



Free Will: Sam Harris Has It (Wrong)

Barry Linetsky

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Do humans have free will? Are we able to make choices and influence our thinking and actions? Or is all of our brain activity just the quivering of atoms based on causal antecedents ignited at the beginning of time? If the latter, then is thinking - including thinking about free will, even possible? Or might it be true that thinking, choosing, and acting in pursuit of goals and values is all just an illusion? Does science really support the latter, as best-selling author and neuroscientist Sam Harris claims?

This essay looks at the issue of free will and determinism based on the writings of Sam Harris in his book 'Free Will.' The materialist view of man that Dr. Harris advocates has been popular for 2,500 years, but is seeing a resurgence as neuroscientists proclaim that recent scientific evidence proves that free will is an illusion.

In this essay, author Barry Linetsky outlines the key arguments put forward by Sam Harris as representative of those put forth by determinists and taught as scientific truths in our universities, and shows how and why such arguments are based on faulty reasoning and why they are more akin to mysticism than reputable science.

Barry Linetsky is an entrepreneur, management consultant, and executive advisor to Norht-Amercian blue-chip corporations. He holds an MBA from the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, and a Master of Philosophy degree from York University. His articles on business management have been published in the Ivey Business Journal and Rotman Magazine.



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