

Free critical thinking on behaviorism

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



Proponents for behaviorism argue that behavior which constitutes habits is acquired through a repeated process of conditioning. On the other hand, advocates of free will posit that human behavior is not subject to control of any laws and effects. They argue that human beings have the ability and requisite powers to elect the way they behave in a set of circumstances independent of past behavior. I totally agree with the arguments in support of free will. I feel that free will is not an illusion and any person can choose to behave in any way he or she likes regardless of past experiences.

Behaviorists argue that a will is either random or caused. Therefore, if it is either caused or random it can never be free. They also argue that if free will exists, there should be a distinction of a free-willed person and that person who is not.

Determinists also support these arguments by arguing that all actions are caused by forces that are beyond the control of a person. It is, therefore, upon this basis that they conclude lack of control vitiates any arguments in support of free will. However, this is not entirely correct. This is because in every day decision that people make there are confronted with choices. It is upon the realization that choices have consequences that a person makes the decision that favors him or her in a set of circumstances. This is a direct illustration of free will. Moreover, the belief that humans have free will gives a person the ability to maintain consistent in their actions and decisions. The idea that one has no control or power of his or her actions cannot be tolerated in a society that seeks to have order and harmony amongst its members.

However, if behaviorism theory is true, then it brings forth a conundrum with

regard to holding people responsible for their actions. The question then becomes whether it should be legal, moral, ethical or justified in any other way holding a person responsible over actions that he had completely no control over. The ideal answer will be in the negative. This is because if a person has no powers to control his actions society cannot seek to punish him in order to deter others from committing similar actions. However, this cannot, according to my professional opinion, be a basis for choosing not to hold criminals accountable for their actions. This is because the intention of the criminal justice system *inter alia* is to keep criminals away from law abiding citizens. Therefore, for a person with a history of committing crimes and the will to repeat the same actions again in the near future, it is in the interest of public safety that such a person be put in prison to avert these actions. This means, therefore, that despite arguments that behavior is a mechanical process there should mechanisms put in place to hold person who go against accepted societal norms accountable. This will ensure law and order and avoid anarchy. Moreover, if actions are caused then those who should be held responsible are those that initiate the cause. It is imperative that a society puts in place mechanism that can ensure harmony amongst its people.

Reference

Kalat, J. W. (2010). *Introduction to Psychology*. New York: Cengage Learning.