**To What Extent Are We Free to Create Our Personal Culture**

**And to What Extent is Our Culture Determined by External Factors?**

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We first need to explain the problem in order to make the following argument logical and organized. The original question might be: Do we create our culture, or is it determined by external factors? But yes and no answers here are too absolute, and critical thinking does not allow for black and white arguments, so the question becomes, to what extent is our own culture created by ourselves, and to what extent is it determined by external factors? "Freedom" and "decision" are undoubtedly the two contradictory words at the heart of the issue.

Before explaining what they mean, let's look at a story that may be an abstract event, not necessarily corresponding to a real event, but which represents the focal point of the conflict between free will and determinism:

This murderer grew up in a slum. His father abandoned him when he was seven months old. He was often abused by his mother and bullied by his older siblings. He never had a chance to go to school, and when he could find a job, he was never able to hold his own. He was starving to death when he robbed the store. He was also addicted to drugs and had no friends to help him. 'When he was a little boy,' said his sister, 'I knew he'd do it sooner or later. 'His mother complained,' I don't understand! Prosecutors called it 'a callous, premeditated act.' The defense accused society, claiming that it was society's neglect and negative influence that made it inevitable that the man would become a murderer. (Solomon, 2008, p. 239)

The conflict between free will and determinism begins with the question of whether criminals should be held responsible for their actions, and how courts should try them. Because we know that if all of his SINS are inevitable and not of his own mind, but of a series of negative influences on his family and society, then he can't be held responsible for them. But the free will view is that no matter what his background is, he has the right to make a free choice, he can choose to live a law-abiding and serious life, but he chooses to commit a crime, and he needs to be punished and held accountable. So, as human beings, are we just the screws of the universe, the tools of fate, or are we individuals living and choosing freely for ourselves? Are our cultures and identities entirely determined by the outside world, or are they ultimately determined freely by ourselves? To what extent, exactly, are their decisions justified?

"Decision" is causality, determinism, everything has its cause. The "determinism" that prevailed in philosophy for a long time held that since everything has a cause and people's choices are ordinary events, people's choices have explanatory reasons, and choices with explanatory reasons are not free. “We are all just cogs in a machine, doing what were always meant to do.” (D’ Holbach, n. d.) “It’s nature that causes all movement.”(The Bhagavad Gita, c.400 BCE). Using syllogism, it follows that a person's choices or actions cannot be free. Determinism, therefore, is the theory that every time in the universe, including every choice of man, and of course individual character and his own personal culture, has a natural explanatory cause; If the earlier situation is certain, then things will happen according to the laws of nature. In other words, the future is certain. After the situation at this moment is determined, the situation at any time from now on will be fixed, even though the fixed situation may be unknowable to us now, that is to say, we may never predict what will happen next second. The correctness of this theory has also been strongly confirmed in natural science. In Newton's classical mechanics, the state at any time is known, and the following solution can be deduced from Newton's laws is the credible evidence of this theory.

But the above seemingly scientific argument is not consistent with many people's cognitive common sense. And by the determinist’s own lights, the very belief in determinism cannot count as justified. (Luca, 2019)For most of us, "freedom" seems obvious. We can decide whether to open or close our eyes at this moment, and the gunman can decide freely whether to pull the trigger. Existing laws also impose the severest punishment on the crime of murder, because they believe that a man is free to choose, or else if everything has been established, the crime does not seem to be his own fault, there is no reason to punish. Free will implies that we are free to create our own culture: to read what we want to read, to associate with who we want to associate with, to choose where we want to grow up, and to make major life choices based on our values. You must have seen and been touched by the chicken soup: "Be the master of your own world," "Live for yourself," "Be the master of your own destiny, and don't care what others think of you." The theme of the society is also telling us to strive for their own happy life and strive for the common prosperity of the society. All of this implicitly acknowledges the power of free will, the belief that no matter what has happened, no matter how many reasons might influence our decisions, we can make our own choices in the present, at least with a little leeway. Free will here seems at odds with the scientific view mentioned above, but there are some who find support for the libertarian view in contemporary science: quantum mechanics. Heisenberg uncertainty principle in quantum theory tells us that we are unable to accurately measure the position of a particle and momentum, despite the significance of physics itself, it contains, is that we can only in statistical probability sense "predict" the future, that is established under the condition of known, can only be sure there is a big probability happen something, can't say will happen or not. It also provides a reliable backbone for the libertarian theory. “A person is a unity of unique and universal properties and has the right to freely develop his/her potential and live in accordance with the needs of his/her spirit.”(Vilotijević Nada M.;Mitić Ljiljana B.;Vilotijević Goran M.,2018)

But just as modern physics and quantum theory did not refute Newton's classical theory (which still holds true at the macro level), free will cannot completely triumph over determinism. Determinism is still true, and always seems to be true, of the physical body. A person's character is no doubt affected by external conditions, even close to complete influence. To a considerable extent, external conditions can determine our culture, determine our character. No one can ignore the influence of family and family education in the early childhood on one's whole life. A newborn baby is like a blank sheet of paper, and the society he lives in is his home. His initial cognition of the world, world outlook and value formation are mostly completed in that period. As we grow older, we meet more people and see more of the world, where we live, what education we receive, and who we surround ourselves with influence our thinking. One might say that one of his ideas is unique, but I think that's probably not true. Thoughts are the most difficult things to create out of thin air. The books we read, the roads we walk, the people we meet, all have seeds planted in our hearts, perhaps deeply buried, so that many years later, we can catch a glimpse of an accidental event that changed our perception. Gravel into rock, it is the accumulation of countless accidental events, the achievement of each individual, can be said to be every necessity. The same is true of culture, which is not so much about our own culture as it is about our personal opinions formed by seeing different worlds and different people.

But these so-called determinisms do not contradict our freedom to create our own culture. In order to be consistent with both the logical view and the ordinary perception, freedom requires a new definition: we can say that an action is free if it is done according to the person's reason; It can also be argued that a choice is free if it is made not by external compulsion, but by a person's own belief that it should be made. In this sense, we can believe that a person's personality and personal culture are inevitably influenced or even basically determined by external factors, but he can still make a free choice and choose to do what he thinks is right. Such consideration is also compatible with the boundaries of responsibility in today's society. If a person makes a mistake, although we think from the perspective of determinism that he may do so because of external factors such as the person's growth environment, his choice is free in the above sense, so he needs to bear the corresponding responsibility. Conversely, “A person is condemned to be free; because once they’re thrown into the world, they are responsible for everything they do.”(Sartre, n. d.)Thus, under the above definition of freedom, free will and determinism have a compatible part, which is also recognized by the historical view of "weak determinism" or "compatibilism".

The whole question we had been seeking was answered. “God is not willing to do everything, and thus take away our free will.”(Machiavelli, n.d.)Our culture is inevitably influenced by external influences, which may to a great extent affect our habits of thinking and shape our personalities. But this does not deny the role of subjective initiative. As long as we want to, we can always do what we want to do, pursue the life we want to live, be the person we want to be, embrace our ideals, and create our own culture!

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