matters. For example, a person may want to become a teacher, but his or her family may not support this choice, preferring to see them as a doctor. However, if the person remains firm in their decision, their dreams can eventually come true. In this case, while family influences our decision, our personal opinion is

crucial in fulfilling our will [Figure 2](#).

Our social life, on the other hand, is influenced by society and family. Culture, tradition, and societal rules play a significant role. Most of our social decisions are based on these factors, so free will plays a lesser role here. Society does not support activities that deviate from the established cultural norms. If someone wishes to engage in social activities that go against these norms, such as a Bengali person wanting to adopt Western dress or food, society may reject them. Here, free will is not fully observed; it is of lesser importance. Sometimes, our family may support us, but as members of society, they may feel a responsibility to adhere to societal expectations, and thus may not support us. From the perspective of society, we have certain responsibilities, so our free will is secondary in this context [Figure 2](#).

Our political life is influenced by the country and the broader world. While free will may lead someone to participate in political activities, there are limitations to this freedom. A political leader does not always act solely out of personal free will; they must consider the well-being of the nation and the reflection of global concerns. According to Aristotle, man is a political animal, meaning a person has a responsibility toward the people of their country. In this context, free will becomes less important as leaders prioritize the welfare of the nation. Therefore, a leader or citizen would not engage in any activities harmful to society purely based on personal desire [Figure 2](#).

In conclusion, free will has varying degrees of importance in different aspects of life. In some areas, we make decisions based on free will, while in others, there are limitations. If we focus on morality in relation to freedom, we can easily say that there is an intimate relationship between the two. Morality is crucial when it comes to judging a person. If someone's attitude contradicts moral principles, they are often not treated well by others. Morality is only possible when a person has the will to act. We judge our actions morally when we are free. There is a subtle difference: morality is not possible without freedom, but freedom is possible without morality. Free will does not necessarily have to be moral, but I believe that everyone should exercise their free will in accordance with moral principles.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, I would like to say that in this article, I have tried to explain various doctrines about free will, but I cannot claim that only one specific doctrine is correct. Each theory has its limitations. Therefore, I have attempted to explain the degree of comparison of free will in various sectors. Human beings are born with freedom, but their social and political lives are not entirely free. Hence, there is a comparison of free will. In some areas, we prioritize our own decisions, while in others, our family, society, and country do not prioritize our decisions. We face certain limitations, which is why, when making decisions based on free will, we must remember our social and political responsibilities to the people and their

welfare. Although we have free will, we should not misuse it. We should avoid being dogmatic. As rational beings, any activity should stem from our reasoning and sensations, and if we act accordingly, both our country and, ultimately, the global community will benefit one day, I believe.

Author Contributions

Mst. Atiya Ibnat is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Mark, J. J. (2020). Philosophy. World History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/philosophy>
- [2] Bertrand Russell. pp. 916. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1946.) 21s. net.
- [3] Pink, T. (1998). Will, the. In The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Taylor and Francis. Retrieved 18 Nov. 2024.
- [4] Philosophy Now. (2024). *What is Freedom? (Issue 143)*, *Philosophy Now*. https://philosophynow.org/issues/143/What_is_Freedom
- [5] Locke on Freedom (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). (2020, January 21). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-freedom>
- [6] Free Will (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). (2022, November 3). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freewill>
- [7] Ewing, A. C. (1952). The Fundamental Questions of Philosophy. *Routledge And Kegan Paul Limited*. pp262.
- [8] Lillie, W. (2011). An Introduction to ethics. *Allied Publishers*.
- [9] Proc. Arist. Soc: Indeterminism, Formalism and value, pp-144.
- [10] Matin, A. (2011), An outline of philosophy, *Adhuna Prakashan*, pp. 248.
- [11] Hai SA., Muslim Philosophy, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh, 1982, pp. 64-66.
- [12] As- Shahrastani, kitabu'I-Milal wa'n- Nihal, p. 59.
- [13] Tantray, M. A., & Khan, T. R. (2021). *Concepts in Muslim philosophy*. Rudra Publications.

Biography



Mst. Atiya Ibnat is a passionate thinker and a dedicated student of philosophy. She completed her Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, where her hard work and curiosity earned her the distinction of being the First Class First in her department. This achievement not only highlights her academic brilliance but also her love for exploring deep and complex ideas. Currently, Atiya is pursuing her Master of Arts in Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University. She continues to excel in her studies, driven by a genuine desire to understand and contribute to the philosophical discourse. Beyond academics, Atiya is deeply intrigued by the timeless questions of existence, morality, and human nature. She hopes to make a meaningful impact through her research and insights, inspiring others to engage with the rich world of philosophy. Her journey is a testament to her unwavering commitment to learning and her belief in the power of ideas to shape the world.