

FREEDOM: Challenge of Determinism

Lecture 17

Phil 1000, Fall 2008
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Why Think You Are Free?

- Choice and Deliberation
 - We feel as though we are in control of what we do, our deliberations, our choice in action, etc.
- Moral Responsibility
 - We hold people responsible for their actions, in part because we think they are in control, free to choose, etc.
- Spirituality
 - Some religious doctrines hold we are free because we are non-material (souls or spirits), not subject to the material causes.

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Determinism

Determinism is the view that contrary to what you might think, humans are not free. Why?

1. Universal Causation

- Every event has a cause; or every event has a prior cause(s) that necessitates that event.

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Determinism

2. Continuity of Nature

Humans are complex creatures, but not separate from nature or the causal structure of the world

- Humans are predictable
- Subject to complex biological and physical causes
- Subject to environmental and cultural causes

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Determinism

3. Illusion of Freewill

- Thinking we are in control of our actions or deliberations is a result of not recognizing (or being ignorant of) all the prior causes.
 - Ignore or are ignorant of prior environmental, cultural, biological influence/causes.
- We take this ignorance to be evidence of freewill (Holbach).

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Indeterminism (a.k.a., Libertarianism)

Denies universal causation:

Although many events have causes, some events do not; some events are uncaused.

- Human action, choice, and deliberation are some of the events that are uncaused.
- Thus, being free (freewill) amounts to being uncaused, or having one's actions uncaused.

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Indeterminism

- If being free = being uncaused, then...
 - Problem 1: uncaused = random chance or arbitrary; but freedom doesn't feel arbitrary, freewill implies some control over thoughts or actions.
 - Problem 2: uncaused = no causal connection to one's thoughts or actions; If something just happens, we don't hold people responsible; responsibility requires purpose/intent... a causal connection to one's actions.

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Dilemma

- P1:** Either determinism or indeterminism is true.
 - P2:** If determinism is true, then we are not free (or responsible.)
 - P3:** If indeterminism is true, then we are not free (or responsible).
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- C:** We are not free (or responsible).

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Answering the Dilemma

Dilemma

- P1:** Either determinism or indeterminism is true.
 - P2:** If determinism is true, then we are not free (or responsible.)
 - P3:** If indeterminism is true, then we are not free (or responsible).
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- C:** We are not free (or responsible).

Options

- **Deny P1:** difficult to do; exhaustive options.
- **Deny P2:** argue that determinism doesn't mean we are not free
 - Soft determinism
- **Deny P3:** argue that indeterminism doesn't mean we are not free.
 - Libertarianism
- **Suck it up!** Accept the conclusion
 - Hard determinism.

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Question

The truth will set you free!

What if the truth is that you are not free?

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Next Time

Soft Determinism
(Stace)

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