

## The Three Amigos

Determinism, Libertarianism, Compatibilism

## Ponder This....

- List three different things that you did simply because they were what you wanted to do
  - Why did you like the activities on your list? Did you choose to like the things you like to do?
    - If yes, what caused you to like the things you like to do?
    - If no, how did you come to like the things you like to do?

## Two Notions of Freedom

- **Circumstantial Freedom:** the freedom to perform an action without interference from obstacles
  - You are not free to vote if someone locks you in the trunk of their car
- **Metaphysical Freedom:** the power of the self to choose among genuine alternatives
  - Genuine alternatives: acting independently of prior causal factors
  - Indeterminism: the view that some actions are not the result of prior causal factors (same as metaphysical freedom)
  - If we are metaphysically free, then facts about our psychology are not sufficient to make our actions necessary or inevitable

## Options for Human Freedom

The debate about freedom and determinism can be characterized by three statements

1. We are determined.
  2. If we are determined, then we lack the freedom necessary to be morally responsible.
  3. We do have the freedom necessary to be morally responsible.
- An inconsistent triad: accept any two and the other you must reject

## We Are Determined

- **Determinism:** the position that all events are the necessary outcome of previous causes
  - Everything that happens is the inevitable outcome of the causal order of things
  - Determinism can admit we have circumstantial freedom but deny we have metaphysical freedom
  - Do not confuse “determinism” with “predeterminism” or “predestination”
    - The latter two presuppose a knower and determinism makes no such assumption

## If We Are Determined, then We Lack the Freedom Necessary to be Morally Responsible

- **Incompatibilism:** position that determinism is *incompatible* with the sort of freedom required to be morally responsible for our actions
  - For the incompatibilist, the issue of moral responsibility is whether we deserve reward or punishment for our actions
  - **Compatibilism:** position that determinism is *compatible* with the sort of freedom required to be morally responsible for our actions

## We Do Have the Freedom Necessary to be Morally Responsible

- The issue is, What kind of freedom is necessary for one to be morally responsible?
  - One view is that circumstantial freedom is sufficient for one to be morally responsible (compatibilism)
  - Another view is that circumstantial freedom is a minimal condition, but one must be metaphysically free to be held morally responsible

## Three Stances Toward Freedom and Moral Responsibility

- **Hard Determinism:** all of our actions are (causally) determined and we do not have moral responsibility for our actions
- **Libertarianism:** we do have metaphysical freedom; determinism is false; we are morally responsible
- **Compatibilism:** we are determined and we have moral responsibility; circumstantial freedom is all we need to be morally responsible

# Holbach

## The Illusion of Free Will

# We Live In a World of Causes

- Humans are connected to universal nature
- They are "unceasingly modified by causes, whether visible or concealed"
- Humans have no control over these causal forces
- These causal forces regulate existence, "give the hue to his way of thinking" and determine actions

## We Act Necessarily

- One's action is the result of the impulse received from
  - the motive
  - the object, or
  - the idea which has modified one's brain or will
- If one does not act on a particular impulse, it is because there is some new cause, motive or object that affects him in a different manner
- "In all this he always acts according to necessary laws from which he has no means to emancipating himself."

## Errors of Philosophers

- Error of philosophers comes from thinking that a human's free will is the "original motive of his actions"
  - What the philosophers have missed is that there are many causes which effect the will
  - Humans are not the master of their desires

## Actions of Humans Are Never Free

- Humanity's actions are never free because they are the result of
  - one's temperament
  - of the received ideas and notions formed about one's own happiness
  - of one's opinions reinforced by example, education, and daily experiences
- "Man, then, is not a free agent in any one instant of his life; he is necessarily guided in each step by those advantages, whether real or fictitious, that he attaches to the objects by which his passions are roused...."

## Does Choice Prove Freedom?

- Suppose I say, "You are not free to raise you hand."
- You respond, "Oh yeah, watch this!"
- Would Holbach say you are free?

No, Holbach would argue that the desire to display your apparent free will becomes a necessary motive which determines your will

## Go Ahead, Jump!

- Is there a difference between the man who throws himself out the window and the man who is thrown out the window?
  - The only difference is that the man who is thrown out of the window is forced to do so by some force external to himself
  - The action of the man who throws himself out of the window is determined by internal forces with remote external causes

## Out of Control

- Are we in control of the motives of our actions?
- Where do these motives come from?
- What gives birth to these ideas and motives?
- Better yet, are we capable of preventing these ideas from presenting themselves in our brains?

## Look About

- Look at your neighbor.
- What do you see?
- Could you at that moment have seen him/her otherwise; that is, with different hair color, different features, different look of bewilderment?
- Similarly, could we have had motives other than those upon which we act?

## Absence of Restraint Is Not Absence of Necessity

- If there is no barrier preventing us from acting a certain way, does that mean we are free to act in that manner?
- Is the prisoner who is no longer in chains free to act any way he chooses?
- "Man may, therefore, cease to be restrained, without, for that reason, becoming a free agent: in whatever manner he acts, he will act necessarily, according to motives by which he shall be determined."

## We Are Not Rocks Moved By Gravity

- Saying we are not free does not mean that we are moved by simple forces in a simple manner
  - Our very existence carries with it internal causes
  - Our brains motivate us based on unknown biological forces
  - Our minds are shaped by our perceptions of the external world
  - We are ignorant of the forces that shape and determine our wills
  - We are ultimately ignorant of why we act the way we do

## Freedom Is An Illusion

- If we understood the multiple, interweaved matrix of causal factors, we would understand that no action is free
- The illusion that we are free arises from our inability to analyze and understand these complex causal factors