

Is free will just a mind trick?

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It happens hundreds of times a day: We press snooze on the alarm clock, we pick a shirt out of the closet, we reach for a beer in the fridge. In each case, we conceive of ourselves as free agents, consciously guiding our bodies in purposeful ways. But what does science have to say about the true source of this experience?

[In a classic paper published almost 20 years ago](#), the psychologists Dan Wegner and Thalia Wheatley made a revolutionary proposal: The experience of intentionally willing an action, they suggested, is often nothing more than a post hoc causal inference that our thoughts caused some behavior. The feeling itself, however, plays no causal role in producing that behavior.

But how could we be deceived into believing that we had intentionally made our choice *before* the consequences of this action were observed? This explanation for how we think of our agency would seem to require supernatural backwards causation, with our experience of conscious will being both a product and an apparent cause of behavior.

In a [study published in Psychological Science](#), [Paul Bloom](#) and I explore a radical—but non-magical—solution to this puzzle. Perhaps in the very moments that we experience a choice, our minds are rewriting history, fooling us into thinking that this choice—that was actually completed after its consequences were subconsciously perceived—was a choice that we had made all along.

Read full, original post: [What Neuroscience Says about Free Will](#)