

Free Will

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZHlBWlJ5zA>

1 Key Terms

- Determinism
- Indeterminism
- Deep Openness
- Principle of Alternative Possibilities
- Event Causation
- Agent causation

1.1 Determinism

- The idea that everything is determined by what comes before it.
- Mele puts it like this: *Determinism* is the thesis that a complete description of the universe at any time together with a complete list of all the laws of nature entails everything else that's true about the universe.
- If determinism is true, then *probability* and *chance* are merely ways of talking about our uncertainty.
- If determinism is false, then *probability* and *chance* are genuine features of our world.

1.2 Indeterminism

- The thesis that a complete description of the universe at any time together with a complete list of all the laws of nature does NOT entail everything else that's true about the universe.
- While Newtonian Physics gives a deterministic picture of the world, this picture was strongly questioned in the 20th century because some (though not all) interpretations of Quantum Theory indicate that the rules governing elementary particles are probabilistic rather than deterministic.

1.3 Deep Openness

A condition requiring the falsity of determinism in which a person has more than one option at a time, given everything as it actually is at the time.

1.4 Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP)

The idea that given the same antecedent (prior) conditions at time t_1 , a person S could do either act A_1 or A_2 . That is, it is up to S what to do after t_1 , and that his/her act is causally underdetermined.

Also called the Could-Have-Done-Otherwise Condition (CDO).

1.5 Event causation

When one event (or several) cause another event to happen. The event is entirely explainable by antecedent (prior) causes.

1.6 Agent causation

When an agent (e.g., a person) causes an event to happen. Agent causation introduces something new into the world that cannot be explained by antecedent (prior) causes. When an agent acts the agent is a first or unmoved mover.

2 Traditional Positions on Free Will

- Hard Determinism (No Free Will)
- Soft Determinism / Compatibilism
- Libertarianism

2.1 Hard Determinism (No Free Will)

Major tenants:

1. Determinism is true.
2. Determinism is incompatible with free will.
- ☒ 3. We never act freely (free will does not exist).

Mele's list (regular, mid-grade, premium) omits hard determinism because he only lists positions that affirm free will.

2.1.1 Distant Causation Argument for Determinism

1. If a person freely performs an action, then the agent is responsible for the action.
2. Agents are not responsible for actions that are caused by factors outside their control.
3. Every action an agent performs is caused by factors outside their control (e.g., genes and early childhood environments).
- ☒ 4. No action is performed freely.

Based on Sober (2009, 326–29)

2.2 Soft Determinism/Compatibilism

Major tenants:

1. Determinism is true.
2. We sometimes act freely (free will does exist).
- ☒ 3. Determinism is compatible with free will.

Corresponds to regular free will on Mele's list.

2.2.1 Classical/Traditional Compatibilism

- An action is free if:
 - it is caused by your own psychological states (e.g., beliefs and desires).
 - it is not impeded or constrained by anything external.
- Issue: Compulsive Behavior
 - Do we really want to say that people suffering from serious addictions or phobias do so freely?

- For example: When a kleptomaniac steals, their action resulted from (1) their own psychological states and (2) is not impeded or constrained by anything external.

2.2.2 Hierarchical Compatibilism

- Similar to traditional compatibilism but distinguishes between free action and free will.
- The hierarchical compatibilist begins by noting the difference between first-order and second-order desires:
- First-order desires
 - Person *P* wants to do action *A*.
 - * Examples: desire for pleasure, food, money, education, acceptance, etc.
- Second-order desire
 - Person *P* wants to have desire *D*.
 - Examples: to want to be a more loving/kind/generous person
- Second-order volition:
 - Free will, as opposed to free action, takes place when a person associates a particular second order desire with his or her will.
 - Person *P* has a second order volition when *P* wants desire *D* be *P*'s will.

In short, a person's will is free if and only if she is free to have the will she wants.

2.3 Libertarianism

Basic tenants:

1. We sometimes act freely (free will does exist).
2. Determinism is incompatible with free will.
- ✗ 3. Determinism is false.

Corresponds to mid-grade and premium free will on Mele's list.

According to libertarianism a person acts (or wills) freely when

- her action (or will) is underdetermined by any antecedent conditions
- the "self" makes up the unexplained difference

2.3.1 A Moral Argument for Libertarianism:

1. Since ought implies can, in order to have a duty to do *A*, we must be able to do *A* and to refrain from doing *A*.
2. Being morally responsible for doing *A* entails that I could have done otherwise if I had chosen to do so and that at some previous time I could have chosen to have done otherwise (or chosen some course of action that would have enabled me to do *A*).
3. But if determinism is true and our actions are merely the product of the laws of nature and antecedent states of affairs, it is not up to us to choose what we do.
4. But if it is not up to us to choose what we do, we cannot be responsible for what we do.
5. So if determinism is true, we are not responsible for what we do.
6. But our belief in moral responsibility is self-evident and more worthy of acceptance than belief in universal causality.
- ✗ 7. So if we believe that we have moral responsibilities, we cannot accept determinism.
- ✗ 8. Since we justifiably believe in moral responsibility, we must reject the notion of determinism even if we cannot give a full explanatory account of how agents choose.

The Ought Implies Can Argument (Pojman 2006, 237)

3 In-Class Activity

Is determinism the real issue?

Form groups of 3-4.

1. Define determinism.
2. Define indeterminism.
3. Are indeterminate events free? (E.g., the result of a coin toss or the output of a genuinely random number generator)
4. Is deep openness enough for free will?
5. Do we have free will? If so, what kind?

Sources

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