

# The Fundamental Unity Of Voluntary And Involuntary Actions

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**Abstract.** Social structure of our society decides the actions that are allowed by any individual human being. All the actions of an individual are characterized into voluntary or involuntary actions, which decides the behaviour of society towards that individual for that action. In this paper it has been shown that the characterization of action into these two categories is fundamentally flawed.

## KEY WORDS

1. Social Philosophy.
2. Metaphysics.
3. Law and Philosophy.
4. Self-Knowledge.
5. Dualism.

## 1. Introduction

The word "Voluntary" originated from the latin word "Voluntarius" which means "willing, of one's free will." So, the word voluntary inherently implies the existence of an agent which has the ability to do free actions. Based on this voluntary word, the opposite label is born which is "involuntary". These words "voluntary action" or "involuntary action" are nothing but the labels that we from our experience decide on which actions to put which. Our social structure heavily depends on these labelling and as we are not apart from society, its feedback affects us both from outside and inside i.e., physically and mentally. These are the basis for several emotions such as guilt, pride, etc. The current society heavily depends on it and cannot sustain without it hence overlooks the possibility of enquiry about its existence. On investigating deeply and honestly one finds several flaws in these labeling and hence dismantles voluntariness. In law and philosophy, voluntariness is a choice being made of a person's free will, as opposed to being made as the result of coercion or duress. These are not the only labels holding our social structure but they played a major role in the development of society as it is.

## 2. Nemesis Of Voluntariness

The existence of any action such as voluntary, relies heavily on the existence of a phenomenon known as free will. Though it is widely accepted in society that a person can act freely according to his/her will, there is no logical way that it can exist. If one digs deep logically into the ability of a person to act freely, he/she will find there is no way that a person can act freely i.e., the existence of phenomenon of free will for a human being seems illogical as neither the causal nor the random events has the ability to provide this. Hence the concepts such as voluntary actions or involuntary actions exist only at social level and have no basis for fundamental existence.

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*2.1. Investigating voluntariness of an action*—We accept several actions as voluntary actions as a social norm but how voluntary are they actually, for instance the action of lifting hand is considered as voluntary action. Now if one ask how does one do it or what does the person did such that his hand is lifted? From researches in biology, we know that there is some correspondence between the brain neuron cells and muscle tissues of hand in order to make this action. But then the question arises, is it the person who produced that signal in the neuron cells? Just like any other cell, we don't have voluntary control over these neuron cells. So lifting of hand is a cascade event initiated by this neuron signal, now even if one claims that he/she is the one who initiated that neuron signal then one can ask further what did he do to initiate that signal and so on up until the point that the action is out of persons control. From social norms the formation of cells or circulation of blood or beating of heart etc are involuntary actions. But we can take any voluntary action and ask what is happening in body and can come to an action that is labelled as involuntary even by social norms. Hence the difference between voluntary and involuntary actions is only of depth of enquiry. Once investigated deeply, the difference between voluntary and involuntary disappears. As a matter of fact on enquiring, we find that no such thing as free will or voluntary action can exist.

*2.2. Cause of acceptance of voluntariness*—Irrespective of all the logical contradictions, the concept of free will and voluntary actions is widely accepted. There is a reason for that. The natural and social environment in which human brain develops, shapes the subjective way of perceiving the objective world around. It develops the brain in such a way that an individual empirically experiences the ability to take decision and hence accepts the notion of voluntary action. Whatever first hand subjective experience one have, one naturally gives more weightage to that. Logical or rational conclusions are currently not in empirical experience of human beings hence concluding something logically, no matter how true, does not change the way one perceives the world. Even the biggest rationalist has this experience of false voluntary actions and free will. There are some methods which can be used to perceive directly the involuntariness of voluntary actions. These methods does not include logical or rational enquiry i.e., these methods do not operate at intellectual level rather at the empirical level.

*2.3. Impact of acceptance of idea of voluntary actions on individual*—In the current social structure, the life of any individual is full of decisions. These decisions when combined with the idea of voluntary action or free will to decide , leads to a feedback to the individual which commence in him/her several types of emotions. These emotions have physical basis in brain i.e., they are linked to release of certain neurochemicals in the brain and hence are capable of making one experience painful or joyful emotions such as guilt, trauma, happiness, misery etc. As these emotions have physical basis in brain , they interact with brain neurons and affects one's brain's activities. Empirically, on combined with several other socially, morally and ethically accepted and rejected concepts, one experiences a range of feelings. Nowadays the case of individual committing suicide or getting depression or feeling loneliness, agony, misery, anxiety etc. have increased to a significant amount. The cause of all these experiences is empirical perception of free will or voluntariness of an action. People have tried to resolve these issues by talking out of it or by using antidepressants but they resolve the issue only temporarily and the problem persists. These are the impacts of acceptance of these ideas on the brain of an individual. As the socially acceptable and empirically perceivable ideas and concepts changes, the kinds of emotions or feelings that individual experiences also changes and vice versa.

2.4. *Endnotes*—This is a reference to a discussion site where Alan Watts talks about processes happening behind voluntary action..<sup>1</sup> The information about the origin of word ”voluntary” is taken from this online source.<sup>2</sup> The definition about voluntariness is taken from this online source.<sup>3</sup>

### **3. Conclusion**

The difference between voluntary action and involuntary action has no logical or rational existence. It is merely an empirically experienced phenomenon which is evolved due to the social structure. It is the cause of a number of emotions felt by any individual. Voluntary action plays a vital role in current social, ethical and moral systems. Fundamentally there is no duality of actions in voluntary and involuntary. They are the same action and the distinction between them is baseless and has no objective possibility.

### **Notes and References**

<sup>1</sup> Watts, Discussion in “Nature of Consciousness Part 3.”  
<https://alanwatts.org/3-4-8-nature-of-consciousness-part-3/>

<sup>2</sup> Origin of word voluntary - <https://www.etymonline.com/word/voluntary>

<sup>3</sup> Voluntariness word definition - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voluntariness>