**Beyond free will: Variety in understanding choice, luck, and necessity**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, June 20-23, 2022*

The aim of the conference was to move beyond “traditional” philosophical research on free will as it has been mainly conducted at European and U.S. universities, grounded in particular frameworks that may not be in line with how other academic approaches, ‘the folk’, and other cultures think about these issues. In line of that, a large variety of approaches were represented in the conference: experimental philosophy, Chinese philosophy, and anthropology for example. Some highlights of the conference:

* The first keynote talk was by Florian Cova, on how to research belief in free will. The talk and discussion made clear how difficult it is to experimentally study what ‘the folk’ believe when it comes to free will, because it remains unclear how subjects interpret the key concepts and which assumptions they make. Another central topic was how we acquire belief in free will and whether it is justified; this I addressed in my talk as well (see below).
* I visited a couple of very interesting talks about luck and how it relates to free will / control. It turns out that the notion ‘luck’ is often simply used, but it is not completely clear what we (should) mean by it. Is luck a cause? And if it is, what kind of cause is it? Does luck imply absence of control and/or moral responsibility? Can it be defined without making normative claims at the same time?
* I attended some of the talks on Chinese philosophy of action and free will (e.g., Zhuangzi), for example the keynote by Robin R. Wang, and I noticed how these views are comparable to developments in embodied and embedded cognition, ecological psychology, and enactivism. They all emphasize that we are not isolated agents, but are shaped by our environment and depend on our environment for possibilities for action. Actions are co-created with things and other human beings. Relatedly, there is not (always) a pre-existing plan, ‘the path is made in the walking’.

My talk was also about how to interpret the findings from experimental philosophy. Several studies suggest that a correlation exists between belief in free will and success, for example academic achievements, productivity at work, and being able to make decisions. Even though these studies do not allow researchers to draw causal conclusions – they did not manipulate one variable in order to see whether it has an effect on the other – researchers tend to assume that belief in free will enhances success. In my talk, I argued that the relation may be the other way around, and that this may not only causally explain but also, to a certain extent, justify belief in free will. Successful people have managed to act in light of their reasons, which is precisely one of the central characteristics of free will. At the end of the talk, I argued that this way of thinking about belief in free will also explains some other phenomena: that we may mischaracterize other people’s ability to act for reasons for example, and sometimes lack understanding of what counts as a reason for others.

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