

## Freewill I: Hard Determinism

1. What is our investment in freewill?

Not just a sentimental attachment:

- At the root of how we organize our own lives (deliberation matters).
- At the root of how we interact with others (presupposed by praise and blame, punishment).

2. What is freewill? Consider when it is lacking

Airplane example: Jones leaves the plane...how?

- Straightjacket: *physical compulsion*
- Gunpoint: *external duress*
- Phobia: *internal duress*

What do they have in common? Action was unavoidable. This suggests:

**Avoidability condition on freedom: I do something freely iff I could have acted otherwise.**

3. Do we ever act freely?

Yes: compare the cases in which we hold people responsible and those in which we don't. Someone acting under compulsion or duress might cause harm to others, but we don't hold her responsible. Others we do hold responsible: Hitler is responsible for the pain and misery he caused, a person who cheats on an exam we hold responsible for his actions. Since we do hold people responsible, and responsibility presupposes freedom, we sometimes act freely.

Flaw in argument: holding people responsible only shows that we *believe* they were free, not that they really are. What evidence do we have in favor of freedom?

4. How do we know we are free?

Some say we know we are free by introspection. More specifically, I can tell I'm free because I would have acted differently if I had chosen to. If I choose to raise my hand, I raise it. If I choose to refrain from raising my hand, I refrain. This suggests:

**Choice analysis of ability: I could have acted otherwise iff had I chosen to act otherwise, I would have.**

But, is it enough to make my action free that if I had chosen otherwise I would have acted otherwise? Is introspection adequate to determine whether we are really free?

5. Problem:

Where is the choice coming from? Holbach suggests that even though we may not think so, our choices are forced on us by prior circumstances. In the hand-raising example, the prior circumstance is my desire to prove a point. And where did this desire come from? From other causes in my brain... Holbach suggests that choosing itself doesn't make one free unless

one has control over one's choices and motives, and to have control over these one must have control over the prior conditions of one's actions. Self consciousness (introspection) might tell you that your actions conform to your will, but it doesn't tell you that you have this prior control.

## 6. Physical Freedom/Moral Freedom

So where are we? Suppose we grant that in particular cases:

If I had willed otherwise, I would have acted otherwise.

This is a *kind* of freedom, perhaps; one might call it *physical* freedom since it goes with not being under any sort of physical constraint. Holbach would not deny us this kind of freedom. But this is not enough, Holbach says, for the kind of freedom we really care about; let's call that kind *moral* freedom. Remember, what we want is that we *could* have acted otherwise. And the fact that I do what I want to do doesn't show I could have acted otherwise, unless it also true that I could have *willed* or *chosen* otherwise. And that's what Holbach thinks we can't do.

## 7. Determinism

Holbach says we don't have control over our wills, but what exactly is his argument? What makes him so sure that whatever I will, and therefore do, is determined by prior circumstances? He claims:

In whatever manner man is considered, he is connected to universal nature, and submitted to the necessary and immutable laws that she imposes on all the beings she contains, according to their particular essences...Man's life is a line that nature commands him to describe upon the surface of the earth, without his ever being able to swerve from it, even for an instant...(462)

This law of causality Holbach speaks of is more or less what is known today as:

**Determinism: Whatever happens is determined by prior events.**

Human choices and actions are no exception. Whatever you decide to do, your decision was inevitable given prior conditions. Granted the decision *feels* free but this is an illusion. (Such illusions are not unknown. Post-hypnotic suggestion: subject on hands and knees, I was wondering about the quality of the tile etc.) And if the decision is not free -- if you couldn't have chosen differently -- then neither is the resulting action. For you couldn't have acted any differently than in fact you did.

**Hard determinism** is the view that first, determinism is true, and second, this shows that freedom is an illusion. Here is the basic argument.

- (1) Whatever happens is determined by prior events. (Determinism)
- (2) I act freely only if I'm able to act otherwise. (Avoidability Condition)
- (3) If my action is determined, I'm unable to act otherwise.
- (4) Therefore, I don't ever act freely. (1,2,3).

Seeing this argument, you might argue that the best strategy is simply to deny determinism. But does that solve the problem? Is indeterminism any more compatible with freewill?

**Indeterminism: Some events are not determined by prior events.**

Consider the freewill dilemma (see also p. 458 of *Reason and Responsibility*):

1. If determinism is true, we can never do other than what we do; so we are not free.
2. If indeterminism is true, then some events--possibly some actions--are random; but if they are random, we are not their authors. So we are not free.
3. Either determinism or indeterminism is true.
4. Therefore, we never act freely.

It appears that denying determinism is no help in preserving for us some space for genuine freedom.

#### SUMMARY AND PREVIEW:

**Hard determinism** is the view that determinism is true and that because of this freedom is an illusion. **Soft determinism** agrees with hard determinism that determinism is true, but maintains that this *doesn't* rule out free will. That is, determinism and free will are *compatible*. For this reason soft determinists are called **compatibilists**. Hard determinists are **incompatibilists**. That leaves the **libertarian**, who agrees with incompatibilism, but holds that determinism is false-free acts occur and are undetermined. So, if DET is determinism, FREE is free will, and INC is incompatibilism, the positions are these:

	INC	DET	FREE
Hard Determinist:	Y	Y	N
Soft Determinist:	N	Y	Y
Libertarian:	N	Y	Y

INC, DET, and FREE are three plausible claims, but one can't maintain all three. Each of the positions just sketched keeps two and denies one. Of the philosophers we'll be looking at, which occupy which positions? Holbach is a hard determinist; Ayer and Stace are compatibilists; Chisholm is a libertarian.