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# A Neurophilosophical Perspective on Consciousness, Choice, and Responsibility

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## ABSTRACT

As we come to understand the role of genes and epigenetic conditions in neuronal wiring, and the role of neuronal wiring in the production of behavior, we are newly confronted with questions about choice and responsibility. Although questions concerning what free choice really amounts to have long been at the center of philosophical reflection, new discoveries, especially from neuropharmacology and neuropsychology, have lent them a special and very practical urgency. In the courts, in the education of children, and in general in daily life, we assume that some decisions are freely made and that agents should be held accountable for those decisions. On the other hand, we see the range of allowable excuses from responsibility broadening as we begin to understand the role of certain neuropathologies in aberrant behavior. These developments take place against the public policy debate concerning the right balance between considerations of public safety, justice, fairness, and individual freedom. From the perspective of neurophilosophy, I shall address some of the broad questions in this arena, including the theological and metaphysical contention that free choice is uncaused choice, and the proposal that pragmatic and scientific considerations can yield the best working basis for assignment of responsibility.