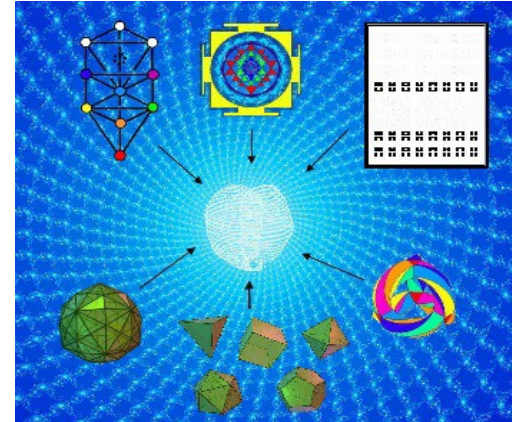
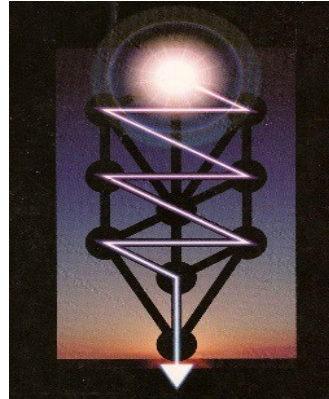
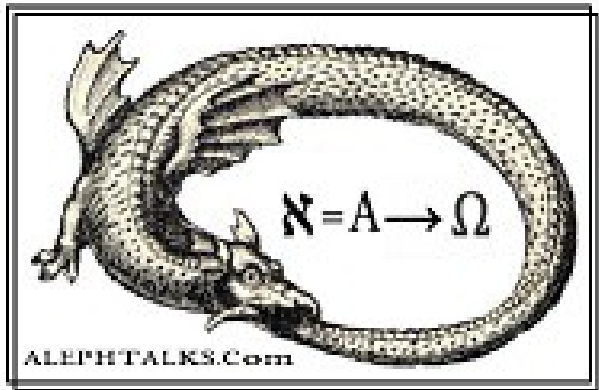


Is Mysticism Where Science, Art, and Religion Meet?



Subject Four: East and West Mysticism
Free Will, Determinism and Enlightenment
©AlephTalks 2022
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Outline



the different factions within the debate and
discuss determinism

the merits and disadvantages of both the
compatibilist and libertarian account on free will
and morally responsibility

the findings in science

an alternative theory in an attempt to unify both
sides of the debate

What Is the Problem?



freedom of the
will is real, and
compatible with
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Background



- Humans consider themselves free, and many of them have never considered not having a free will
- Philosophical discourse shows that this free will is not a given
- The free will debate includes issues such as moral responsibility, freedom of action, freedom of will, whether it relates to a person, chance, luck, how science is involved, et al
- All these issues, and especially moral responsibility, hinge on the notion of determinism

Determinism



The universe, at any time, can only have a single possible future, exactly one physical outcome considering the past and laws of nature. In this view, all choice, including that which leads to it, is necessitated, and is a direct outcome of genetic and environmental elements beyond human control: every event has a cause.

The debate can be divided in factions

- Hard determinism
- Compatibilism
- Libertarianism
- Hard incompatibilism.

Determinism



Several philosophers throughout time have given a description of the dilemma of determinism, here we discuss William James views

- According to James, hard determinism ignores the dilemma altogether since for them it is clear that the universe must advance with physical continuity and coherence
- James argues that soft determinism leaves room for the good and bad to mix with causation: hard determinism entails pessimism, and soft determinism entails subjectivism.
- Thus the dilemma is between those who deny the possibility of freedom and those who argue for its possibility. However, if the division within the debate revolves around determinism (to establish moral responsibility), one must first examine the idea of determinism in more detail before one can look at the arguments flowing from it.

Determinism



Concerning the dilemma, John Stuart Mill argues that the freedom of will is what is at stake: the positive answer to the dilemma entails a ***doctrine of necessity***, and those who oppose argue that ***the will determines itself***.

The main error concerning determinism, according to Mill, is that ***causation is associated with necessity***. Necessity implies irresistibility, but causation merely means a uniformity of sequence.

Applying this to will, causation only entails that a particular cause will be followed by a particular effect, but that it is open to counteraction by other causes. Causation entails a relation between cause and effect and nowhere does this imply any necessity: it seems that fatalists have, unjustifiably, connected their fatalism to determinism, and thereby successfully executed a philosophical coup d'état against the definition of determinism.

Determinism



Hume and Kant agree that there is no plausible reason to accept that there is such a thing as causality out in reality.

Hume correctly assesses that nothing in our sense experience provides us any cause and effect, let alone necessity: for Hume, causality is a psychological habit over time after repeated observations and all one can establish is a constant conjunction, not a necessary connection.

Kant agrees, but concludes that the necessity relating to causality is superimposed by our mind: causality is merely a logical rule (category) of the mind to enable us to experience the difference between an observing an object (subjective succession), and an event observed in time (objective succession). From this one can argue for a form of soft determinism imposed by our brain, not one derived from reality.

Determinism



If one accepts that determinism does not entail necessity, then determinism and free will can co-exist: compatibilism. Mill's account is a classical defence of compatibilism, but more modern defences exist.

One such argument come from the British philosopher A.J. Ayer who argues that freedom should not be contrasted with causality, but with constraint. The fact that actions are causally determined does not entail that these actions are constrained, so, Ayer argues, it does not follow that one is not free, and therefore humans are morally responsible for these actions.

The crux of the argument is, besides the moral responsibility, that even if determinism is the case, then actions are not meaningless. Actions might be the effect of a cause, but they are also the cause of future actions, and if these actions differ then future actions differ too.

Determinism



Ayer assumes that someone has the capability to act otherwise since Ayer allows that actions, due to the lack of constraint, can change.

G.E. Moore argues that 'could have done otherwise' (A) means the same as 'if chosen to do otherwise, then one would have done so' (B).

Roderick Chisholm argues that these two do not mean the same thing since (B) can be true while (A) can be false: the person would have acted differently if chosen to act differently, but could not have done otherwise. For example, if a man had chosen to save the life of a little girl he would have saved her. However, if he had done so he would have died (and thus the girl too), and therefore he could not otherwise, but to save himself. Therefore the person cannot be held morally responsible, because the person could not have done

Determinism



However, one can argue against this that free will does not require a capacity to be able to do otherwise.

If one is locked in a room, then it is irrelevant whether determinism is true or false, since this is a matter of 'no matter what one did or wanted to do', or local fatalism.

In addition, Harry Frankfurt argues that even if one cannot do otherwise, the person can still be morally responsible.

Example: it was determined that only one outcome was possible (external control over the brain), but the choice for this outcome was undetermined up onto the moment it occurred. If the person chose this particular outcome freely, then, although the person could not have done otherwise, this person is morally responsible nonetheless.

Libertarianism



Those who argue that determinism is false and that humans have freedom are called Libertarians: human freedom and moral responsibility exist, but these notions are incompatible with determinism and therefore determinism must be wrong.

Libertarianism has three main branches: agent-causal libertarianism, simple indeterminism, and indeterministic event-causal libertarianism which all argue that to be free means that our actions must not be causally determined.

Some classical defenders of agent-causal libertarianism are Thomas Reid and George Berkeley, but a more contemporary defence comes from Roderick Chisholm. Chisholm holds that both determinism and indeterminism are at odds with humans as responsible and free agents.

Libertarianism



If agent 'A' shoots agent 'B', then this act was up to agent 'A' for 'A' could also not have shot the person.

Central is the agent causing something which makes the agent responsible; for example, if agent 'A' was forced by agent 'C', then the act was caused by agent 'C' and not 'A', and thus 'A' would not be morally responsible, but agent 'C' would be.

Alternatively, if agent 'A' shot agent 'B' out of the blue, without any cause, then no one would be responsible for the act of shooting 'B' and the act would be meaningless.

Chisholm sees a third way. Something is neither caused nor is it not caused, but at least one event within a given act is not caused by another event: the agent. To explain this agent causation, Chisholm divides causation between immanent causation (agent makes an event happen) and transeunt causation (an event making another event happen).

Libertarianism



When agent 'A' acts, then by immanent causation agent 'A' makes a cerebral event happen, and this event in the brain makes the act happen which is the transeunt cause.

Chisholm refers to Aquinas in terming these types of causation, and this is also the weakness of the theory: the human as agent is an unmoved mover, a first cause, it causes the brain to do something without being caused or changing itself. According to Aquinas, this is a hallmark of God, not humans.

A less extreme interpretation would entail explaining Chisholm's argument as an agent in relation to dualism, like a Cartesian soul which is nevertheless equally problematic.

Libertarianism



.Tim O'Connor argues that a way around the dualistic problem is the creation of a natural system in which the soul (agent) and body constitute a single system.

At some point the body generates the soul (nonphysical substance) completely dependent on the body. There is no evidence for this, and O'Connor himself recognises that this would entail the emergence of a fundamental substance ex nihilo. The discussion surrounding dualism, the soul, creation out of nothing, and other aspects needed to justify this view would require a separate study.

Even if the account of agent-causation, as proposed by Chisholm and defended by O'Connor, would hold (including agent-causal power as an emergent property of the brain), it does not account for another problem; namely, that of luck.

Libertarianism



.The previous example places indeterminism at the end of the chain, just before the decision, and this makes it vulnerable to the luck argument (that the outcome is a matter of luck, and therefore random).

Daniel Dennett argues that this need not be: imagine that an agent has to decide between A and B for which the agent comes up with 5 considerations (1–5) and on the basis of these considerations the agent decides for B. After this decision, two additional considerations occur to the agent (6–7), and had these occurred before the decision then the agent would have decided for A

Libertarianism



.According to Dennett, which considerations occur to the agent are to a certain extent strictly undetermined, and therefore the decision can only be conditionally predicted since the first set of considerations leads to decision B (1–5), and the second set leads to decision A (1–7).

In addition, there are an infinite amount of possible sets of rational considerations (consideration 1–16, 5–25, 5–5000, etc.).

In principle one cannot predict which from all these rationales will occur for the decision to be made. Against this one can argue that the knowledge possessed by the person is (at least partly) causally determined (family born into, think of education possibilities, etc.)

Libertarianism



Robert Nozick expands this idea of intelligent selection and reasoning further. In *Philosophical Explanations*, Nozick develops the idea of weighing considerations, because all other approaches to free will are fruitless (according to Nozick)

Nozick's approach, indeterministic event-causal libertarianism, argues that only some events are not causally determined: the weighing of reasons against each other is an undetermined process. Although it might be causally determined that a reason is a reason, the exact weighing of reasons is not

Libertarianism



When a person must make a decision and weighs the reasons for doing 'A' (R_a) against reasons for doing 'B' (R_b) and the person decides to do 'A', then the person doing 'A' accepted R_a (all reasons for doing A).

However, if the person had done 'B', then R_b would have been the cause of doing 'B'. Nevertheless, the act itself is not (causally) determined, only the decision made is caused by virtue of the reasons which led to the decision.

According to Nozick, this is an example of contra-causal freedom (or contra-deterministic): a distinction between the action being caused and the action being causally determined. One can argue that strictly speaking this is a compatibilist account based on soft determinism.

The Tao or Dao



Tao or Dao is the natural order of the universe whose character one's human intuition must discern in order to realize the potential for individual wisdom, as conceived in the context of East Asian philosophy, East Asian religions, or any other human thought that accords with them on this principle. This intuitive knowing of "life" cannot be grasped as a concept; it is known through actual living experience of one's everyday being. Its name, Tao or Dao (About this sound came from Chinese, where it signifies the "way", "path", "route", "road" or sometimes more loosely "doctrine", "principle" or "holistic beliefs")

Laozi in the Tao Te Ching explains that the Tao is not a "name" for a "thing" but the underlying natural order of the Universe whose ultimate essence is difficult to circumscribe due to it being non-conceptual yet evident in one's being of aliveness.[citation needed] The Tao is "eternally nameless" (Tao Te Ching-32. Laozi) and to be distinguished from the countless "named" things which are considered to be its manifestations, the reality of life before its descriptions of it.

Buddhism



As expressed in the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, the goal of Buddhism is to overcome suffering (*duḥkha*) caused by desire and ignorance of reality's true nature, including impermanence (*anicca*) and the non-existence of the self (*anattā*).

Most Buddhist traditions emphasize transcending the individual self through the attainment of Nirvana or by following the path of Buddhahood, ending the cycle of death and rebirth. Buddhist schools vary in their interpretation of the path to liberation, the relative importance and canonicity assigned to the various Buddhist texts, and their specific teachings and practices.

Widely observed practices include meditation, observance of moral precepts, monasticism, taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and the cultivation of the Paramitas (perfections, or virtues).

The Role of Science



One of the criticisms regarding libertarianism is that it does not fit well with modern science.

Science is equally divided.

Classical Newtonian physics supposedly proves that the universe is deterministic and forms the basis for the hard determinism of D'Holbach and Laplace.

However, classical Newtonian physics is not as deterministic as those philosophers claim: determinism, independence, and objectivity are mutually incompatible in any physics theory, not just in quantum physics. Nevertheless, research has confirmed these three separately, and therefore it is impossible to form any causal determinist theory.

The Role of Science



.The universe at the quantum level is not deterministic (regardless whether this is on subatomic or macroscopic level, in principle not everything in the universe is deterministic).

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle shows that if one knows the position of a particle, then it is impossible to know the momentum; it is undetermined.

Heisenberg's son argues that Laplace's deterministic theory cannot be right since the principle shows the unpredictability of nature. At best the world is an interchange between determinism and the random.

Most physicists argue that quantum physics annihilates the possibility of a perfectly determined universe, leaving room only for soft determinism or indeterminism.

The Role of Psychology



- Psychology, especially neuroscience, has researched free will: the behaviourists, like B.F. Skinner, are determinists and argue that free will is an illusion

Despite the fact that behaviourism has been out favour for some time, more recent research supports the notion that free will is illusionary.

Soon et al. found that a decision can be decoded up to ten seconds before the person becomes conscious of it. However, just because one becomes aware of it later does not exclude that the person does not make the decision at an unconscious level. In addition, it is also possible that a response bias formed by preceding decisions in the experiment compromised the results of the experiment.

The Role of Psychology



A recent book by Peter Tsu argues that the human brain is actually wired for freedom: at the microscopic level, our brain is directly influenced by what happens at the quantum level, because chemical receptors (NMDA) in the brain depend on the behaviour of single magnesium atoms which block the receptors.

These receptors can only let ions flow if that magnesium atom is released rendering brain activity possible, and these single magnesium atoms are subjected to quantum physics.

Can Both Be Right?

.Determinism is phenomenally real, in all possible direct human experience, but that reality, outside our mode of perception, is indeterministic per se.

Mill rightfully disentangles determinism from fatalism and what remains is the necessary uniformity of a sequence according to rule (the rules of the human brain as explained by Kant).

In the Critique of Pure Reason (Kant), causality is a mode of representation in time which must be presupposed in order to distinguish a subjective succession from a causally determined event in time: experience-based soft determinism, one imposed by the brain.

Building on this, research in psychology shows that human tend to impose order on the world which is not really there: apophenia. In a sense, this is similar to causal determination, because both are functions of the brain to enable ordered experience.

Can Both Be Right?

.Quantum events are indeterministic and cannot be directly observed.

In addition, during physics experiments, such as the double-slit demonstration, the observer influences the experiment and its outcome (observer effect).

One can also explain this differently: humans do not actually influence experiments, but as soon as one observes the experiment it must conform to the conditions of the human brain which enables the observance.

One does not influence the experiment, but rather it is represented (incorporated into our experience) to us in the only way it is possible. In our experience two objects cannot occupy the same space, nor can they be at two places at the same time. Nevertheless, these things happen in quantum physics as long as we do not directly observe the events.

Can Both Be Right?

.How does this make us free or morally responsible?

Although our experience tells us the world is deterministic, it is not really deterministic: humans simply cannot experience the world differently, but as soon as the event is not directly observed (quantum events) the event is random.

Humans are consciously aware of their freedom of will and action. The brain and its consciousness are both not part of our own experience; rather they are required in order to have any experience, and therefore remain outside of the realm of experience (which is experienced deterministic), and is therefore not subject to phenomenal determinism.

This notion is supported by the findings of Peter Tsu, that the brain itself functions at the quantum level..

What They Missed

.So far the focus is on philosophy and the physical nature of the brain

There is a whole different experience if one has done a focused meditation. Everyone agrees when one starts to meditate, the mind is continually verbalizing and wondering and beyond control. With years of practice, this changes: There is vivid clarity and awareness where the mind notices everything. After years of meditation practice, one can experience a major transformation of consciousness, seeing reality as it is with vivid clarity and absolute certainty.

Anyone with a self, would right off such ideas as unbelievable. However, masters of meditation, do say this can happen. This is based on direct experience. In this world of vivid clarity and absolute certainty, one sees all beings as having heart mind and there is huge compassion for everyone. Causing harm to anyone does not arise. Ideas of free will and moral responsibility have no application. In this world of no self, the universe is changing every minute and each sees it differently.

What They Missed

.Suppose you are enlightened: you have nonduality, and the dual entities of your mind and soul are now one entity

You would then realize that the compactified dimensions provide certainty even in the quantum realm

You would then realize the certainty that comes from linking with the universe wave function and seeing all possible outcomes

You would choose a path of enlightenment that eventually will maximize love and compassion naturally; in fact it would be impossible for you to follow any other path. You would sense heart mind in others

Determinism wins out for the enlightened person, even as the universe continues to evolve and change around you, and your view of the universe is unique to you and different from how others view it.

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