the feeling of what it is like to be in control of one's actions; knowing what is going to happen and, at the same time, minimal awareness of the sensory consequences. Thus, will has a specific phenomenology in addition to the knowledge of authorship.

We also propose that, even if priority, consistency, and exclusivity are sufficient for the experience of being the author of an action, this does not mean that conscious will is an illusion. The situations Wegner draws upon to claim that conscious will is simply an emotion of authorship are all very specific and differ in important ways from everyday settings. First, they are characterized by a lack of exclusivity, such that the intention to perform an action can either be attributed to oneself or another entity, be it a hypnotist, a ghost, or simply another person. Faced with a lack of exclusivity, we are likely to attribute authorship of an action to somebody else – unless priority and consistency are reinforced as in the "I Spy" study, wherein people are tricked into attributing to themselves an intention they never had. In everyday life, most of our actions and intentions can usually unambiguously be attributed to ourselves. Second, Wegner focuses on situations where intentions in action rather than prior intentions (Searle 1983) are at stake. He investigates the feeling of authorship in situations where one did not have a strong prior intention to perform a specific action. However, in everyday life, many of our actions seem to be the consequence of prior intentions that have been formed following conscious deliberation. A recent experiment (Lackner et al., in preparation) suggests that when a prior intention for an action has been formed, performance of the action is less susceptible to the influence of a distracter (a voice referring either to the action to be performed or an action not to be performed) than when the action is only accompanied by an intention in action. It seems that Wegner, in his remarkable study of the phenomenal will, has extended his conclusions slightly too far to include all kinds of intentions, and while his thought-provoking ideas explain cases of intentions in action, they do not explain prior intentions very well.

Finally, we suggest that from the finding that the phenomenal will can be illusory it does not follow that the empirical will, defined as "the causality of the person's conscious thoughts as established by a scientific analysis of their covariation with the person's behavior" (Wegner 2002, p. 14) is also an illusion. Although Wegner claims to address only the phenomenal will, he uses demonstrations of how the feeling of conscious will can be erroneous at times to draw conclusions about the empirical will, suggesting that all or most of our voluntary actions are caused by unconscious forces rather than conscious intentions. From the observation that the feeling of conscious will and actions are not causally related in certain specific conditions such as hypnosis, automatisms, and particular experimental settings, it does not automatically follow that conscious thoughts are generally not causally related to actions.

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Is the illusion of conscious will an illusion?

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Abstract: This book is a tour de force in showing that what we believe to be actions dictated by conscious will are not, in fact, wholly dictated by conscious will. However, Wegner has fallen into the trap of making claims that go beyond his data to make his case more compelling and newsworthy. Psychology needs to be informed by common sense.

The Illusion of Conscious Will (Wegner 2002) is a wonderful book that shows that much of what we believe to be consciously-driven action is, in fact, more complexly driven than we are likely to think possible. For those who maintain an illusion of tight control, the book will be an eye-opener. For some notable examples, the foibles of Strom Thurmond, Newt Gingrich, Bill Clinton, Richard Nixon, and other very intelligent individuals may make clear, at least to some, that even the brightest among us have much less control over their actions than they would like to believe – and certainly than they would like others to believe.

The title of the book implies that conscious will is a myth. Indeed, Wegner ends the book by stating that "the feeling of doing is how it seems, not what it is – but that is as it should be. All is well because the illusion makes us human" (p. 342). But is it an illusion?

I would argue that nothing in the book quite shows conscious will to be an illusion. Rather, it is part of a complex chain of events in which the conscious will does not necessarily come at the beginning of the chain. However, as Aristotle and everyone since who has studied causality has appreciated, causality always represents a complex chain of events. One can almost always ask for a cause one step further back in a causal chain. For example, why do people procreate? Because they want to? Because of their motivations? Because of their emotions? Because evolution drives them to? Because God willed them to? Because they are victims of their genes? The causal chain is long, and it is complex rather than linear. The fact that there may always be one step further back does not mean that causal value cannot be assigned to each step along the way. To argue otherwise is the ultimate in reductionism.

An example can be viewed in the case of the murders committed by Lee Boyd Malvo in and around the Washington, DC, area in 2002. It is uncontroversial that Malvo committed them. But why? Because he was under the dominating influence of John Muhammed? Because he was psychopathic? Because he was a natural-born killer? The causal chain, as in most events, is long and complex. Unquestionably, research paradigms such as those used by Wegner would show that his conscious willing of the killings was not at the beginning of the causal chain. Was the jury therefore wrong in convicting him of murder and sentencing him to life in prison? The causal chain is complex. But one would shudder to think of Wegner testifying at the trial that Malvo's will was only at some intermediate step in the causal chain, and that therefore, Malvo, as well as Muhammed, must be set free. They aren't responsible for their actions because their conscious volition was at some midway stage of the decision process. Does Wegner or anyone else want to move to this position – that no one is responsible for his or her own actions? Do we want, in deciding what is, to spend our time deciding exactly what "is" means, as some powerful defendants would have us do?

I believe there is a general lesson here. Mischel (1968) once argued that research did not support the notion of personality traits. Jensen (1998) has argued that when all is said and done, general ability (*g*) pretty much captures all that is worth capturing in the study of intelligence. These claims seem, through common sense, off-base. Mischel (Mischel & Peake 1983) later backed off from his earlier claim. Perhaps someday Jensen or his disciples will back off from theirs. When the evidence of everyday experience suggests that the story told by psychological research is not quite right, we need to listen to it and consider the possibility that our paradigms are leading us astray, at least in our interpretation of conclusions. Wegner's research does not show conscious will to be an illusion. It shows it to be complexly determined. But I would suspect, or at least hope, that Wegner would not entirely exculpate Malvo or Muhammed on the argument that what they did was not the product of conscious will. Rather, the process was complex, but in the end, we must take responsibility for our own actions, however complexly determined they may be. The process by which Malvo committed the murders may well not have started with conscious will. But conscious will could have kept Malvo from committing the murders. It didn't. Hence, he is culpable. And his culpability is no illusion, and it in no way makes him "human."

Psychology, and science in general, have long been plagued by their failure to recognize fully the relevance of the Hegelian di-

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alectic. Extreme theses and antitheses garner more attention, increase citation rates, and sell books. But they are rarely correct. In the end, questions that are originally formulated in terms of (false) dichotomies (e.g., "Is conscious will real or an illusion?") usually end up being formulated in more complex ways that recognize some kind of synthesis in which a statement is not true or false, but rather, true to some extent, under certain circumstances (Sternberg 1999).

None of my argument takes away from the value of Wegner's most impressive research program. But I believe it does call into question what may be an overly simplistic interpretation of the results. Conscious will is not an illusion. It is not a simple reality. It is part of a complex and multifaceted causal chain that cannot, in the end, relieve us of responsibility for our own actions.

Wegner's "illusion" anticipated: Jonathan Edwards on the will

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Abstract: Wegner's *The Illusion of Conscious Will* (2002) ignores an important aspect of the history of the concept: the determinism of Jonathan Edwards (1754) and the later response to this determinism by William James and others. We argue that Edwards's formulation, and James's resolution of the resulting dilemma, are superior to Wegner's.

In 1754, Jonathan Edwards published his epochal *Freedom of the Will.* Edwards, a strict Calvinist predestinarian, sought to reconcile the omnipotence of a deity that directed and foresaw all future events, the "universal determining providence," with the need to regard people as moral agents who could be praised or blamed for their actions. Edwards rejected the idea of an autonomous "free" will (which he saw as inconsistent with divine omnipotence), and instead located human action within a deterministic network of unfolding events; a systemic model of the causation of behavior in which the force of the "apparent good" of an action was, like the force of gravity in planetary motion, the impetus for all behavior (Edwards 1754/1957). All ultimate causation was both divine and divinely foretold, and the unfolding of human action was both part of a dynamic system and completely determined.

Edwards's book opened 150 years of debate in America about the nature and existence of "free will," an important debate in a liberalizing age that moved past the strict Calvinism of Edwards. Many of the opponents of determinism (e.g., Catherine Beecher and Rowland Hazard) appealed to the strong personal awareness of self-agency. Free will was self-evident, to be found in the consciousness of effort that accompanied all exertion of will. Such consciousness *could not,* so the argument went, be illusory, a claim that, as for Wegner, seemed wide open for psychological debunking.

The issue weighed especially heavily on William James, for whom all of science seemed to point to a strictly determined will. Yet this was an idea that led him into a stifling depression, one he mastered, as he tells us in an 1870 diary entry, by asserting his first great pragmatic formulation: "The first act of free will is to believe in free will" (H. James 1920, p. 147). This characteristically Jamesian solution was a pragmatic stance that resolved his amotivational depression and eventuated in his later philosophical and psychological positions (James 1890). James's "solution" to Edwards's dilemma effectively closed the debate begun in 1754, and since then free will has been only a minor topic in psychology.

Wegner tells his readers nothing of this history, although it is directly relevant to many of the issues he raises. Thus, consider Edwards's claim that "The will is as the greatest apparent good." (Edwards 1754/1957, p. 142). The phrasing was carefully explained: there is a seamless connection between the perception of an action as good at the moment and the carrying out of the action itself; each "is as" the other. Edwards used the example of a drunkard sitting before a drink; if the drunkard drinks, it is because drinking appears as the greatest good at the time. If the drunkard abstains, then abstinence appears as the greatest good at the time. Either way, perception of the greatest good and the action are inseparable. Edwards rejected any notion of the will as an *efficient* cause, that is, as a mechanistic prior event, a motivational "cue ball" hitting an actionable "eight ball" (Tweney 1997). Human action – the perception of an action and its carrying out – were instead parts of a whole. The drunkard does not "freely choose" to drink. Instead, bad character and the proximal situation determine the drinking, just as, were the character good, abstinence would prevail.

Consider now Wegner's definition of the experience of will: "Will is experienced as the result of self-perceived apparent mental causation" (pp. 65–66). This resembles Edwards's "The will *is as* the greatest apparent good," but it muddles the causal issues. Note that Wegner sets up his definition by referring first to a billiard ball notion of causality (see p. 64), as if that were the only kind of causation possible. This is not like Edwards's systemic determinism, in which the perception of the apparent good and the action are distinct but inseparable parts of a whole. The result is that Wegner fights, yet again, the old battle about the causal efficacy of the "feeling" of will. His book takes on the task of proving once and for all, that the *feeling* of will is illusory. This ignores the deep dilemma set by Edwards, as well as the elegance of the resolution proffered by James. Edwards needed a deterministic will because he sought a theocratic social order in which the "Elect" could lead the damned and continue to praise or blame both damned and Elect alike. In the post-James era, by contrast, we can see that the cultural and political construct of free will is essential in a free society, even as it is superfluous in psychology.

It might be claimed that Wegner brings a fresh approach, in that the kinds of social psychological experiments used by Wegner to support his claims were not available in the first debate over the existence and nature of free will. Unfortunately, the obvious potential problems with such experiments are not discussed – response bias, demand characteristics, and the like. Even in the case of hypnosis, don't subjects consciously choose to relinquish control over their actions? Wegner seems to assume that to "prove" conscious will, the individual must have full control over every minor action. Thus, when people perform actions under hypnosis that seem out of their control, this is taken as proof of his theory. However, if the loss of some control proves against free will, regaining some must prove for it. Thus, we could prove that there *is* free will by pointing to biofeedback studies in which people can learn (within limits) to control their own autonomic functions, such as heartbeat. In fact, there is no proof either way, since the construct of "free will" is not a psychological construct.

Finally, what of Wegner's moral claim? In the end, quoting James, Wegner brings in character as the warrant for praise and blame (p. 324), dismissing free will as a potential psychological mechanism (but then why include all the experimental studies?), while reasserting the importance of the now-illusory emotion: "Conscious will is the somatic marker of personal authorship . . . that authenticates the action's owner as the self" (p. 327). Free will is a *positive* illusion for Wegner – a signpost of reality, a mood enhancer, supplemented perhaps by a new kind of Zen-like resignation. This is a new predestination, perfectly appropriate to a psychologized society of isolated selves fantasizing control over their own fates; the illusion that because things seem to be so, then they are so. Do we have a "new Calvinism" here, one in which a psychological "Elect" can praise and blame those fooled by their own illusions of free will?

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