

CALINA ALIMAN-DORNEANU

# **The Illusion of Free Will**

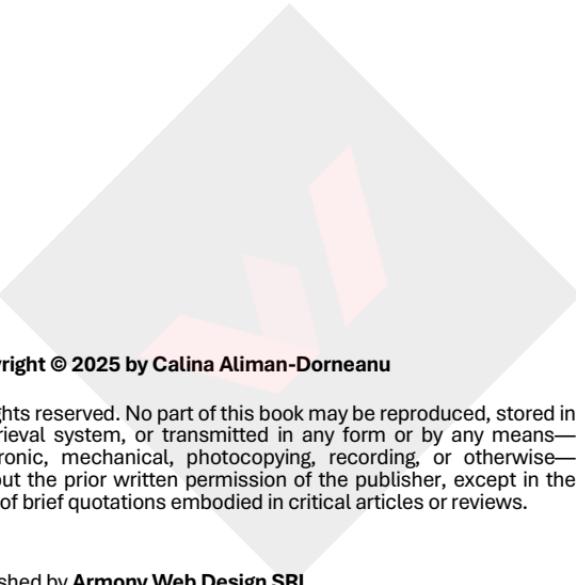
Destiny, Simulation and Vibration – A Story  
of Human Wonder

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**Bucharest**

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# The Illusion of Free Will



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# The Illusion of Free Will

*For the seekers of truth, who still look up  
at the stars*



## The Illusion of Free Will

Special thanks to Steven Bartlett. If it weren't for his podcast episode with Dr. Roman Yampolskiy — *"These Are the Only 5 Jobs That Will Remain In 2030"* — this book would likely never have come into being. That conversation sparked the inspiration that led me to explore deeper, to question further, and finally to weave these reflections into the work you now hold in your hands.

To the countless thinkers, storytellers, and seekers across history who kept the old questions alive: this book is also for you. Your wonder became my compass.

And to every reader who walks these pages — may they light a spark of curiosity within you, as they did within me.

# The Illusion of Free Will

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## Preface

Since the dawn of time, human beings have gathered around firelight and under star-filled skies, telling stories to make sense of the mystery of existence. The flames gave warmth, but it was the stories that gave meaning. They explained why the sun rose, why the seasons turned, why suffering came, and why love endured.

Across cultures and ages, these stories carried the same questions: Why are we here? Are our lives already written? Or do we shape them with our choices?

Around the fire, the old ones spoke and the children listened, their faces lit by sparks and shadows. Each tale was more than entertainment; it was a thread tying them to those who came before, a map through the unknown. Myths gave shape to what could not be grasped, weaving gods and heroes into the silence between the stars. The

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questions were never answered completely, but passed on — an inheritance of wonder.

Today, the fires have changed. We no longer gather only beneath the moon, but also before the glow of screens, searching for answers in data and code. We turn not only to gods and myths, but to simulations, algorithms, and theories of vibration. Still, the same questions remain, as ancient and eternal as the constellations: Who are we? What holds the fabric of our lives together?

The chapters that follow are not arguments to be won, nor doctrines to be accepted. They are stories — woven from philosophy, myth, and science — about the human search for truth. Their purpose is not to close the questions, but to open them wider, to remind us that wonder itself is part of the answer.

So let us begin where humanity always has: with the old questions, carried across time like embers from a fire, still glowing in our hands.



## Chapter 1

### - The Old Questions

*There is always a question older than the answer.*

There is a thread running through every life, thin as a whisper, strong as iron. Some call it fate. Others call it choice. But before the names, there was only the question.

Long ago, in a small community, a little girl sat by the fire after her father had died in a hunting accident. She turned to the elder beside her, eyes wide with grief and confusion, and asked: Why him? Why now? Why must people die? The elder, with a voice

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deep as the earth, told her it was fate—that the gods had written her father’s story long before his birth, and nothing, not even love, could change what was meant to be. The child did not fully understand, but she felt the weight of destiny pressing against her heart. And with that moment, she inherited one of the first answers humans ever gave: that life is already written.

Many years later, I found myself asking the same thing. Every time I dared to ask my grandmother why suffering clung to her life, she answered with words heavy as stone: *“Este soarta mea... trebuie să-mi duc crucea”*—“It is my fate... I must carry my cross.” She said it not with anger, but with a quiet acceptance that felt older than her own years. Her voice carried the same certainty as that elder by the fire: that some stories cannot be rewritten.

But the question did not stop at our doorstep. Another fire, another land, another voice: in India, children sat cross-legged in the dust as their elders spoke of **karma**—that every act plants a seed, and each seed will

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ripen in its own season, even across lifetimes. Alongside it came **dharma**, the duty carved in the soul, a path only one life could walk. And still further east, in China, beneath the bending willows and winding rivers, sages spoke of the **Dao**, the Way that flows like water: freedom lies not in resisting the current, but in learning to move with it.

Different lands, different stories, yet the same fire burning: are we bound to a fate, or do we dance with choice?

Centuries rolled on, and the fire moved indoors. A young man sat at his desk, a single lamp burning in the dark. Restless, he questioned everything around him. What if his senses deceived him? What if the world he saw was not the real one? This young man was René Descartes, and his suspicion became philosophy. He asked: How can I know that what I see and feel is true? What if an invisible hand is weaving illusions all around me? His doubt echoed the old question: What is real, and what is written?

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And now, the fire has turned electric. A scientist sits before glowing screens, lines of code streaming across. She builds simulations of entire worlds—oceans rising, civilizations expanding, galaxies colliding. If she can create such complexity on a machine, she wonders, what if her own reality is itself a machine's creation? What if she too is inside a simulation, a program designed by beings she cannot perceive? A chill runs down her arms as she whispers: What if I am not real at all?

From the flames of prehistory to the computers of today, we have asked the same things in different voices. Is it life chosen or given? Are we actors in a story already written, or improvisers shaping the play as we go? Is there a higher design that binds us, or do we carve our own path through the wilderness of existence?

Perhaps you, too, have asked these questions. Perhaps in moments of joy or despair you felt events seemed meant to be. Or perhaps you've felt the opposite: that with one decision, you changed everything. The

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truth is that both feelings belong to being human. We sense both the weight of destiny and the thrill of choice. We live suspended between them, always wondering which is real.

The old questions are not old because they are outdated. They are old because they are eternal. They belong to every generation, every heart, every soul. And so, with them, we begin our journey: through shadows and scripts, through threads of destiny, and finally into the song of vibration. A journey not to find final answers, but to live more deeply into the mystery that makes us human.

