

Determinism and Free Will

I. Incompatibilism

Incompatibilist Argument (from Rachels)

1. Everything we do is caused by forces over which we have no control.(1)
2. If our actions are caused by forces over which we have no control, we do not act freely. (2)
3. Therefore we never act freely. (1,2)

Liberatarian Arguments:

1. The argument from experience
2. The argument that the universe is not a deterministic system
3. The argument that we cannot predict our own decisions (from Rachels)
 1. If human behavior is causally determined, it is in principle predictable (Assumption)
 2. But a prediction about what someone will do can be thwarted if the person whose behavior is predicted knows about the prediction and chooses to act otherwise. (Assumption)
 3. Therefore not all actions are in principle predictable (2)
 4. And so not all actions are causally determined. (1,3)

Response: Two types of predictability:

- (A) Predictable by a hypothetical ideal observer who stands outside the system and observes events but does not interfere with them.
- (B) Predictable by human beings in the real world.

II. Compatibilism

Free doesn't mean uncaused – but rather, caused by your desires.

Incompatibilist will say: But...even if our actions are caused by our desires – our desires are caused by things outside our control – in fact, if determinism is true our desires were caused by all sorts of things that happened even before we existed –and what happened before we existed is surely not up to us. So how does the fact that our actions stem from our desires imply that our actions are free

Compatibilist will say: There's no conflict between human behavior being free and being caused by things outside of our control. In fact, if human behavior had no causes it would be crazy and chaotic! Perhaps, then, not only is free will compatible with determinism – maybe free will *requires* determinism (or something like it)?

III. Free Will and Practical Rationality

The Lazy Argument

1. It is determined now that either I'll pass tomorrow's exam or fail.(Assumption)
2. If I will pass the exam, I have no reason to study – for even if I don't study, I will pass.(1)
3. If I will fail the exam, I have no reason to study, for even if study, I will fail. (1)
4. I will either pass or fail the exam. (Assumption)
5. I have no reason to study. (2,3,4)

What's wrong with this argument?

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24.00 Problems in Philosophy
Fall 2010

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