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IS MAN A SLAVE OF DESTINY OR ITS MASTER?

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ABSTRACT

This article explores in depth the relationship between human agency (free will) and destiny (determinism), drawing upon philosophical, scientific, and literary sources, as well as the ideas of numerous scholars and thinkers. The study examines the concepts of “qazo and qadar” in Islamic philosophy (Ash‘ari, Maturidi, al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina), the notion of destiny in Alisher Navoi’s works, Benjamin Libet’s neuroscientific experiment and its critiques, as well as findings from psychology and genetics, and the tragic conflict presented in Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex. In addition, the views of philosophers and scientists such as Daniel Dennett, Robert Sapolsky, Baruch Spinoza, and David Hume are analyzed. The results indicate that a human being is not merely a slave of destiny but can be its active participant and even its master—this is realized through the complex interaction of free will and determinism.

Keywords: destiny, free will, neurobiology, philosophy, determinism, “qazo and qadar”, Libet experiment, Oedipus, compatibilism.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of human thought, the question “Is man a slave of destiny or its master?” has occupied a central place. This issue has remained an eternal subject of debate in philosophy, religion, science, and literature. The rapid



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development of modern neurobiology, genetics, and artificial intelligence has made this question even more actual.

Proponents of determinism argue that every human action is part of a predetermined chain of cause and effect, whereas supporters of free will view humans as autonomous agents capable of making independent choices.

In Islamic philosophy, the issue is closely connected with the concepts of qazo (divine decree) and qadar (measure). In the works of Alisher Navoi, destiny is described as the “pen of fate”, yet humans can respond to it through effort and trust in God. From a scientific perspective, Benjamin Libet’s 1983 experiment demonstrated that brain activity precedes conscious decision-making; however, later studies (Brass, Mele, etc.) criticized these findings and argued that free will cannot be entirely dismissed.

In literature, Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex vividly illustrates the tragic conflict between fate and free will: although Oedipus cannot change his destiny, his response to it remains his own choice.

Libertarianism (Kant, Sartre's existentialism) believes that man has true free will. Sartre's famous statement on this subject is: "Man is the master of his own destiny, because he creates himself." In this direction, man can make choices in any situation and take responsibility.

The aim of this article is to synthesize philosophical, scientific, and literary perspectives to demonstrate that humans can be active masters of their destiny. The relevance of this topic lies in its importance for understanding responsibility, morality, and the shaping of the future in today’s global context.

METHODS

The study is based on a literature review method. A comparative and qualitative analysis approach is employed. Sources include reputable academic journals,



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Uzbek scholarly publications, and classical works. Theoretical synthesis serves as the primary analytical framework.

RESULTS

In philosophy, determinism (hard determinism—Spinoza, Laplace) views all actions as products of causal chains, considering free will an illusion. Compatibilism (Hume, Dennett) reconciles determinism and free will, suggesting that humans act freely when their actions align with internal desires. Libertarianism, on the other hand, defends absolute freedom.

Daniel Dennett interprets free will as an “evolutionary achievement,” while Robert Sapolsky, in his book *Determined*, argues that biological and environmental factors fully shape human behavior. Baruch Spinoza (*Ethics*) is a classic example of hard determinism: everything is determined by necessity, free will is an illusion. Baron d’Holbach also considers actions to be an unbroken chain of causes. David Hume is one of the founders of compatibilism: freedom is the power of acting according to the will without external obstacles. Free will is compatible with determinism, because “necessity” is a constant conjunction. Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism is a vivid example of libertarianism: “Man is condemned to freedom” (*Being and Nothingness*). “Existence precedes essence” - man creates himself, makes choices in any situation and takes responsibility. This approach is idealistic and takes little account of biological and social constraints.

In Islamic philosophy, belief in “qazo and qadar” is one of the pillars of faith. According to the Ash‘ari school, God creates all actions, while humans “acquire” them. The Maturidi school places stronger emphasis on human agency. Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, interprets destiny as divine foreknowledge rather than compulsion. Ibn Sina (Avicenna) highlights the harmony between reason and will within the peripatetic tradition. Ibn Sina defended the deterministic approach - the



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chain of cause and effect determines everything. Al-Farabi was a supporter of human free will, basing political and moral decisions on free will: a person can choose a virtuous or an evil path. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) recognized the power of man to act, but considered it limited by external factors. These approaches served to maintain a balance between fate and free will in Islam.

Aristotle, as reflected in ethical studies, considers free will the foundation of morality: virtue is achieved through moderation and conscious choice. On the other hand, emphasized that actions are “up to us”: through choice, habits are formed and character is created. Plato considered freedom to be the self-control of the soul: if reason controls lust and anger, man is not a slave to fate. Although the Stoics accepted determinism, they saw freedom as an internal relationship - mastery is achieved by not resisting fate.

In Navoi’s works, destiny is depicted as the “pen of fate,” yet humans can actively respond to it through effort and love. According to Navoi scholarship, destiny does not enslave humans but gives meaning to their actions.

Benjamin Libet’s experiment showed that the “readiness potential” begins about 550 milliseconds before conscious intention, raising doubts about free will. However, later studies (Brass, Mele) argue that the experiment lacks ecological validity and that conscious will retains a “veto” power. Thus, neuroscience does not completely deny free will.

In psychology and genetics, twin studies indicate that 40–60% of behavior is hereditary, while environment and personal choice account for the rest. Sapolsky supports determinism, whereas Dennett defends compatibilism. Research also shows that belief in free will is influenced more by environment than genetics.

In Oedipus Rex, Oedipus attempts to escape his fate but ultimately fulfills it; however, his search for truth is a free choice. His final act of self-blinding represents an assertion of agency.



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DISCUSSION. The analysis demonstrates that the problem of human destiny cannot be explained solely through determinism or free will. Rather, these concepts exist in a complex and dynamic interaction.

First, compatibilism emerges as the most convincing philosophical framework. It acknowledges biological, social, and cultural constraints while preserving the human capacity for conscious decision-making. Dennett's view that free will is an evolutionary development highlights its adaptive and functional nature.

Second, Islamic philosophy offers a balanced perspective. While acknowledging divine order through qazo and qadar, it emphasizes human participation. This approach rejects fatalism and affirms human responsibility.

Third, modern scientific research supports the complexity of the issue. Although neural processes play a crucial role in decision-making, they do not fully determine conscious choices. The critiques of Libet's experiment demonstrate that humans possess a "veto power," reinforcing the presence of free will.

Fourth, literature provides a profound exploration of this dilemma. The figure of Oedipus illustrates the inevitability of fate, yet also highlights human responsibility in responding to it. In contrast, Navoi portrays humans as active participants capable of shaping their destiny through effort and moral striving.

Overall, human life is shaped not only by external determinants but also by internal values, intentions, and decisions. Therefore, it is inaccurate to define humans as entirely free or entirely determined beings; instead, they exist within a dynamic balance between these two forces.



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CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that humans are not absolute slaves of destiny but conscious participants and, to a certain extent, its masters. Destiny provides the framework and limitations of life, while free will enables individuals to make choices within those boundaries.

The synthesis of philosophical, religious, and scientific perspectives leads to several key conclusions:

- Determinism explains the laws governing human existence;
- Free will ensures human responsibility and agency;
- Their interaction forms the essence of human existence.

True freedom is not absolute independence but the ability to make conscious choices within given constraints. In this sense, humans do not create destiny entirely, but they actively shape it.

Practically, this conclusion is significant because it:

- Protects individuals from fatalism;
- Strengthens personal responsibility;
- Encourages conscious ethical decision-making.

Future research should focus on the intersection of neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and moral philosophy, as these fields offer promising avenues for further understanding the relationship between free will and determinism. A person can control, make choices, and change their life to a certain extent, but this process is related to previous causes, environment, and limitations. Most importantly, a person must realize their potential and take responsibility. Ultimately, humans are not slaves of destiny—they are conscious beings capable of understanding, responding to, and partially shaping it. This is their greatest power.



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