



DESTINY VS. CHOICE

By Marie D. Jones

Can You Choose What's Meant To Be?"

"You can't avoid it, it's written in the stars."

"He was destined to be a success."

"Life is what you make it."

"Choose your thoughts and choose your life."

Throughout our lives, we are bombarded with contradictory claims that our lives are pre-destined, that Fate deals us the cards we will play our entire lives with, that whatever happens, happens for a reason. OR that our lives are what we choose them to be, that what we focus on expands and manifests, that it's all just one big crapshoot. Confused, many of us don't know if there is indeed a blueprint for our lives laid down before we are born, or we are entirely on our own and left to our own defenses – making it up as we go along.

The word "destiny" comes from the Middle English "*destinee*," and simply refers to a predetermined course of events that are the result of an irresistible power or agency. But destiny has often been confused with fate, which is a little more constricting. While destiny implies that one has a bit of maneuvering room by which they can reach their destined end point, fate implies no such allowance for choice. Thus, some outside "agent" such as a God, Goddess or other entity was once thought to be the purveyor of one's fate. This outside agent or force laid down in stone how a person's life would unfold, and there was nothing that person could do to change the course of events to come.

The Greek myths spoke of the "Moirae," and the Roman myths, of "Parcae." The Norse myths had their "Norns." These were, in all three cases, three goddesses that were given the role of imparting the circumstances and events that would make up the mortal man or woman's fate. There are even goddesses that are responsible for giving out good fortune, such as the Greek goddess Tyche, and the Roman Fortuna, ruling out any role that choice might play in finding and keeping wealth, success and happiness. If the goddesses didn't deem you fit, tough luck.

In order for a life to be predestined, it had to be predetermined, and this is where science, philosophers and religious and spiritual leaders have long struggled to explain exactly who, or what, predetermined it. If we understand that all causes have a prior event, what was that first prior event? Which came first, the cause, or the event? One can easily see why the battle between destiny and free will has been an enduring one.

While scientists might say it was just random, the result of the Big Bang and its resultant physical laws that fell into place by some kind of brilliant accident, philosophers and religious thinkers sensed that there was something that started the whole chain of cause and effect that laid down the path of each human life, maybe even the earth itself. This beginning of the chain is known as “first cause,” and without knowing first cause, we simply don’t know who or what destined us to our roles in life.

But we humans know we have free will. We know we have choices...don’t we? We feel as though we have the ability to choose our spouses, our jobs, our homes, the kind of food we will have for dinner, and whether or not we will go to the movies on Tuesday or just sit home and watch “American Idol.” It’s up to us to decide. The founding father of political philosophy, Thomas Hobbes, states that freedom is the ability to do what we wish without hindrance or constraint. Even within the confines of our social, cultural, sexual and behavioral conditioning, complexes and needs, we can do whatever we choose. Later philosophers added that perhaps freedom was not so much about being able to do anything one wanted to do, but to have the *power* to do anything one wanted to do. So much for semantics...

Yet over thousands of years, we have battled with the sense that both destiny and free will or choice play a huge role in our lives, and certainly in how the world around us came to be. Our religions are filled with stories and proverbs and quotes about having a destined role or a predetermined fate, such as Christ’s destiny to be betrayed by Judas. He knew. He said it was his destiny, and he drank of that particular cup willingly, taking his final fate in his hands. But remember, he could have *chosen* not to follow through with it all. He could have *chosen* to say no.

But what does science have to say about destiny and choice? If we look at our own bodies, we can easily see that we have a genetic blueprint by which we became blond or brunette, green-eyed or brown-eyed, short or tall, big boned or small boned, and any other physical characteristics that were handed to us by our parents and their parents and their parents. We didn’t choose our genes. And yet, when it comes to behavior we seem to be able to make choices, both good and bad, and have some say in the course and outcome of our life path. There seems to be ample evidence for both nature vs. nurture, and both inherent and adapted characteristics that make up a human being.

The Big Bang is often referred to as the starting point of our universe (we won’t even get into what came before it, or what first cause “caused” the Big Bang!), from which all the forces, laws and matter and form and energy and life came into existence. It was perhaps a blueprint of sorts, and yet many scientists will say that it did not have any kind of intelligent design behind it. It just happened the way it happened. There was nothing, then – BANG! – there was everything.

But there are those scientists who believe that the amazing sophistication and intricacies of how life came to be simply could not have been a lucky accident of chemicals and particles and gasses and heat and matter and energy all being in the right place at the right time, and in just the right amounts. To these men and women of science, there indeed seems to be a destiny that started and directs the cosmos, and that the first cause behind it appears to have had some type

of intelligence, though not necessarily human. Perhaps the Universe, including us, is nothing more than the program of a giant Cosmic Computer, yet one would still have to ask...who or what is programming the computer?

Even in the quantum world there is interplay of both destiny and choice. At the level of the quantum, we are told that particles exist in a suspended state both as particle and waveform, until they are observed and their *wave function collapses*, thus fixing the particle into a position or outcome. Particles have a range of possible or potential states and until an observer effect occurs, those states remain in superposition, or happening all at once so to speak. Therefore, an observer can choose the state of a particle simply by observing it.

If this is how we are creating our reality, as even the popular law of attraction teachings tell us, with focus and intention and observing things into being, then how could anything be predetermined? Are we all just making our lives up as we go along? And yet, everyone can agree that we all are destined, once born, to die. Those who have indeed died, and return to tell about it, often tell stories of being told by higher guides or divine beings on the other side that they must return and fulfill their roles, or destinies, on the plane of the living. These are subjective and personal experiences, but the fact that so many report them is something to be considered. It is as if we must stay put until our pre-chosen destiny is fulfilled...even if we have to die and return to life again to find out.

Millions of people visit astrologers, palm readers, tarot readers, even love and relationship coaches wanting to know their destinies. Will I meet my soul mate? Should I change jobs? What is my purpose here? Some readers will tell people that their lives, according to the stars or rune stones or cards, are in some ways predestined, and yet, they have considerable choice in how they will reach that destiny. An astrologer might say that yes, the stars influence your life, but you still have room to move about within the confines of those influences. A tarot reader might tell you that you will meet with danger next week, but you can still make the choice to be hyper-vigilant and avoid a terrible car accident while leaving for work.

Love coaches will tell you that there are many soul mates out there for you, and not just The One, and that there might be someone destined for you in a sense that they will be the best fit, but they won't be the only best fit out of billions of people on the planet.

Yet if we are honest with ourselves, many of us do feel called, as if we have a path, or a destiny, that we are moving towards. When we ignore that path, or deviate from it, we are unhappy and dissatisfied. When we feel on path and on purpose, life flows. And yet, always, we have choices. The choice to walk that path, to not walk it, to run or skip or bike it. There may be one destination we are moving towards, but we get to choose the route by which we get there.

Destiny...Fate...or Free Will...Choice? Which path will you choose to take?

"Man was predestined to have free will." Anonymous

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