

Christine Long

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IB Theory of Knowledge

Nicely

Sociobiology and Reductionism???

It has been taught for centuries that man was the center of the universe. That humans rule the world. And that the thing that sets people apart from the rest is their extraordinary ability to reason and make their own decisions: their freewill. So what would it mean if man's freewill was taken away? Where would that leave us? Would it make us less *human*?

Reductionism is defined as "the attempt to explain all biological processes by the same explanations (as by physical laws) that chemists and physicists use to interpret inanimate matter." There is also a Reductionist theory that suggests that complete reductionism is possible. Reductionists have studied human behavior and suggest that human behavior is based on what our body's molecules do. What if one day they do exceed in explaining human behavior in this way? What would that mean? Would it mean that our whole concept of human existence and human behavior is false? Would it remove the whole idea that the human race's distinction comes from our freewill?

Reductionists try to explain human behavior by the ideals of sociobiology. The theory of sociobiology claims that "all human behaviors, which include social, altruistic and religious behavior, are caused by maximizing the survival propensity for our genes." This idea suggests that all great works of art, all human relationships, and all religious beliefs, are all created by means of genetic survival. This idea suggests that a person's

behavior throughout his life is programmed through his genes. That people have no free will.

It is known that human beings have certain animal instincts, yet at the same time, they do not always yield to them. Moral standards often hold people back and keep them from acting on their animal impulses. For example, sexual desire is an animal instinct, yet human's have the ability to control this. Because of moral beliefs, a man might decide to not to have sex before marriage. Sociobiology suggests that this choice that the man makes is not an action of freewill, but instead is because of his genetic makeup that pre-programmed his life, that his choice to not act upon his desires was strictly molecular.

If reductionists were to succeed in proving the theory of sociobiology, it would completely change the way of life everywhere. If one's life is predetermined by genetic make-up and the idea of free-will is removed, it would leave the idea that one's actions and thoughts are worthless. It would remove the idea of effort and determination and success. If people believe that their destiny is predetermined, what would be the point in trying for anything? If your life was predetermined, then what is the point? If you do not have control over how your life will turn out, why would you strive to do your best and to succeed? After all, if you are meant to succeed, you will anyways. This idea would completely remove one's purpose in life.

The reductionist explanation on human behavior also removes morals and religion from the picture. Most religions teach that human beings have a purpose on Earth. They teach the existence of freewill in man's mind and heart. They teach morals and encourage people to do well and try their best. If free will does not exist, what role does religion have? What role do morals have? What would this world be like without the existence of

morality and religious beliefs? This idea would leave human beings and their role in life as a mechanical process. It would leave human beings not as our idea of being *human*, but rather robotic. It is like the image of the toy robot in which you wind up the key on his back and set him down and let him go. Is that really a possibility?

How could reductionists succeed in explaining human behavior on the molecular level? Human beings are so different; it would be like comparing all the sets of fingerprints on everyone's hands. There are many problems with comparing human beings and conducting researches on human behavior. How could one prove that human behavior is based on genetic make-up? As unlikely as this idea seems, it seems even more impossible for it to ever be proved. Sociologists and psychologists everywhere have been studying human behavior for a long time and have scarcely come to any conclusions. Why? For one thing, the diversity in human behavior makes it near impossible to compare different people and then come to a general conclusion for a certain group of people altogether?

An ethical question that might arise is: should reductionists try to explain human behavior based on what our body's molecules do? Sure. Why not pursue this knowledge? Any idea is open to research and investigation. The only way for us to learn anything and to gain any sort of knowledge is to investigate different ideas and theories. Personally, I believe that human behavior cannot be based on what our body molecules do. I just do not think that it is a possibility. Yet, I have no problem with people studying the idea. What's the worst that could happen? I think it is very beneficial to explore this area of knowledge. Shouldn't we as human beings search for the truth? If some people believe

that is the truth, then they should pursue it. I think that the pursuit of knowledge is important.

Some good things can come from seeking this knowledge. The ultimate attainment of truth could possibly result either in proving or, more likely in my opinion, disproving the theory. In the end, the attainment of knowledge is an important thing that is valued in human culture.

On the other hand, there could be some disadvantages to pursuing this type of knowledge. For instance, some people have a tendency to believe things without having proper justification. As reductionists explore this possibility, and the belief in it grows, even without proper proof, the effect that it might have on the group of believers might be devastating. If these people start believing that their entire existence is predetermined, it could cause them to seek no purpose in life, it could cause them to put forth no effort in life. Also, it might remove the moral values that they may have once believed in. Without morals would people still do good things in the world? Or would they only seek to please themselves and their whimsical desires? Morality is like glue that holds this world together. The difference between what is right and wrong and also the pursuit of what is true and good is what gives people a purpose in life.

Human beings need a purpose in the world in order to function as we know it. People need the feeling of success and achievement. They need something to strive for. We need moral values and religion. Religious beliefs are based on having a purpose in the world and attaining to do what is good. Without a purpose in the world, what would life be like? It would be a mechanical process in which humans behaved like

robots. And without freewill, what would be the purpose in the world? What would it mean to be *human*?

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