

**Will M.**

Deephaven, Minnesota

*Moving shadows lovely light lovely light lovely light*

Paper clay, acrylic, oil pastel, and recycled paper on canvas

I was afraid of my painting. Free will was entangled in the process of creating it. I thought about restrictions, rules, and fears while creating. However, I thought more than I did create, which is evidence of my fear and hindered my creation process. I didn't spend time with my painting. I spent time observing and conceptualizing every path I could take, yet I could not decide where I wanted to go.

Despite my hesitation, I conquered many fears in this painting, including my fear of color and inconsistency. I love the path that I have taken and where I am going. My journey is simply not yet over.

I copied the world in my artwork. I created lines of paper clay as the floor of my painting. I am obsessed with lines. I see only lines. I look for wood grains and vents and folds and grates. I look for paths in objects. They guide my eyes. I created my colorful and repetitive world. I decided to make my own sheets of paper and paste them onto my lines and colors. I chose white and blue paper, like the color of water. I chose to include parts of the nature I currently live in as a part of the body of my paper. I included pieces of used newsprint and newspaper to live in my paper. I chose to place a path of paper across the grain of my painting to represent the current experiences I am present in and reflect on. My paper is made of the world. I have drawn on that world with love.

# Bambamfofam



Will M.

The Oxbow School

OS50

Writer's Note: *My sense of agency is pungent. I smell the earth, and therefore I exist. Consciousness hides in experiences. I am floating along the current of time. The water carries me through experiences that I will remember and learn from. I choose how I exist. I am a collective of minds from the past and the present, but I am still an individual. I give myself away, and I take from others. I do not have freedom, but I can do whatever I want. The extent of my control starts from the tips of my toes to the ends of my hair.*

## **I. Consciousness**

Becoming aware of consciousness is a key moment in the development of an individual's psyche. Consciousness directly relates to discovering identity, a vital aspect of being an individual. Without being aware of identity, one cannot make meaningful connections with others, as one cannot make connections within themselves. Individuals can only pursue positive and impactful relationships with others if they know all parts of their identity by being conscious of themselves and the world. Consciousness is both internal awareness of self and external awareness of the world. Internal awareness is feeling emotions and sensations and being aware of personal perceptions. External awareness is understanding how one's actions and presence affect other conscious beings (Koch, 2018). These two concepts make up consciousness. Split up into three parts and using internal and external awareness as a guide, consciousness is simple: the ability to be aware, to remember and feel experiences, and to understand the origins of an individual's own behavior.

The ability to be aware is grounded in introspection. Introspection is the process of looking within oneself to search and feel for emotions, experiences, and behaviors and following the causal relationships between emotions, experiences, and behaviors to find parts of identity

(Christman, 1991, p. 1). The process of introspection is reflective and metaphysical but not degradingly critical. Through self-reflection, one can become more aware of themselves and their experiences. One can use their experiences as a tool to search and feel for their emotions and behaviors. They can be aware of emotions and how they felt in that experience, and then one can discern the origin of behaviors in response to those emotions felt in that experience. By being aware of these things, one can notice things about themselves and choose how to react to them.

## **II. Determinism, Fatalism, and Compatibilism**

Internal thought is truly the product of external consumption. Therefore, an individual is not free and is indeed part of a collective and influenced mind. Because the will of an individual is being influenced by uncontrollable external factors, the individual cannot be held responsible for their actions because they cannot control themselves. This is the concept of determinism. This implies that if a person decides to kill thousands of people, that person cannot be held responsible for their actions because, simply, the will of the person was influenced by other forces beyond themselves. Those forces are to blame, not themselves (Smilansky, 2012, p. 3). Similarly, fatalism states that fate is predetermined and cannot be controlled, and everything that is supposed to happen will happen. Fatalism encourages individuals not to take control and responsibility for their lives (Miyasaki, 2016, p. 15). It provides a sense of artificial comfort, forcing individuals to become complacent with their lives and dissolve motivation. Both concepts take control and will away from existence. However, the concept of compatibilism encourages people to take control of their lives while also accepting the existence of determinism. External emotions and experiences are funneled into an individual's mind, creating

behaviors and actions. Compatibilism argues that external emotions and experiences are uncontrollable factors of existence and do makeup behaviors. However, humans still control their morals and desires, which determine their behaviors, and are responsible for their actions (Smilansky, 2012, p. 9).

### **III. Self**

Reactions are controlled. Behaviors are reactions to emotions. Therefore, behaviors can be changed. Unlike emotions and experiences, which are affected by the external world, behaviors are entirely internal. One can choose how they react to the external world. One can love oneself unconditionally, the way one is, and continue living with these internal and external relationships, only changing one's perspective of oneself and the world to a more loving lens. For example, a person struggles with how their hair lays on their head. They choose to accept and love the appearance of their hair without changing it. One can also choose to destroy parts of oneself that one does not like so that one can change. One can find behaviors and emotions within oneself that one dislikes or disagrees with and would want to change. Still, one accepts those behaviors and understands that those behaviors are parts of oneself. Then, one can talk to the habit internally and ask that habit to cease their behavior so one can change peacefully. If a person struggles with being overly critical of others and wishes to be less judgemental, they could reflect on their behavior and follow internal paths of emotions and experiences to find the cause of that behavior and reconcile with it internally. They recognize the behaviors' existence and accept it as part of their identity, but they want it to change, so they conquer and change that behavior of themselves. One can react to emotions and behaviors in infinite ways. Despite the

control one has over one's actions, the external world still purposefully attempts to manipulate the actions and identities of individuals.

#### **IV. Subconscious Manipulation**

Many marketing strategies aim to steal individuals' subconscious decisions. The media aims to subconsciously control the consumer's actions to benefit the media's agenda. Marketers use fear as a tool to control the minds of consumers. They make advertisements that arouse fear in the consumer. That fear creates an emotional connection with that advertisement so that the consumer has an attachment to it and, therefore, wants to act in a way that benefits the marketed idea or society. Advertisements aim for a sweet spot of fear that provokes an emotional response that creates a positive relationship with the advertisement. Advertisements do not want to pass a threshold of emotional stimulation that creates sensations of anxiousness in the viewer (Henthorne et al., 1993, p. 3). This response may deter the consumer from the agenda of the advertisement. The media wants to take control away from the individual, which aligns with ideas of determinism and fatalism. However, the media takes control of the subconscious without the awareness of the individual. One can be aware of their choice to believe in determinism and fatalism, but one can struggle to be aware of how advertisements affect them. Marketers take advantage of this ignorance. This is problematic because if subconscious behaviors are being developed without the awareness of the individual, it is difficult to pinpoint the origins of certain decision-making patterns in the subconscious. However, one can take control of this manipulation. Using the critical strategy of self-reflection and external research to determine the agenda of advertising, the consumer can become a sieve of information by being aware of how advertisements affect them and how specific ideas and societies presented in advertisements

correlate with the personal morals and desires of the consumer (Christman, 1991, p. 6). Individuals who are more aware of the media they consume can create more meaningful internal connections and have the freedom to create stronger, more personal morals and goals.

## **V. Free Will**

Determinism and fatalism state freedom and free will do not exist. The feeling of free will does exist. It exists only in the presence of restraints (Miyasaki, 2016, p. 17). Restraints are triumphs, cycles, rules, and anything encouraging an individual to learn or think differently. Restraints allow individuals to exercise their free will to conquer them and grow. Restraints challenge freedom, as freedom can only act without restraints. However, one must face restraints to feel freedom, just as one can only feel happiness if sadness exists. An individual's freedom thrives in the face of restraints. Just as one can only grow by facing problems, restraints test the will of an individual, and by conquering restraints, one can feel freedom. For example, someone who is afraid of commitment can conquer their fear through self-reflection, acceptance, and decisiveness. One can feel freedom by doing so because more paths in their life have opened up due to their ability to conquer, and their will has strengthened. Facing restraints that challenge the individual's mind, body, and will creates a feeling of free will.

Making decisions for yourself and creating morals and values for yourself with your own ideologies that you have consciously chosen to believe in is the key to free will. Free will is the ability to speak, act, and think without restraint. It is often related to political decisions, such as laws that change the lives of the citizens. However, it is also relevant to smaller, more malleable, and vulnerable social environments. People who have created their own morals and desires in oppressed environments where their will was being manipulated do not yet possess free will. For

example, a child who grows up in a home where their father and mother impose ideas of toxic masculinity onto them will carry those imposed morals and desires throughout their life because that idea was implanted into their mind at a vulnerable stage of development. Even if that child wants to believe in those morals and ideas of a man in the future, toxic masculinity is still implanted into their brain without the option to decline. They could've thought differently, given the chance to make independent decisions and develop their own morals and desires (Christman, 1991, p. 3).

Similarly, accepting and loving a physical or mental state does not lead to free will. A person who spends eternity confined to a single room can only feel free if their morals and desires are not restrained by their isolation. If an individual is forced to be isolated in a single room for an indefinite amount of time, and their beliefs and morals do not align with that physical and mental state prior to their confinement, they are not free. Even if that person accepts their circumstances and can become content with their confinement, they cannot feel free. Their isolation forces them to accept their circumstances, as they have no choice but to stay. They are complacent, not free (Christman, 1991, p. 13). Free will lies in self-creation. To have free will, one must decide one's own values, behaviors, and morals without oppression. One must be free to choose and pave one's own path.

## **VI. Creation**

We are conscious beings. We are aware of ourselves, our existence, our impact, our emotions, our experiences, and our behaviors. We are aware of our control. We live between the internal and external worlds. We are so powerful individually, but only because we are a collective. We choose how we interact with the world, but we cannot choose how the world interacts with us.



We have freedom as a collective, and we can feel freedom as individuals. We have destroyed, created, avoided, adapted, and solved restraints, and we will continue to learn and face restraints.

Individualism exists! I have control over myself and my actions, and I can do whatever I want. I will continue to face struggles, problems, and fears so that I can feel freedom and learn. I choose to live this life, and nothing can stop me. I know myself better than anyone else. I love myself more than anyone else. I am super powerful.

### Works Cited

Christman, J. (1991). Liberalism and individual positive freedom. *Ethics*, 101(2), 343-359.

"Liberalism and individual positive freedom" defines the parameters of positive liberty, provides examples of effective self-reflection, and encourages individuality. The article is part of the *Ethics* journal published by the University of Chicago Press. The journal strives for clarity and simplicity in its articles for the broadest audience. Similarly, the University of Chicago Press aims to educate and inform the public. John Christman is the director of the Penn State Humanities Institute and professor of philosophy and women's gender studies. The article focuses on self-consciousness and the origin of desires and values. It attests to the power of decision-making. This article is important to my research because control over self and awareness of influences are vital to my topic, and are present in this article.

Henthorne, T. L., LaTour, M. S., & Natarajan, R. (1993). Fear appeals in print advertising: An analysis of arousal and ad response. *Journal of Advertising*, 22(2), 59-69.

"Fear appeals in print advertising: An analysis of arousal and ad response" focuses on the emotional and physical response that adverts induce in consumers. The article is part of the greater *Journal of Advertising*, published by Taylor & Francis, Ltd. Taylor & Francis, Ltd publishes over 800 journals and 1,800 articles each year. Tony L. Henthorne works in tourism and focuses on marketing for his career. Michael S. Latour was a professor of marketing at Ithaca College. Rajan Natarajan is a marketing professor at Auburn University. The article analyzes the amount of fear arousal needed for consumers to be influenced by advertisements most effectively. This article is relevant to my research because it covers the impact of fear and psychological control in media.

Koch, C. (2018, June 1). *What Is Consciousness?* Scientific American. Retrieved April 23, 2024, from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-is-consciousness/>

Miyasaki, D. (2016). Feeling, not freedom: Nietzsche against agency. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 47(2), 256-274. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jnietstud.47.2.0256>

"Feeling, not freedom: Nietzsche against agency" analyzes Nietzsche's theory of freedom, which relates the greatest feeling of freedom to the greatest resistance. The article is part of the *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, which focuses on any philosophical study relating to Friedrich Nietzsche's work. The journal is published by Penn State University Press, which values scholarly communication worldwide. The article was written by Donovan Miyasaki, a professor of philosophy at Wright State University. The paper provides ideas of agency and freedom that stem from determinism, fatalism, and compatibilism, which reject conventional freedom. Miyasaki expresses that by analyzing freedom through a metaphysical lens, one can see that freedom and free will do not exist. Humanity is a collective, and through determinism, people are collections of each other. To feel freedom, one must reject conventional freedom and agency and accept fatalism and determinism. Then, one can feel freedom in the presence of restraints. This relates to my research because this topic covers ideas of acceptance and control.

Mumford, S., & Anjum, R. L. (2015). FREEDOM AND control: ON THE MODALITY OF FREE WILL. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 52(1), 1-11.

"FREEDOM AND control: ON THE MODALITY OF FREE WILL" defines the extent of free will that is possible in this existence. The article is part of the journal *American Philosophical Quarterly*, which prides itself in high-quality work without bias toward the school of thought. The University of Illinois Press and North American Philosophical

Publications published the journal. The authors of the article are Stephen Mumford and Rani Lill Anjum. Stephen Mumford is the department head of philosophy at Durham University. Rani Lill Anjum works at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, where she leads the Centre for Applied Philosophy of Science. This article relates to my research because it covers idea of control and acceptance, explicitly referencing ideas of dispositional modality.

Smilansky, S. (2012). Free will and moral responsibility: The trap, the appreciation of agency, and the bubble. *The Journal of Ethics*, 16(2), 211-239.

"Free will and moral responsibility: The trap, the appreciation of agency, and the bubble" provides an analysis of hard determinism and compatibilism. The article is a part of *The Journal of Ethics*, published by Springer. *The Journal of Ethics* focuses on the quality of work and the philosophical ideas presented in the articles. The paper is written by Saul Smilansky, a professor of philosophy at the University of Haifa. This article is relevant to my research because it provides an analysis of an existence with both hard determinism and compatibilism. Smilansky breaks apart both ideas and discerns the valuable pieces of each idea.