

Does Free Will Truly Exist: Defend for Compatibilism

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Abstract: The concept of free will has been a topic of discussion among philosophers for centuries. One of the most debated issues is whether determinism and free will can coexist. In this paper, I defend the view of compatibilism, which asserts that determinism and free will are compatible. The argument maintains that free will is a necessary condition of moral responsibility, and compatibilism helps establish the connection between moral responsibility and determinism. I analysed Ayer's view and argued that free will exists, and we sometimes act freely despite being complex deterministic beings. The paper presents the compatibilist's argument that determinism is compatible with free will, and it succeeds because human beings can choose to act in the absence of compulsion without fully understanding the reasons behind their actions.

Keywords: Philosophy; Compatibilism; Free will; Determinism

In this essay, I would like to argue in favor of compatibilism as an idea that there exists no conflict between determinism and free will. I shall defend compatibilism from Ayer's view. In this argument, I seek to reiterate the view that free will is a necessary condition of moral responsibility and compatibilism only helps establish the connection between moral responsibility and determinism. This argument maintains the view that human freedom exists and, in compatibilism, we sometimes act freely and in doing so, we've become highly complex deterministic beings. In my argument, the compatibilist's argument about free will succeeds and is validated by the fact that a human being may choose to undertake a certain action- in the absence of compulsion- and yet not become fully aware of the reasons behind their actions.

In compatibilism, free will and determinism are compatible. The problem of free will is anchored on three propositions: there's free will; determinism is true; and if determinism is true, then there's no free will. In determinism, the complete state of the world in the past plus the laws of nature guarantee a single, unique future state of the world. Necessarily, if the state of the world at some past time T_1 is S_1 , and the laws of nature are L_1, \dots, L_n , then the state of the world at later time T_2 is S_2 .

The argument's most important premise is determinism. In essence of determinism, the theory of determinism holds that all events, including moral choices, are determined solely, and completely, by previously existing causes. In its natural meaning, determinism can be understood as the exclusion of free will since it implies that humans, even rational ones, cannot act otherwise than they do. In fatalism, another essential premise of the argument, the concept of determinism becomes extreme, in that, there's only one possible state of the past and only one possible set of laws of nature. These assumptions lead to only one possible state of future. Free will consists of the ability to do otherwise that states X does A freely only if X is capable of doing otherwise than A. ADO1 conveys X does A freely only if there is no cause of X's doing A; ADO2 presents X does A freely only if had X not wanted to do A, then X would not have done A. It can be interpreted in terms of either counterfactual interpretation or the no-cause interpretation. The ambiguity that exists in the two different interpretations need to be disambiguated in order to truly understand the compatibility that exists between freedom and determinism. In the case of the no cause interpretation, by doing activity X, it can be argued that my ability to do otherwise is simply uncaused. In essence, it argues that there exists different possibility for the same past. In the counterfactual interpretation, the argument holds that if I did not want to do activity X, then I would not have done it. The counterfactual conditional gives a conditional that covers for the other state of existence that would have been possible if the world was different in some way. The first premise for Argument for Compatibilism is that if determinism is compatible with ADO1 or ADO2, then determinism is compatible with free will. The second and third premise state determinism is not compatible with ADO1 and determinism is compatible with ADO2. Therefore, determinism is compatible with free will.

Ayer defends for his premise that if determinism is compatible with ADO, then determinism is compatible with free will because the most important concept of freedom is the ability to do otherwise. The ability to do otherwise condition on freedom is ambiguous, the two interpretations are no cause interpretation and counterfactual interpretation. We can get the result of ADO1 as our claim if no cause interpretation is the previous condition, and ADO2 as the result of counterfactual interpretation. Thus, Ayer maintains a similar view about free will and freedom by reiterating the negating effects of constraints on the exercise of free will. In instances where individuals are not subjected to any constraints, then they are morally responsible for a significant percentage of their actions despite the reality of causal determinism. So if determinism is compatible with any of these condition, then determinism is compatible with freedom. Next, Ayer defends for AC2 that if it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise, it is surely irrational to hold me morally responsible for choosing I did. So ADO1 isn't freedom anyway, if our actions are uncaused, it's simply a matter of luck. Thus, determinism is not compatible with ADO1. There are two steps Ayer uses to defend the third premise. First, ADO2 captures what we ordinarily mean by "free" and "unfree" that bring the statement of The Ordinary Thief and The Kleptomaniac. The Ordinary Thief doesn't have compulsion and their action follow desires whereas The Kleptomaniac's compulsion would prevent in their desire not to steal. The difference is actions would have been caused by their desires or actions would be controlled by compulsion. Compare and contrast two cases of freedom and lack of freedom, if ADO2 captures the difference between the two kinds of cases, then we can conclude that it is a good account of what freedom is. The next step is to show that ADO2 is compatible with determinism: determinism is the complete state of the world in past together with the laws of nature determine or guarantee a single, unique future. Counterfactual interpretation shows if X had wanted to not do A, then X would not have done A, which also end up with a unique future.

I believe compatibilist's argument about free will succeeds and is a sound argument, which means the argument is valid and all the premises are true. Given the modern scientific view of the world and our existence and role in it, it appears that we are not only part of the natural universe but also merely objects that are subject to the natural laws of the universe- same as buildings and planets which bow to the law of gravity. The human concept of what's to be considered moral and legal responsibility or even the freedom to choose has become subject to a critical reappraisal that's synonymous with the past century. Determinism views the universe as a rational entity and as such, the complete knowledge of any given situation acknowledges the possibility of the unerring knowledge of its future being present. For instance, if I am able to know all the forces operating in nature, at any given moment, and its components' respective positions, then I would be able to accurately predict with certainty the past and the future of every entity- whether large or small. Hard determinists hold the view that humanity should give up on our concept and ideas of moral responsibility- and in extension, our concept of free will. However, as an individual who believes and relates deeply to the compatibilist view, I accept the first and second propositions that free will exists and determinism is true. However, I will reject that argues in favor of incompatibility; if determinism is true, then it doesn't necessarily mean that free will becomes non-existent. In this argument, I argue in terms of the complexity of the human psyche- a human being is a highly complex deterministic being. I believe that free will and determinism are mutually complementary rather than contradictory, as can be observed in the argument made by the incompatibilists. The success of the argument about free will can be evaluated by the fact that a human being may choose to undertake a certain action- in the absence of compulsion- and yet not become fully aware of the reasons behind their actions. However, this doesn't automatically transform into an indication or evidence of the absence of a causal effect. The causes of their action might still be in existence despite of their state of unawareness. Also, the absence of evidence with regard to causation doesn't necessarily translate into the evidence of absence. In most instances, for both statistical and causal laws, scientist fail to pinpoint the cause of a certain action. In such instances, and in most cases, this lack of evidence is attributed to limited knowledge about an occurrence rather than a lack of causation, this is an assumption that cannot be disproved.

According to my understanding of the ability to do otherwise, it's only possible to exercise this option if I was capable of engaging in something else other than doing activity X. In this argument, I engaged in activity X freely simply because I wanted to do it. If I did not feel like doing it then I would never have done it. This chain of thought translates into a counter-factual theory. If determinism, as interpreted in my engagement in activity A, is compatible with my counterfactual argument then it becomes compatible with free will. In essence, for free will to be present, I have to at least bare a certain sense of responsibility for my actions. If doing activity X happens merely as a matter of chance, in that I was never presented with the option to choose otherwise then it would be quite irrational for other individuals- or even authorities- to hold me responsible for my choice. Uncaused actions, in the assessment of free will, should be observed as simply a matter of luck. In the counterfactual argument, an assessment of free will should also be viewed based on the effects of compulsion or duress in making decisions. As much as one willingly chooses a

certain course of action, it doesn't necessarily mean that they exercised their free will. Freedom can be observed in the case of an ordinary thief who undertakes his ruthless activities without coercion, compulsion, bribery or duress. For free will to be present, the actions of an individual have to follow their desire. For the ordinary thief, the desire to steal is inherent and self-driven and their action to steal is only but an action that follows their desire.

Counterfactual interpretation makes our actions free and morally responsible. In contrast, the actions of a kleptomaniac cannot be construed as being free and morally responsible. This is because a kleptomaniac's desire to steal is the result of compulsion. In cases where the kleptomaniac expresses a desire not to steal, their compulsion overrides and compromises their ability to do otherwise. The case of the ordinary thief is the best example of what freedom truly is. The two conditions well explain why in some cases we are morally responsible for our actions but sometimes we are not. Freedom and free will only exists when things are under control and there is no compulsion overrides mind for doing such action.

In general, determinism is the complete state of the world in the past together with the laws of nature that determine or guarantee a single, unique future. Counterfactual interpretation provides the perfect interpretation of the meaning of freedom. Most often, the term "free will" is normally associated with a will that is not entirely dependent on prior physical states and events. Most philosophers and theologians, through their assessments and publications on free will tend to employ the term "free will" in a contra-casual sense that ignores the need to show evidence of a sufficient physical cause that drives an individual to engage in their chosen course of action. The language meaning of free will conforms to the interpretation of the word as established by incompatibilists. In order to understand determinism, one's view of the universe should incorporate an understanding that everything in existence- including human behavior- has a set of sufficient physical causes. On the other hand, compatibilism holds that determinism, as expressed earlier, is true and is compatible with the view that human beings are capable of exercising free will. In talking and assessing the meaning of free will, it's expedient to acknowledge the existence of a free act – generally, an action taken in exercise of free will. In essence, freedom becomes the consciousness of necessity. Therefore, this definition makes the argument about determinism and compatibilism successful since a man can be acting freely when his actions are causally determined and that his actions must be causally determined for it to be possible to be acting freely.

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