

## TED HONDERICH: DETERMINISM AS TRUE, COMPATIBILISM AND INCOMPATIBILISM AS BOTH FALSE, AND THE REAL PROBLEM

-- The Determinism and Freedom Philosophy Website --

*This new piece begins with a defence of determinism against those hopeful persons who think it has been refuted by Quantum Theory. After that there is argument against the idea that determinism is compatible with freedom and also the idea that determinism is incompatible with freedom. Do you ask if both ideas can be false? Read on for the answer -- and an explanation of the real problem that determinism poses to us in our lives. The thoughts in this piece, until one or two at the very end, are not new, but they might be true. They make up a draft of my contribution to a new collection of pieces, The Free Will Handbook, edited by Robert Kane of the University of Texas, published by Oxford University Press in 2001.*

An event is something in space and time, just some of it, and so it is rightly said to be something that occurs or happens. For at least these reasons it is not a number or a proposition, or any abstract object. There are finer conceptions of an event, of course, one being a thing having a general property for a time, another being exactly an individual property of a thing -- say my computer monitor's weight (19 kg) as against yours (also 19 kg). None of these finer conceptions can put in doubt that events are individuals in a stretch of time and space.

What is required for an event to have an explanation, in the fundamental sense, is for there to be something else of which it is the effect. That is, for there to be an answer to the fundamental question of why an event happened is for there to be something of which it was the effect. A standard effect is an event that had to happen, or could not have failed to happen or been otherwise than it was, given the preceding causal circumstance, this being a set of events. In more philosophical talk, the event was made necessary or necessitated by the circumstance.

Of course there are finer conceptions of what it is for an event's having been made necessary by a circumstance. Some say that since the circumstance occurred, so did the later event. They give a simple logician's account -- disambiguate that to your taste, reader -- of such a conditional statement. This reduces to David Hume's story of causation, where the particular causal circumstance and the particular event were just an instance of a constant conjunction. Others are impressed by the difference between a causal circumstance for an event and an invariable but non-causal signal of that coming event. To exclude the signal from being the causal circumstance they say,

maybe in terms of possible worlds, that what a circumstance's necessitating an event came to is that since the occurrence occurred, whatever else had been happening, so did the event.

Evidently there is a little room for this difference of opinion -- our conceptual and other experience does not immediately rule out one of these views. Our experience does rule out other contemplated accounts of what is needed for an event to have an explanation in the fundamental sense -- of its being necessitated by a causal circumstance. Clearly we do not understand an event's having had to happen as being only that it was more probable, maybe just more probable than not, as a result of the circumstance. That is not what we believe either, you bet, when we say the event could not have failed to happen. It is yet clearer that we do not take an event's having had to happen as being that it might well not have happened despite there having been something on hand that was 'enough' for it.

In my life so far I have never known a single event to lack an explanation in the fundamental sense, and no doubt your life has been the same. No spoon has mysteriously levitated at breakfast. There has been no evidence at all, let alone proof, of there being no explanation to be found of a particular event. On the contrary, despite the fact that we do not seek out or arrive at the full explanations in question, my experience and yours pretty well consists of events that we take to have such explanations. If we put aside choices or decisions and the like -- the events in dispute in the present discussion of determinism and freedom -- my life and yours consists in nothing but events that we take to have fundamental explanations. Thus, to my mind, no general proposition of interest has greater inductive and empirical support than that all events whatever, including the choices or decisions and the like, have explanations.

Offered as exceptions to the latter proposition, without begging the question, are certain items distinct from the ordinary or macro events of our lives. They are indeed spoken of as events. They are, we hear, a certain sub-class of micro or atomic and subatomic events. They are the quantum events of Quantum Theory. They, like all micro events, are far below the level of spoon movements and, more importantly, far below the neural events associated with consciousness and conscious choices or decisions in neuroscience.

The first thing to be noted of these supposed quantum events, events of true chance, by anyone inclined to determinism, is that there is no experimental evidence in a standard sense that there are any. There is no such evidence within physics. There is no such evidence, moreover, three quarters of a century after Heisenberg and Schrodinger developed quantum theory. In that very long time in science, including the recent decades of concern with Bell's Theorem, there has been no direct and univocal experimental evidence of the existence of quantum events.

A second thing to be noted of these items has to do with a prior issue of which you have had a hint from my usages. What are they if they do exist? How are they to be conceived? How is the mathematics or formalism of Quantum Theory to be interpreted? How are we to think of these items that are supposed to turn up in our heads and, as some say, leave room for traditional Free Will? Well, standard accounts of them by physicists bravely say they are baffling, weird and wonderful, self-contradictory, inexplicable, etc., etc. These events so-called do not involve 'particles' as ordinarily understood and defined, and the special use of the term 'particle' within interpretations of the mathematics cannot be satisfactorily defined. So with uses of 'position' or 'location' and so on.

The situation can be indicated quickly by noting a well-known collection of physicists' own speculations as to what quantum events in general, this bottom level of all reality, comes to. It comes to observer-dependent facts, subjective ideas, contents of our consciousness of reality, epistemological concepts, ideal concepts, propositions, probabilities, possibilities, features of a calculation, mathematical objects or devices, statistical phenomena, measures and measurements, abstract particles, probability waves, waves in abstract mathematical space, waves of no real physical existence, abstract constructs of the imagination, theoretical entities without empirical reality, objects to which standard two-value logics do not apply.

It was remarked above that physics has not provided any direct and univocal experimental evidence of the existence of events that lack standard explanations, events that are not effects. The noted collection of speculations about the nature of quantum events shows more than that. It remains a clear possibility, indeed a probability, that physics has not started on the job, even 75 years late, of showing that there are events that lack explanations. This is so, simply, because it remains a probability that quantum events, so-called, are not events. They are not events in any of the senses gestured at in the first paragraph above. In brief, it is probable that they are not things that occur or happen, but are of the nature of numbers and propositions, out of space and time. They are theoretical entities in a special sense of that term, not events.

Someone inclined to determinism, and a little tired of a kind of hegemony of physics in a part of philosophy -- the part having to do with determinism and freedom -- may be capable of saying more. They may even remain capable after considering several relevant and admirable contributions by others to this very volume. As the above collection of speculations by physicists indicates, even without the addition of some wholly inconsistent and 'realist' speculations, the interpretation of the mathematics of Quantum Theory is not merely baffling, weird and wonderful, etc. It is a mess. That is what would be said of any such enterprise of inquiry that did not enjoy a general hegemony, in more than the mentioned part of philosophy. This is a matter to which we will revert briefly in the end.

What we have, then, is that the proposition that all events have explanations has unique inductive and empirical support in our experience, that there is no experimental evidence in a standard sense for quantum events, and that Quantum Theory's failure to provide experimental evidence for them may be the result of its confused concern with theoretical items other than events.

A fourth thing to be contemplated about the supposed quantum events goes flatly against all this, but not against determinism as often conceived for philosophical purposes, and as it is conceived here. Let it be assumed that quantum events so-called, despite the collection of speculations by physicists lately noted, are to be conceived as events. Let it be assumed, against our experience, that they do exist. They are right there among other micro events, at atomic and subatomic levels, as distinct from macro events. They are events that simply lack explanations, events of true chance.

These events of true chance may have been very probable, of course. They may have had a probability of 95%, whatever this talk of probability is taken to mean. But to the question of why they actually occurred, their having had a probability of 95% is clearly no answer at all. To assign them a probability of 95% is precisely not to claim they had to happen or could not have failed to happen. It is precisely to hold open the possibility that they might not have happened.

In fact, on the assumption about true chance being made, there is no answer to look for as to why in the fundamental sense they happened. To the question of why in the fundamental sense they actually occurred, there is no relevant fact to be known, no relevant fact of the matter at all. This is dead clear because, ex hypothesi, everything might have been just the same without their occurring at all. You can miss this little proof of the absolute exclusion of explanatory fact, but it is not a good idea to do so.

Let us understand by determinism the family of doctrines that human choices and actions are effects of certain causal sequences or chains -- sequences such as to raise the further and separate question, as traditionally expressed, of whether the choices and actions are free. The choices and actions in this determinism, then, are not effects of special sequences beginning a little while before in what can be called originations or acts of Free Will. These are the stock-in-trade of Libertarian philosophers. These items, whatever else they are, and you will be hearing some more about this, are not effects.

Determinism so conceived is a matter of only macro events. It remains so if it is developed, as certainly it ought to be, into explicit philosophies of mind that take into account the relation of choices and actions to the brain, to neural events. The latter, the stuff of neuroscience, as already remarked, are as much macro events as choices and actions themselves.

It is clear that anyone inclined both to the existence of true chance or quantum events

and to determinism as defined is not at all forced to choose between them, but can have both. She is not stuck with the levitating spoons. Her essential idea will be that quantum events in our heads do not translate upwards into macro events that also lack explanations. The quantum events in this respect may cancel out one another -- or something of the sort. Given the entire absence of events of real chance within standard neuroscience, this is perhaps the easiest theoretical position for those who want their philosophy, no doubt for some good reason, to be in accord with science as it is now rather than with whatever it will be, the paradigm now rather than the paradigm to come.

This macro determinism, determinism as defined, raises exactly the traditional problem of freedom despite being married to micro indeterminism. It leaves exactly where it was the question about determinism most attended to by philosophers, that of its consequences for our lives -- our freedom in choosing and acting.

A fifth remark about determinism and denials of it is that physics including Quantum Theory, as already implied, is deferred to by many as basic or ultimate science. This has importantly to do with its absolute generality, and the idea that all other science can somehow be reduced to it. Certainly this deference, despite difficulties raised by the rest of science, is open to anyone who simply denies that all events have explanations, and in particular denies determinism. However, there are other personnel to be considered: the Libertarian philosophers, of whom there are some good examples to be found in this volume. They assert the existence of originations or acts of Free Will in their small philosophies of mind -- these originations being non-effects, whatever else they are, and either causal predecessors of choices and actions or the choices themselves.

These philosophers take from physics the proposition that certain events are without explanations in the fundamental sense. They then add that these originations have other very different but real explanations that leave or put them and their effects within the control of the person in question, leave or make the person in question responsible for them and their effects in a certain way. This amounts to more than contradiction in just spirit.

Physics and in particular Quantum Theory as interpreted by physicists do not amount just to the proposition that certain events are not effects but in fact have or may have other explanations, mysterious but somehow just as real or good as standard explanations. Physics does not take itself as like a car dealer who needs to allow that there are other car dealers in town. Plainly physics does not tolerate the other real but mysterious explanations of choices and the like when the choices are taken, as they are by most contemporary philosophers of mind, to be just as physical as spoon-movements. Physics itself, whatever physicists on holiday or in retirement say, is no more tolerant of choices non-physically conceived, along with conscious events generally, despite the blur of non-physicality.

Thus the position of the philosophers of origination is exactly what is resisted or disdained by Quantum Theory's conventional defenders -- a hidden variable theory, something that absolutely undercuts Quantum Theory as interpreted. The philosophers of origination cannot have it both ways, comfortably or uncomfortably.

Can this conclusion be resisted by supposing that there is some non-mysterious way, perhaps even consistent with Quantum Theory, in which originations as true chance events can nonetheless have explanations? Something to do with dark battleground of probability? Well, there can be no way in which it can consistently be asserted that the actual occurrence of an origination has a fundamental explanation. It is going to have to remain a total mystery -- with no possible fact anywhere in existence to dispel the mystery.

But, it may be said, there is surely some sense in which an event is explained if it is established as having been very probable. This needs to be granted, but not for a reason that gives a helping hand to the philosophers of origination. What is it for event A to have made it 95% probable that event BA occurs, there is precisely a causal circumstance for an event of the type of B. We have good evidence for that, even if we don't know, or know exactly, what is in the circumstance. would occur? If we put aside more mystery, and theories of probability that do not attempt to give its nature or reality, there seems to be only one answer to the question. It is of course that in 95% of the situations in which an event of the type of

What this non-fundamental explanation of B comes to, then, in fact presupposes the possibility of a fundamental explanation of B. It presupposes precisely the existence of a causal circumstance, as yet unspecified, for B. It presupposes that B was a necessitated event. Non-fundamental explanations, as might have been expected, are dependent on exactly the existence of possible fundamental explanations. That is why non-fundamental explanations do indeed count as explanations of a kind. Whether or not these derivative explanations can be said to fit into interpretations of Quantum Theory, they evidently do not fit into the views of the philosophers of origination. To allow a derivative explanation of an origination would be precisely to deny that it is an event of real chance. (Cf. Kane 1996)

There is a seventh respect in which the philosophers of origination are in more than trouble. Their doctrine suffers from another inconsistency that must stick in the craw of anyone not also on a mission to rescue our freedom. Say my lover writes to ask if I have been to bed with someone else, and I then form the intention to lie, and then I do lie. In order to save my freedom and responsibility as understood by them, my rescuers insert a quantum event between the question and my intention. In order to complete the rescue, however, or rather to defend it from itself, they need to exclude a quantum event between the intention and the lie. Otherwise I shall be doing some random lying -- neither freely nor responsibly.

How can they consistently do this? Does Quantum Theory as interpreted have some clause, hitherto unheard of, that its random events occur only in such places as to make us morally responsible in a certain sense? This objection of inconsistency, perhaps, is less effective with some uncommitted philosophers because they do not really take the philosophers of origination seriously. If it really weread hoc, accepted as true that a random event could get in between the question and the intention, with great effect, then it would have to be accepted that one could get in between the intention and the lie, with as much effect. Any attempt to exclude the possibility is bound to be fatally

Let us now try to leave the question of the truth of the proposition that all events have fundamental explanations, and the truth of determinism in the narrower sense specified. Let us try to leave the question, at any rate, in so far as certain other things can be separated from them. One of these, which in fact should come first, is the question of the conceptual adequacy of determinism and of the opposed family of doctrines, those having to do with origination. It is possible to overlook or forget the fact, but both families do indeed and need to consist in philosophies of mind -- accounts or anyway intimations of the nature of consciousness and mental activity, of how they come about, of mind and brain, and of the connection between mental activity and behaviour or action.

It is remarkable fact that when we put aside the little philosophies of mind expressly concerned with the further question of whether choices and actions are free -- the literature on determinism and freedom -- what we find is determinism and hardly anything else. That is, in the Philosophy of Mind itself, we find only philosophers who assume or explain that human choices and actions are effects of causal sequences or chains of the sort that are taken in the literature on determinism and freedom to raise the further question of our freedom. When philosophers are concerned with consciousness and mental activity and so on, in and for themselves, in the real Philosophy of Mind, they have nothing to say of origination.

Thus in the Philosophy of Mind's autonomous existence, its history since Gilbert Ryle's The Concept of Mind in 1949, there is nothing at all about what, if the philosophers of origination are right, is the unique fact of our consciousness and mental activity and so on. In monisms and dualisms, in Functionalism and in the Philosophy of Action, in assertions and accounts of our subjectivity, in conceptions of a person, and above all in various doctrines of the general explanation of our behaviour -- in all of this, at least half of it not scientific or 'materialistic', we find nothing of what is supposed by its supporters to be what actually sets us aside from the rest of the world -- our originations.

Are a couple of qualifications in order? Well, there has been some support for the mysterious idea that reasons are not causes -- what are they supposed to be, then? -- but it has not gone so far as embracing origination. There is also Donald Davidson's

Anomalous Monism, which denies the existence of lawlike or nomic connections between mental events, so-regarded, and physical events. There are no such connections between mental events and their physical antecedents -- as there are no such connections between mental events and either simultaneous neural events or such later physical events as actions and their effects. Well, it is also part of this extraordinary doctrine that the mental events regarded as physical, which indeed they must be, are effects of their physical antecedents. (Davidson 1980)

Of what relevance to the truth of determinism is the nearly complete absence of the opposing family of doctrines from the orthodox Philosophy of Mind? That particular question of truth has the interest of standing in connection with the matter of orthodox science and a certain presumption of truth -- although not one into which I myself enter with full confidence. Let us leave it, and note instead that origination's absence from the Philosophy of Mind can indeed be taken to suggest that there is no tempting conception of origination in existence. Otherwise it would certainly have been made use of in general explanations of behaviour.

Origination's absence from the Philosophy of Mind also reinforces the question of whether there is an adequate conception of it. What has been said so far, to recall, is that an act of origination (1) is not an effect, (2) is either a causal predecessor of a choice and action or the choice itself, and (3) has a special explanation such that it and therefore its effects are within the control of the person in question and such as to make her responsible in a certain sense for them. Is this adequate? That it is not has for some time been contemplated by the more-or-less determinist party in the philosophy of determinism and freedom. The idea was famously expressed by Peter Strawson when he spoke of panicky metaphysics. (Strawson 1962)

It is indeed difficult to see what can be added to the conception we have so far of origination in order to have more to put in place of the standard account of the occurrence of choices and actions in terms of fundamental explanation and causation. It can be asked, certainly, how the special kind of explanation and thus personal control comes about. In answer, if talk of probability is given up, recourse may be had just to ordinary verbs of our human activity, such as 'to give rise to', or indeed 'to cause'.

But these, as we understand them elsewhere, are a matter of fundamental explanation, of standard effects. 'Give rise to', ordinarily used, is as much a matter of standard causality as 'push'. It is wholly obscure what remains of the verbs of human activity when their backbone of sense is taken out of them. They do not have a backbone put back in, either, when it is said that A's having caused B was just A's having been 'enough' for B, which was consistent with B's not happening. No sense has ever been given to the 'enough'. (Cf. Ginet 1990)

Quite as plainly, there can be recourse to talk of reasons of a kind in trying to explain



choices and actions without the aid of fundamental explanation. There can be recourse, that is, to logical or conceptual relations of an essentially normative kind. But that I had good reason eventually to confess to my lover, in terms of whatever value-system, including my own morality, gives no explanation of why I confessed. There may be the explanation that I was caused to confess by my good reason in a more robust and a standardly causal sense -- where my reason clearly was something more than an abstract entailment or other premise -- but this, of course, is exactly what origination is supposed to replace.

Let us leave open for a while the question of whether there is an adequate conception of origination -- conceivably the question of whether we have one in what has been said already. Also the question of whether there is another use for what some will see as the irrelevance or indeed the philosophical low blow of pointing out that the stock-in-trade of origination-philosophers never gets attention in the Philosophy of Mind. Let us turn now to the question of what is taken to follow from determinism -- the question not of its truth or the prior question of its conceptual adequacy, but its consequences. This does of course bring in the linked question of the consequences of origination.

Here we encounter those two traditions that began in the 17th Century or before and are still with us, one with knobs of modal logic on it and the other encrusted with hierarchies of desire -- the traditions of Incompatibilism and Compatibilism. The first is to the effect that if determinism is true we are unfree and are not morally responsible for our actions, since determinism and freedom are logically incompatible. The second is to the effect that even if determinism is true we remain free in many of our actions and hence morally responsible for them, since determinism and freedom are logically compatible. What the two traditions evidently agree about, and typically declare, is that our freedom is one thing, or would be one thing if we had it, and hence that we have this one concept of it -- or at any rate one freedom or one concept of freedom is fundamental and somehow the only important one.

In the last couple of decades, a good deal of diligence has gone into a certain Incompatibilist line of thought. Plainly stated, it is that if determinism is true then my action today, perhaps of complying or going along again with my unjust society, is the effect of a causal circumstance in the remote past, before I was born. That circumstance, clearly, was not up to me. So its necessary consequence, my action of compliance today with my hierarchic democracy, is not up to me. Hence my action today is not free and I am not responsible for it. (van Inwagen 1983)

This line of thought is dignified by having the name of the Consequence Argument for Incompatibilism. It is worth noting in passing that in its essential content, its logic, the argument has nothing to do with our being unable to change the past. It is that the past had in it no act of origination and in particular no relevant act of origination. It

had in it no act of origination that had the later action of compliance as content or object, so to speak, and as effect. Instead it had in that remote causal circumstance and a causal sequence from it leading up to the action of compliance. If the past did have such a relevant act of origination in it, although I still couldn't change it and the rest of the past, things would be OK. My action of compliance could be up to me.

It is also worth noting that the argument has nothing essential to do with a causal circumstance in the remote past. To repeat, what the Incompatibilist supposes would make my action today up to me, make me free and responsible, is an act of origination relevant to today's action of compliance. Suppose that the act of origination for the action of compliance would have had to be in the last five minutes -- originations wear out, so to speak, if they do not issue in actions within five minutes. If they are to work, they have to be renewed. We do indeed believe something like this. If so, for the Incompatibilist, my action's having been the effect of a causal circumstance just over five minutes ago would make the action not up to me. Suppose on the other hand, absurdly, that a previous embodiment of me did perform a relevant act of origination. That might cheer up the Incompatibilist, even if it was so remotely in the past as to be as to be just after the Big Bang, and even if that event was immediately followed by a causal circumstance, certainly remote, for my later action of compliance .

Thus what is crucial for this line of thought is a relevant act of origination. And hence, to mention one thing, the argument has as much need of giving an adequate account of origination as any other argument of its ilk -- any Incompatibilism. What in fact has happened in connection with the line of argument, however, is a lot of reflection, aided by modal logic, on something else. We could transform it into reflection that makes the essential content or logic of the argument explicit, talk about a causal circumstance just over five minutes ago, but there is no need to do so.

The reflection has been on whether it does really follow, from the fact that a remote causal circumstance was not up to me, that its necessary consequence, my action today in going along with my society, is not up to me. The reflection has included variations on the plain version of the line of thought, and also objections to and supposed refutations of both the plain line of thought and the variations.

It is not easy for me to see that this has been philosophical time well spent. Does it not seem clear that in an ordinary sense of the words, it does indeed follow that if the remote causal circumstance was not up to me, neither was what was connected with it by an unbroken causal sequence -- my action today? Will anyone say that there is no sense of the words in which it follows that if the remote circumstance was not up to me, neither was its necessary consequence? No fundamental or important sense in which lack of control is transitive? Might you join me in saying that if modal logic were to prove that there is no such sense of the words, or no important sense of the words, so much the worse for modal logic?

Now consider the other side in the traditional dispute -- some Compatibilist struggle in the last couple of decades, or rather two such struggles. Both are attempts to defend this tradition's fundamental conception of our freedom. That conception, at its most simple, is of a choice or action that is not against the desire of the person in question. Freedom consists in choice or action flowing from the desire of the person in question -- or, a little less simply, from embraced rather than reluctant desire. Freedom is this absence of constraint or compulsion. Freedom is voluntariness -- quite other than origination. An unfree decision or action by contrast is one made as a result of the bars of the prison cell, or the threat to one's life, or the compulsion of kleptomania.

Against this idea as to our freedom, it may be objected that we could be free in this way and yet not be in control of our lives. This voluntariness is not control. Exactly this was a complaint of Incompatibilists. It gave rise to a struggle in response by our Compatibilists. It is plainly a mistake, we still hear from them, to suppose that if I was free in this sense today in my action of social deference, I was subject to control. What control would come to would be my being subject to the desires of another person, or something akin to another person, maybe within me. Given this proposition, evidently, it is not the case that determinism, which is indeed consistent with the Compatibilist idea to our freedom, deprives us of control of our lives. (Dennett, 1984)

So far so good, you may say, but clearly a question remains. Could what has been said by the Compatibilists be taken as coming near to establishing that there is but one way in which we can conceive of not being in control of our lives, the way where we are subject to someone or something else's desires? To put the question differently, and more pointedly, does this come near to establishing that there is but one way, the Compatibilist way, in which we can be in control of our lives, which is to say one way in which we conceive of being free? That all we think of or can care about is voluntariness?

There are rather plain difficulties in the way of this. There evidently is something very like another idea of self-control or freedom. Is it not against the odds, to say the least, that this dispute into which our Compatibilist is seriously entering is between his own conceptually respectable party and a party that has no different idea at all, nothing properly called an idea or anyway no idea worth attention, of what our freedom does or may consist in? There is what has been said of origination.

Let me mention yet more quickly the effort by some Compatibilists to make more explicit their idea of freedom. It is at bottom the effort to show why the kleptomaniac and other such unfortunates, on the Compatibilist account of freedom, are in fact unfree. Certainly it could be thought there was a problem for the account here, since the kleptomaniac in walking out of the department store yet again without paying for the blouses presumably is somehow doing what he wants to do, presumably is not

acting against desire.

Our Compatibilist is indeed on the way to a solution if he supposes, a little bravely, that all kleptomaniacs not only desire to make off with the blouses, but also desire not to have that desire. By means of this idea of a hierarchy of desires, that is, the Compatibilist is indeed improving his conception of a free action -- it is, at least in the first part of the conception, an action such that we desire to desire to perform it. (Frankfurt 1971) Suppose more than that -- that the whole philosophical enterprise, this hierarchical theory of freedom, works like a dream, with no difficulties about a regress or about identifying a self with a particular level of desires or about anything else.

Will that have come near to establishing that there is no other conception of a free action? Will it come close to establishing that we have operating in our lives only the hierarchic conception? Will it come close to establishing the lesser thing that this conception is fundamental or dominant or most salient or in any other way ahead of another one? Come to think of it, how could it actually do that? Are we to suppose that from the premise that one conception of freedom has now been really perfected it follows that there is no other conception of freedom or none worth attention?

So that you do not suppose I have been partial, let us glance back at the Incompatibilist struggle. Think again of me today, acting again in compliance with my unjust society, and take the action to be the effect of a causal circumstance in the remote past, before I was born. It does indeed seem, as was maintained above, there must be some proposition to the effect that if the remote circumstance was not up to me, neither was the action of compliance that was made necessary by the circumstance. But something else is surely quite as clear -- and maybe more important than the previous point that the line of argument, like any Incompatibilist line of argument, needs an adequate account of origination.

There is, isn't there, a clear sense in which my action, necessary consequence though it was, may well have been up to me -- perfectly up to me. Suppose I was struck a month ago by Bradley's utterance that to wish to be better than the world is to be already on the threshold of immorality. Suppose I had then consciously determined after a month's serious reflection that henceforth I would consistently act on the side of my society. Suppose it had come about that a great desire drew me only to this -- and of course that I desired to have the desire, and so on. In fact my whole personality and character now supported my action of deference. I could not have been more for it. Does not this conjecture, or any more restrained one you like, come close to establishing that it must be a very brave Incompatibilist who maintains that there is no significant sense in which my action of compliance was up to me?

So much for recent activity in the two hoary traditions. There is yet more activity, in particular with respect to origination, in preceding essays in this volume. I commend

it to you -- but also the idea that a yet more direct approach to the two traditions is possible. (Honderich 1993: 80-106; 1988: 379-487)

We all have hopes for our lives -- we all have a dominant hope in a particular stage of life, perhaps for more than one thing, perhaps a disjunctive hope. Like any hope, it is an attitude to a future possibility, at bottom a desire with respect to the possibility. Very likely indeed it is a desire with respect to our own future actions and their initiations in particular desires or whatever. To come to the crux quickly, such desires come in two sorts for all of us. One sort is for a future in which our actions will be voluntary, uncompelled and unconstrained. We won't be in jail or victims of our fearfulness. The other sort of desires is for a future in which our actions are also not fixed products of our natures and environments. We will not just be creatures of them. Each of us has the two sorts of desires, or at any rate each of us is more than capable of having them. One contains an ideas of our future actions as our own in being voluntary. The other sort makes them our own in also containing at least an image of our future actions as originated.

There is the same plain truth, as it seems to me, with respect to the trampled ground of moral responsibility, of which Incompatibilists in particular have had a too elevated notion. What determinism threatens here is also attitudinal. It is a matter of holding people responsible for particular actions and with crediting them with responsibility for particular actions. To do so is to approve or disapprove morally of them for the actions in question. We may do so on the contained assumption that an action was voluntary. Or we may do so, differently, on the contained assumption that the action was not only voluntary but originated. Different desires enter into the two sorts of attitudes -- retributive desires are attached to the idea that the person in question, just as things had been and were, could have done other than the thing he did.

What is more, we act and have institutions or parts of institutions that are owed to one assumption rather than the other. One good example of a general fact is preventive punishments, depending only on a conception of actions as voluntary, and retributive punishment, depending on a conception of actions as also originated. There is thus a behavioural proof of the existence and indeed the pervasiveness of two attitudes and two conceptions of freedom.

What all this leads to is the real problem of the consequences of determinism -- which is not the problem of proving something to be our one idea of freedom, or our only self-respecting one, or what you will along these lines. The real problem of the consequences of determinism is that of dealing with the situation in which we have both the idea of voluntariness and also the idea of voluntariness plus origination, and these two ideas run, shape or at least colour our lives, and the second conflicts with determinism. We may attempt to bluff, and to carry on intransigently in the pretence that what matters is only the first idea and what it enters into, one family of attitudes.

This is a response of intransigence. On the other hand we may respond with dismay to the prospect of giving up the second idea and what it enters into, the other family of attitudes.

It is at this point among others that the question of the adequacy of the idea of origination comes up. Some philosophers say there is no adequate idea of it. What it comes to is only some piece of nonsense, literally speaking, like the old nonsense of speaking of a thing's causing itself. Hence, for one thing, it does not matter if determinism is true or false. If it is true, there is no more problem than if it is false, since there is no serious idea with which it conflicts. Also, Compatibilism has the field of discussion to itself, since Incompatibilism comes to nothing. The question of truth does not arise. (Cf. Strawson 1986)

This is a curious position that prompts speculation. Suppose I have no idea of why the petunias on the balcony need sun, but am persuaded they do, no doubt by good evidence. Despite the evidence, I have no acquaintance at all with photosynthesis, not even any boy's own science of the matter. It does not follow, presumably, that I lack the idea that the petunias need sun. I could have the idea, too, in a prescientific society where news of the science of the thing would for a long time make no sense. Could I not also have the idea, in a later society, if all of many attempts to explicate the need had broken down in obscurity and indeed contradiction?

At first sight, certainly, those who suppose that there is an adequate idea of origination are in just this sort of position. They speak no nonsense when they assert or offer for contemplation a certain thing. It is that there occur originations, these being events that are not effects, are in the control of the person in question, and render the person responsible in a certain way for ensuing actions -- his being held responsible can consist in an attitude having in it certain desires, notably retributive ones. The friends of origination speak no nonsense when they depend considerably for their characterization of the events of origination on these consequences. The friends still speak no nonsense when it transpires that they cannot in some way explain how it comes about that there is origination, or would come about if there were any. They still speak no nonsense in what went before if their attempts to explain are themselves pieces of nonsense.

No doubt more distinctions are needed here, but it remains my own view that determinism does threaten something important to us of which we have an adequate idea if not a tempting idea. The latter sort of thing, as you will expect, is an idea open to a kind of explanation, an idea of something along with an some explication of it. My untroubled view, too, until very recently, has been that the true problem of the consequences of determinism is the problem of giving up something of which we do have an adequate idea. It is not as if that problem does not arise for the clear-headed.

We can set out to try to deal with this problem of attitudes, at bottom desires. We can try to get away from the responses of intransigence and dismay, and oscillating between them, and make a response of affirmation. This, caricatured, is looking on the bright side. It is seeing the fullness and fineness of a life given much of its character by the attitudes consistent with determinism, and thus giving up the ones inconsistent with it. We can try this -- but we may not succeed. (Honderich 1993: 107-129; 1998: 488-612)

As it has seemed to me, what stands in our way, and in fact obstructs real belief in determinism despite all that can be said for it, is a great fact of our culture. We are so formed, first of all by mothers, those first agents of culture, as to be unable to escape the attitudes. We cannot dismiss one kind of our hopes, and we cannot escape other attitudes, such as those having to do with responsibility, notably when they are directed by ourselves onto ourselves.

Is this the only possible conclusion to the problem of determinism and freedom? For want of space, let me pass by some gallant work of originality and interest (Double 1991, 1996) and come on to something else, an idea of another alternative.

Having lately engaged explicitly in autobiography, rather than the kind of it in which philosophy is sometimes said to consist, I have been newly taken aback by the strength and durability of my attitudes to myself inconsistent with determinism. Is the stuff about culture really enough to explain them? I have been taken aback too by a seeming fact about a further kind of explanation -- picking out a cause within a causal circumstance and giving it special standing in connection with the effect. This has attitudes in it, all too evidently, but it also seems a business of truth. I do not mean that the attitudes direct and mislead explanation, but that they can seem somehow to enter into its constitution.

Thus a question has come up about attitudes inconsistent with determinism. Could they be owed not only to mothers and their successors in our culture but also have truth in them? Is that why they are so strong and durable? Will some dramatically different reconciliation of determinism and freedom one day be achieved? Certainly it will not be another appearance of that weary warhorse, Compatibilism. Will it have something to do with a connection between desire and truth? Again the point is not about desires affecting our pursuit of truth or obscuring it, but about their entering into the constitution of it. (Honderich 2000)

The point stands in connection with two remarks earlier. One was about Quantum Theory having a certain hegemony despite its interpretation being a mess. The other was about the stock-in-trade of origination-philosophers never getting noticeable attention in the real Philosophy of Mind. Can it be that attitude enters more into belief, some of it also knowledge, including Quantum Theory as interpreted and Free Will philosophy, than we have thought is possible or proper to suppose?

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For a careful account by a philosopher of science of the implications of old and new physics for the truth of determinism, see John Earman's [Determinism: What We Have Learned and What We Still Don't Know](#). For some more philosophy on science, indeed more science pertaining to free will, have a look at [Is the Mind Ahead of the Brain -- Benjamin Libet's Evidence Examined](#) and also [Is the Mind Ahead of the Brain -- Rejoinder to Benjamin Libet](#).

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