

FREEDOM: Agents and Hard Determinism

Lecture 19/20

Phil 1000, Fall 2008
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Quick Review

- Why Think You Are Free?
 - Choice and deliberation
 - Moral responsibility
 - Spirituality
- Soft Determinism
 - Alternative Possibilities
 - Conceptual
 - Internal vs. External Causes
- Determinism
 - Universal causation
 - Continuity of nature
 - Illusion of free will
- Today:
 - Libertarianism
 - Hard Determinism
- Dilemma

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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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Libertarianism

- Denies P3: Hold that indeterminism is true, but we can make sense of being free or responsible.
- Causation and Agency

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Chisholm

Need an account of freewill that shows 4 things:

1. A person is responsible when the event in question was brought about by some act of that person;
2. The act was something that was in the person's power either to perform or not to perform;
3. However, we cannot say that every event included in the action is caused by some other event;
4. And we cannot say that the action was not caused.

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Failed Solutions

- A. Free acts are those caused by internal psychological states:** the problem is that these internal states may not be under the control of the person.
- B. Free acts are those which result from one's character:** the problem is same as above; no one is entirely in control of his or her character.
- C. "Could have done otherwise" means if the person had different reasons they would have done otherwise:** the problem is that person is not clearly in control; if all the causes had been different, then the action would have been different.
- D. Indeterminism:** the problem is, as the dilemma suggests, that it doesn't give us any more control or responsibility.

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Chisholm's Solution

Agent Causal Theory

- A free action is one for which the action was caused by the agent (the person), but nothing caused the agent to act that way.
- Thus, (1) the action is brought about by the agent, and (2) it was in the agent's power to perform or not to perform that action because the agent was not caused to act that way.
- Also, (3) the agent is not caused by other events, and (4) the action was not uncaused.

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Agent Causal Theory

• Transeunt causation

(event causation): the causal relation between two events

• Immanent causation

(agent causation): the causal relation between an agent and an event, where the agent is not caused by other events.

... → E → E → E...

Event → Event

... → A → E → ...

Agent → Event

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A Few Problems

1. Agents are strange metaphysical objects with strange causal properties: an uncaused cause of actions? Sounds like God.

Chisholm's Reply:

- The problem is not unique to immanent causation; (event) causation in general is not well understood; agent causation may be more intuitive.
- Distinguish between the agent *doing* A and A *just happening*; the latter case needs only event causation, but the former requires we appeal to the locus of action, the agent.

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A Few Problems

2. Agents don't appear to be any more responsible than indeterminist accounts: agent needs to be connected to the action, but also needs to be connected to their deliberations, events in the world, etc.

Chisholm's Reply

- Hobbsean vs. Kantian approach: H assumes action is predictable, but K assumes action is unpredictable; Chisholm favors Kant's approach

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We are Left with a Dilemma

- P1:** Either determinism or indeterminism is true.
(Comprehensive options)
- P2:** If determinism is true, then we are not free (or responsible).
(Soft Determinism doesn't help)
- P3:** If indeterminism is true, then we are not free (or responsible).
(Libertarianism doesn't help)
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- C:** We are not free (or responsible).

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Unfree and responsible?

- If responsibility means uniquely causally responsible but uncaused, then no.
- If responsibility means importantly causally responsible, then yes.
- Think:
 - Why hold people "responsible"?
 - Punishment...

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Punishment

- **Retribution:** punishment acknowledged some moral wrong you have to pay for; would have to be done away with if hard determinism is true.
- **Correction:** punishment is intended to re-educate offender; can be maintained, if education is possible.
- **Deterrence:** punishment is used to “educate” others about consequences; can be maintained, if education is possible.

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Living with Hard Determinism

- Perhaps...
 - If hard determinism is true, we are not free but we can be held responsible;
 - However, ‘responsibility’ can’t maintain a notion of retribution in punishment (nor praise); only causally relevant locus.
- Does this make you feel better about being unfree?

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Next Time

Ethics

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