studies would no longer be experimental. Subjects cannot take control of this variable because they cannot separate their wish to test the causal power of *W* from their having or not having an intention ("Let me see if my finger lifts without me willing it").

Searle's (1983) notion of "prior intentions," as opposed to "intentions in action," gives conscious will a chance. Plans and commitments often precede overt actions with a regularity surpassing that of independent variables in laboratory experiments (cf. Wegner 2002, p. 19). Searle, who "raised his hand . . . four times in a fifteen-minute period to show he indeed had conscious will" (Wegner 2002, p. 319) might even have predicted in writing how often and when he would act. Of course, the Laplacian view of strict determinism espoused by Wegner entails that Searle's actions were fully explained by the state of the Universe (including Searle's brain) at any previous time. Singling out his conscious intentions as causes is practical and parsimonious, however, as it does not require a theory of everything.

Research such as Wegner's is valuable because it illuminates changes in the strength of association between conscious will and action. Although researchers cannot solve the mystery of human choice empirically, they must proceed as if they could, much like ordinary people must act as if they had such choice. In the words of the Talmudic sage Tarfon, "You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

Free will for everyone – with flaws

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Abstract: Wegner's refutation of the notion of a conscious free will is addressed to a general reader. Despite a wide ranging and instructive survey and a conclusion acceptable to current psychological thinking, it is flawed by terminological confusions and lack of attention to relevant evidence and previous psychological approaches. It is suggested that psychology best drop the term *will* altogether.

Wegner (2002) has written an important book that primarily addresses a general rather than specialist audience. Wegner dwells relatively briefly on important psychological research, for example, his brief allusion to priming studies without discussion of the pertinent implicit/explicit distinction. He touches most of the relevant (and sometimes forgotten) bases and rehearses an argument that has dominated scientific psychology for about a century. The process of addressing the general reader results in a breezy, readable approach. Since I have little quarrel with Wegner's general view of conscious will, I shall briefly summarize his major contributions, and then concentrate on a few of the topics that he has left unsaid.

First a word about terminological confusions in using terms like *mind* and *consciousness.* Thus, the "conscious mind" (Wegner 2002, p. 11) is used at one point, but elsewhere *mind* is the usual combination of human thought, perception, and conception, that is, a summary term for the mental processes. Similarly, *consciousness* is abused in such uses as "consciousness experiences" (p. 36) or "consciousness doesn't know" (p. 67), and on subsequent pages (e.g., p. 318). The empirical will is usefully defined in terms of "relationships between . . . thoughts, beliefs, intentions, plans, or other conscious psychological states and . . . subsequent actions" (p. 15). But why just *conscious* states? On page 27, the conscious qualification is left out, and in various other places proper attention is paid to the function of the multitude of unconscious mechanisms and representations that occupy cognitive psychologists.

Chapter 3 is central to the book; it starts with the "theory" that conscious will is experienced when people interpret their thoughts as the cause of action. This is surely a concise statement of the phenomenon but hardly a theory. The statement was supported in ingenious experiments (Wegner & Wheatley 1999), but Wegner threatens to throw the baby out with the bathwater when he implies that mental events can never be causal agents for thought and action. This is in conflict with a body of research that has shown since 1989 that visual and auditory imagery may in fact have such causal efficacy (see, e.g., Michelon & Zacks 2003; Pilottiet al. 2000). The following chapters delve deeply into the literature on automatism, the uses of the illusion of will, and related problems of agency, hypnosis, and many others.

There is a paucity of references to previous psychological discussions of free will. In one I must declare an interest (Mandler & Kessen 1974), but the most important omission is Westcott's 1977 paper (which also includes a number of references to other psychological discussions of volition). It is especially unfortunate that Wegner has not had occasion to include this essay because he has skipped many of Westcott's topics. Westcott surveys relevant (rather than discursive) philosophical arguments and points of view, and in his section on the psychology of free will, Westcott addresses such factors as cognitive dissonance, attitude change, and locus of control as well as various variants of decisions such as "rational decision," "snap decision," "random choice," and "coerced choice." All of these are accompanied by "experienced will." Westcott offers a flow chart of the precursors of such experienced will that combines historical and current determinants, alternatives, and cognitive activity (including attention, valuation, and criterion setting). The final result is remarkably similar to Wegner's conclusions about empirical will.

I mention the paper that Kessen and I presented in 1974 primarily in order to make an additional argument. We noted that whereas free will is a human construction rather than a fact of existence, a belief in free will is still probably a desirable state of affairs. The belief that one is free to choose from among different alternatives generates a delay in thought and action that brings more alternatives to the fore, and strengths among them may change in the light of evidence. Such a delay "is likely, though not certain, to bring some increment to the quality of the final choice" (Mandler & Kessen 1974, p. 316). We also suggested that as young children discover that their actions influence their environment, they develop a theory of personal efficacy that contributes to the belief in voluntary control. Our suggestions add in small part to Wegner's notion in Chapter 9 that the experience of free will acts to organize our experience of our own agency.

Wegner's final chapter starts with a well-argued discussion of the relationship between conscious willing and determinism, and makes interesting contributions to the advantage of conscious will in providing a sense of authorship and of achievement. Finally, while Wegner's distinction between conscious and empirical will is useful, what is missing is a disciplined discussion of the empirical will. Wegner (as well as other writers such as Westcott) leaves us with a complex menu of possible contributors to intentional, directed action – but no roadmap, no recipes. Maybe it would be best to forget about the problem of will altogether. Now that we understand what the subjective feeling of willing is about, we can return to our major problem: to understand, explain, and predict human thought and action. Will, in general, is too easily confused with conscious, illusory will. It also has unfortunate links with theories of the will associated with national socialist Germany (Mandler 2002). I would prefer to define conscious will in terms of Wegner's explanation, and get on with the work of psychology without extraneous baggage, such as attempts to define a determinist will.

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