

# EDITORIAL

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Dear Reader,

Life is the sum of all our decisions. This assertion has been attributed to Albert Camus, and indeed, we are constantly making decisions on a daily basis – in front of the wardrobe, at breakfast, at work, and when planning our leisure activities. Not to mention the major decisions regarding careers, choosing a partner, and family life. But how consciously do we make these decisions? How much is coincidence, what is predetermined, and what can we influence ourselves? In this issue, which focuses on freedom of choice, we explore these very questions. Whether free will exists and if so, how to define it, are questions that concern both philosophy and the natural sciences. Neurobiology continues to develop new approaches to studying the processes underlying our decisions – and to exploring the nature of free will.

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As to whom we choose to journey through life with, one might think we largely have free choice these days – at least, that's what dating apps suggest. Some people use them to give fate a little push, since chance often plays a role in finding a partner. However, our experiences and traits also influence the search for a partner. This leads to patterns that can be illustrated using demographic data.

Chance also determines where and into which family we are born. Our origins shape our path through life, and especially our health, to a greater extent than we may realize. Epigenetic research shows how life circumstances – in the womb, during childhood, and even in later years – affect the activity of our genes and, in turn, our health.

Despite the influence of external circumstances, it remains within our power to shape our decisions and lead a fulfilling life – consciously and deliberately.

And it's with this in mind that we wish you an empowering read!

Your Editorial Team