

# Glossary of Terms

Determinism

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Glossary



## Glossary of Terms

On the Information Philosopher website, our glossary of terms uses hyperlinks (with blue underlines) to provide recursive definitions from within each entry. We cannot do this in print, of course.

Hyperlinks go to other pages in the I-Phi website and to external sites such as the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and Wikipedia, where available.

The web version also offers “Search I-Phi” links to find all the pages on the I-Phi website that refer to the given term. In this print version we provide an index. Some glosses also offer a click on “I-Phi Page” to get a much more detailed description of the term in the Core Concepts sections of the website.

The website also links to other online glossaries of relevant philosophical terms, such as:

- Ted Honderich’s Determinism and Freedom Terminology
- Alfred Mele’s Lexicon for the *Big Questions in Free Will* Project

## A

### Actualism

Actualism is the idea that the events that do happen are the only possible events that could possibly have happened. Actualism denies the existence of alternative possibilities.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Alternative Sequences, Consequence Argument, Direct Argument, Frankfurt-style cases, Indirect Argument, Standard Argument

### Actual Sequence

The Actual Sequence is the sequence of events in the past that lead up to the current moment of deliberation and decision. The term is used in Direct Arguments, such as Peter van Inwagen’s Consequence Argument, Frankfurt-style cases and John Martin Fischer’s Semicompatibilism.

It is contrasted with the Alternative Sequences that result from Alternative Possibilities. Arguments for incompatibilism that consider alternative possibilities are called Indirect Arguments.



Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Alternative Sequences, Consequence Argument, Direct Argument, Frankfurt-style cases, Indirect Argument, Standard Argument, Tracing, Transfer Principle

## Adequate Determinism

Adequate Determinism is the kind of determinism we have in the world. It is also called “near determinism” (Ted Honderich), “almost causal determinism” (John Fischer), and “micro-indeterminism” (John Searle). Macroscopic objects are adequately determined in their motions, giving rise to the appearance of strict causal determinism.

Microscopic objects, on the other hand, show the probabilistic consequences of indeterminism, due to quantum mechanics. These probabilistic effects usually average out in large objects, leading to the illusion of strict causal physical determinism, including the powerful and very productive idea of deterministic laws of nature.

Other glosses -- Determination, Determinism, Indeterminism, Laws of Nature, Quantum Mechanics

## Agent Causal

Agent-causal libertarianism is the idea that an agent can originate new causal chains, actions that are not predetermined to happen by events prior to the agent’s deliberation (between alternative possibilities perhaps) and decision. Some agent-causal theories are metaphysical, assuming that the agent’s mind is not bound by the physical laws that govern the body. Some philosophers claim mental events are “non-causal.”

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Causality, Causa Sui, Event Causal, Indeterminism, Origination

## Agnostic

Most modern philosophers claim to be agnostic on the “truth” of determinism or indeterminism. For example, Alfred Mele claims his arguments for “Agnostic Autonomy” are valid whether or not determinism is true. John Fischer says semicompatibilists are agnostic. And Derk Pereboom has renamed “hard determinism” to “hard incompatibilism” to remain agnostic.

Agnosticism ignores the great asymmetry between determinism and indeterminism. Determinism is congenial to claims that freedom consists of following the laws of nature and that God has foreknowledge of our actions. Indeterminism is much more difficult to reconcile with a



responsible freedom, since it has such negative implications - randomness, chance, uncertainty, and contingency - leading to the randomness objection to free will.

Other glosses - Determinism, Foreknowledge, Indeterminism, Standard Argument

## Akrasia

Akrasia, from the Greek a-kratos (no power), describes “weak-willed” actions taken against one’s better judgment. Rationalism assumes there is always a single best way to evaluate an agent’s options or alternative possibilities, so that weakness of will is fundamentally irrational.

Other glosses - Strongest Motive, Weakness of Will

## Alternative Possibilities

Alternative Possibilities for thought and action were thought to be a requirement for free will and moral responsibility until Harry Frankfurt extended John Locke’s “locked room” example of a person who freely chose to stay in a room, unaware that the doors had been locked, so that alternative possibilities did not exist for him.

Note that alternative possibilities should not be interpreted as probabilities for actions. This is a mistake made by many prominent philosophers who assume that indeterminism makes chance the direct cause of action.

Other glosses - Determination, Direct Argument, Frankfurt Examples, Indeterminism, Indirect Argument, Undetermined Liberty

## Alternative Sequences

Alternative Sequences are hypothetical counterfactual sequences of events in the past that lead up to the current moment of deliberation and decision. They result from Alternative Possibilities. Arguments for incompatibilism that consider alternative possibilities are called Indirect Arguments.

Alternative Sequences are contrasted with the Actual Sequence that leads up to the current moment of deliberation and decision. The term is used in Frankfurt-style cases and John Fischer’s Semicompatibilism.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Frankfurt-style cases, Indirect Argument



## Asymmetry

There are two important uses of this term in free will and moral responsibility.

The first is the great asymmetry between determinism and indeterminism in the standard argument against free will. Determinism is much easier to reconcile with the will than is indeterminism (pure chance).

Susan Wolf has pointed out the strange asymmetry between praise and blame. Those opposed to punishment for retributive reasons (as opposed to practical consequentialist reasons) are often in favor of praise for good deeds. This reflects the ancient Platonic view that we are responsible only for the good we do. Our errors we blame on our ignorance, which is, unfortunately, no excuse before the law.

Other glosses - Illusion, Consequentialism, Determinism, Indeterminism, Moral Responsibility, Revisionism, Retributivism

## Authenticity

Authenticity (from Greek *authentēs*, author) suggests that we are the author of our actions, that we originate actions which are “up to us.” But various forms of determinism claim other authors for many or all actions.

Other glosses - Autonomy, Control, Determinism, Origination, Up To Us

## Autonomy

Autonomy, (from *auto* + *nomos*) is literally self-lawful, self-governing, or self-rule, is often used in the free will debates as an alternative to free will, freedom of choice, freedom of action, etc.

Like the term authentic, autonomy suggests that we are the author of our actions, that our actions are “up to us.”

Other glosses - Authenticity, Control, Freedom, Free Will, Origination, Up To Us

## Avoidability

Avoidability is a synonym for “could have done otherwise.”

It is the libertarian condition that the agent has alternative possibilities for action. Daniel Dennett defends avoidability as an evolved freedom even in a deterministic universe.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Done Otherwise, Yes-No Objection



## B

### Basic Argument

Galen Strawson developed a Basic Argument that denies the existence of free will and moral responsibility. It is based on an infinite regress and denial of any *causa sui* or uncaused cause. Briefly stated, the regress says that you do what you do because of your character. To be responsible for your character, you must have done something to form that character. But that something was done by your character at an earlier time, and so on *ad infinitum*, or at least to when you were too young to be responsible.

Although Strawson is agnostic and says his argument works whether determinism or indeterminism is true, his denial of any *causa sui* effectively cancels indeterminism and the Basic Argument resembles the Consequence Argument.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Consequence Argument, Direct Argument, Moral Responsibility, Standard Argument, Ultimacy

### Broad Incompatibilism

Broad Incompatibilism is Randolph Clarke's synonym for traditional compatibilism. Clarke distinguishes it from his Narrow Incompatibilism, which is a synonym for John Martin Fischer's concept of Semicompatibilism.

Broad Incompatibilism is incompatible with both free will and moral responsibility.

Other glosses - Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, Moral Responsibility, Narrow Incompatibilism, Semicompatibilism

## C

### Causality

Causality is the basic idea that all events have causes. When every event is caused completely by prior events and their causes, it leads to the idea of determinism. A causal chain links all events to earlier events in a limitless sequence. Theologians inconsistently imagine the chain to break with an uncaused cause (*causa sui*) which they identify with God and miracles.



Quantum indeterminacy produces uncaused causes. There is still a causal chain, but it no longer permits complete predictability. Events are now merely probable, no longer certain, though the probability can be arbitrarily close to certainty. Most macroscopic events are, for practical purposes, as predictable as perfect determinism would have allowed. Nevertheless, a break in the causal chain is a requirement for free will.

Other glosses - Adequate Determinism, Causa Sui, Determinism, Indeterminism

### *Causa Sui*

*Causa Sui* describes an event that is self-caused or uncaused. The event might be the product of an agent with metaphysical power. It might be a random accident with only probabilistic outcomes. Theologians identify the *causa sui* with miracles, saying that only God is a *causa sui*. Friedrich Nietzsche famously called it “the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far, it is a sort of rape and perversion of logic “

Other glosses - Agent Causation, Causality, Indeterminism

### Chance

Chance has been called an illusion by philosophers who argued that probability is only the result of human ignorance. William James saw an “antipathy to chance” in most philosophers.

Chance has historically been seen as a negative idea, associated with gambling, for example. Chance has been regarded as atheistic, since it appears to deny Foreknowledge.

Other glosses - *Causa Sui*, Randomness Objection, Undetermined Liberty

### CNC

CNC is Robert Kane’s term for the Covert and Non-constraining Control of the kind in Frankfurt-style cases and manipulation of agents.

Other glosses - Frankfurt-style cases, Manipulation Argument

### Compatibilism

Classical compatibilism is the idea that free will exists in a world that is deterministic. It was invented by the Stoic Chrysippus and developed by Thomas Hobbes and David Hume.

Classical compatibilists are determinists. Immanuel Kant called compatibilism a “wretched subterfuge.” William James called compatibilism



a “quagmire of evasion.” He called compatibilists “soft determinists,” who evade the fact of their “antipathy to chance.”

Most modern compatibilists, aware of modern quantum physics, avoid the determinist label, claiming to be agnostic about the “truth” of determinism or indeterminism. Alfred Mele defines “soft compatibilism” as admitting that some indeterminism might be useful, since it breaks the causal chain back to the Big Bang.

After P. F. Strawson, philosophers have changed the debate from free will to moral responsibility. Many now conflate free will and moral responsibility.

Semicompatibilists, following John Martin Fischer, argue for the compatibilism of moral responsibility and determinism (or indeterminism). Like Strawson, they say that even if determinism were true, we would not surrender the idea of moral responsibility implicit in our natural attitudes toward blame and praise, punishment and reward.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Determinism, Incompatibilism, Indeterminism, Semicompatibilism

## Consequence Argument

If our current actions are caused directly by and traceable to events long before our birth, we can not be morally responsible for them. Peter van Inwagen coined this term for his argument, which is simply a variation on the standard Determinism Objection to free will. He developed this argument as an improvement on the Traditional Argument that had depended on avoidability or the ability to do otherwise, which implied the agent had alternative possibilities for action. Van Inwagen accepted the idea that Frankfurt-style cases had called alternative possibilities into question.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities,, Causality, Direct Argument, Frankfurt Examples, Moral Responsibility, Tracing, Traditional Argument

## Consequentialism

Consequentialism is a theory of moral responsibility that makes moral judgments based on the consequences of an action. Moritz Schlick argued that it is acceptable to punish agents despite their lack of free will because of the beneficial effects on behavior that result.

Consequentialism also describes theories of punishment that are justified because of the consequences, e.g., the deterrence of a certain



crime, as opposed to a retributivist theory, that punishes because the agent simply deserves the blame.

Other glosses - Consequence Argument, Moral Luck, Moral Responsibility, Retributivism

## Control

Control is what is needed for an agent to feel an action originates with and is “up to her.”

Some (e.g. Harry Frankfurt) say control is found in a hierarchy of desires. Some (e.g. John Fischer) say control is being “responsive to reasons.” Fischer divides control into “guidance control” and “regulative control,” the latter involving alternative possibilities.

Determinism undermines control, as do various manipulation schemes including behavioral conditioning, hypnosis, brainwashing, and the like, as well as physiological problems like addictions, obsessions, and other mental disorders. External coercion denies even the freedom claimed by classical compatibilism.

In Frankfurt-style cases, hypothetical interveners exert control over decisions if and only if the actions appear to be ones the intervener does not want.

Other glosses - Agent Causation, Alternative Possibilities, Compatibilism, Determinism, Frankfurt Examples, Guidance Control, Hierarchy Of Desires, Origination, Reasons-Responsive, Up To Us

## D

### Degrees of Freedom

Degrees of Freedom is the idea that freedom is not an all-or-nothing true/false question. Freedom is always limited by constraints on action, whether simply physical constraints, external coercion, or internal disabilities. Fewer constraints mean more degrees of freedom.

When freedom depends on the existence of viable alternative possibilities, an agent with greater intelligence, education, or experience is qualitatively more free because she is more likely to generate workable options, more ways to do otherwise. More alternatives mean more freedom.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Done Otherwise



## Deliberation

Deliberation is the consideration of alternative possibilities and their evaluation according to the agent's character, values, desires, and beliefs, with the aim of choosing one of the alternatives as a course of action.

Note that even determinists appear to believe they have alternative courses of action when they deliberate. That is, they must practically consider that their alternatives are undetermined before their choice is made, and that they are free to choose any of them. If the agent knew with certainty that only one alternative existed, she could no longer deliberate.

Randolph Clarke uses “deliberative” to describe two-stage models of free will, which locate indeterminism in the first stage, to distinguish them from “centered” free will models like that of Robert Kane, that locate indeterminism in the decision stage. Clarke also calls deliberative freedom “indirect” freedom.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Determinism, Determined Deliberation, Indeterminism

## Determination

Determination is the act of deciding, ending a process of deliberation and evaluation. It can include undetermined liberties, in which there is chance “centered” in the decision itself and determined deliberations, in which there is no chance in the decision.

Other glosses - Deliberation, Determined Deliberation, Determinism, Self-Determination

## Determined Deliberation

A decision that is adequately determined by the available alternative possibilities. There is no randomness in the decision itself. These are examples of Hobart determination. But they are not necessarily pre-determined before the generation of alternative possibilities began.

Other glosses - Deliberation, Determinism, Self-Determination, Undetermined Liberty

## Determinism

Determinism is the idea that there is but one possible future, and that it is determined by the “fixed” past and the (mistakenly presumed deterministic) Laws of Nature.



There are many kinds of determinism. None of them are based on sufficient evidence. Most have become mere dogmatic truths. Determinism remains a hypothesis that is very popular among philosophers, but it is entirely unjustified. Determinism is an illusion.

Aware of modern quantum physics, most philosophers admit the world is indeterministic, but they say that free will would be compatible with determinism, if determinism were true.

Other glosses - Causality, Compatibilism, Determination, Indeterminism, Pre-Determinism

## Determinism Objection

The Determinism Objection is the first horn in the traditional dilemma of free will. Either determinism is true or indeterminism is true. In neither case can there be any moral responsibility. Note that the great asymmetry between determinism and indeterminism has led philosophers to favor the kind of deterministic or causal explanations that are the apparent basis for laws of nature. But determinism is an illusion. Many philosophers declare themselves agnostic on this objection to free will. The determinism objection is the core idea behind Peter van Inwagen's Consequence Argument.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Consequence Argument, Determinism, Luck Objection, Illusion, Standard Argument, Randomness Objection

## Direct Argument

The Direct Argument for the incompatibility of determinism and moral responsibility does not depend on avoidability or the ability to do otherwise. John Fischer developed it as an improvement on Peter van Inwagen's Consequence Argument, using a Transfer Principle of Non-Responsibility which traces the causes of current decisions and actions back in the causal chain of the "actual sequence."

Other glosses - Actual Sequence, Alternative Possibilities, Consequence Argument, Indirect Argument, Done Otherwise, Standard Argument, Tracing, Transfer Principle

## Do Otherwise

The idea that an agent could have done otherwise was historically seen as a requirement for free will. This idea is in clear conflict with the deterministic idea that the past allows but one possible future.



G. E. Moore and others say that “could have done otherwise” simply means “if the agent had chosen to, he could have done otherwise.” This obviously requires a different past (which implies past alternative possibilities). Some philosophers call this the “if-then” hypothetical or conditional analysis.

Harry Frankfurt developed sophisticated arguments to show that alternative possibilities need not exist to claim that an agent is free.

Nevertheless, if in the present an agent has alternative possibilities, she can say “I can do otherwise.” Change that to the past tense once the agent has chosen and she can say “I could have done otherwise.”

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Fixed Past, Frankfurt Examples

## Downward Causation

Downward Causation is the idea that higher-level processes can exert a “downward” influence on lower levels. Examples include the dualist immaterial mind influencing the body, and macroscopic systems, such as the brain, influencing quantum-mechanical wave functions at the level of the atoms. Where reductionism assumes all causation is from the bottom up., downward causation works from the top down.

Other glosses - Quantum Mechanics

## Dual Control

Dual Control is the power of an agent to act or not to act, in exactly the same circumstances. That is given the Fixed Past and the Laws of Nature just before the action (or the lack thereof), the agent can either act or avoid performing the act.

Robert Kane and Richard Double call this “dual (or plural) rational control.” Double suggests that it may be impossible to act rationally in two different ways, given the same reasons to act. Kane also called it the “plurality condition” when there are many alternative possibilities for action, each of which has comparable good reasons.

Actions that have dual or plural rational control are Undetermined Liberties.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Compatibilism, Control, Determinism, Done Otherwise, Laws of Nature, Undetermined Liberty, Yes-No Objection



## E

## Epistemic Freedom

Epistemic Freedom is the idea that since we cannot know the future, we have a kind of freedom even in a deterministic world.

It is closely related to epistemic probability, which says there is no real (or ontological) chance. There is only human ignorance about the complete details that would allow us to predict the future exactly. Religious thinkers credit this to our finite minds, whereas the infinite mind of God has complete Foreknowledge.

Other glosses - Foreknowledge, Ontological, Probability

## Event Causal

Event-causal libertarianism denies strict causality, the idea that every event has antecedent physical causes which completely determine all subsequent events. Some causes must be uncaused to break the causal chain of determinism. Uncaused causes include quantum events, whose outcomes are only probable. Event-causal theories raise the randomness objection in the standard argument against free will.

Other glosses - Agent Causal, Causality, Determinism, Indeterminism, Standard Argument

## F

## Fixed Past

The Fixed Past refers primarily to the obvious fact that past events are not changeable. But it appears often in determinist/compatibilist accounts of whether an agent could have done otherwise. “One could only have done otherwise if either the Fixed Past or the Laws of Nature had been different,” goes the argument.

The conclusion is “There is but one possible future, and it is determined at each moment by the Fixed Past and the (deterministic) Laws of Nature.”

G. E. Moore and others say that “could have done otherwise” simply means “if the agent had chosen to, he could have done otherwise.” This obviously would have been a different past, one of the alternative possibilities. Some philosophers call this the “if-then” hypothetical or conditional analysis.



Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Compatibilism, Determinism, Do Otherwise, Laws of Nature

## Foreknowledge

Foreknowledge is the idea that the future is already known, usually to a supernatural being.

In classical Newtonian physics, a Laplacian super intelligence could in principle predict the future from the classical laws of physics, given knowledge of the positions and velocities of all the atoms in the universe.

Other glosses - Determinism, Free Will, Laws of Nature

## Frankfurt Cases

Frankfurt-style case or examples claim that an agent can be responsible, can be said to act freely, even though no alternative possibilities exist. Harry Frankfurt attacked what he called the Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP). Alternative possibilities for thought and action were considered to be a requirement for free will and moral responsibility until Frankfurt extended John Locke's "locked room" example of a person who freely chose to stay in a room, unaware that the doors had been locked, so that an alternative possibility did not exist. In Frankfurt-style thought experiments a hypothetical demon blocks all possibilities except the one that he wants the agent to choose.

Note that Frankfurt assumes that alternative possibilities do in fact exist, or there would be nothing for his hypothetical intervening demon to block. Since information about the agent's decision does not exist until she makes her decision, Frankfurt's hypothetical intervening demon (much like the similar Laplacian demon or God's Foreknowledge) does not exist. This is the Information Objection to Frankfurt-style examples.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Indirect Argument, Information Objection, Kane-Widerker Objection, Leeway Incompatibilism

## Freedom of Action

Freedom of Action must be carefully distinguished from Freedom of the Will.

An action is said to be free by classical compatibilists like Thomas Hobbes and David Hume if the agent is not coerced by external forces.



The action may be completely determined by causal chains going back in time before the agent's birth, but they are nevertheless free in the compatibilist sense.

In his essay, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, Isaiah Berlin defined freedom of action as “negative freedom,” and free will as “positive freedom.” It is also known as Voluntarism, in contrast to Origination. And it is the Liberty of Spontaneity rather than Liberty of Indifference.

Other glosses - Causality, Compatibilism, Determinism, Free Will, Liberty of Indifference, Liberty of Spontaneity, Origination, Voluntarism

## Free Will

Free Will is sometimes called Freedom of Action. Libertarian Free Will includes the availability of Alternative Possibilities and the ability to Done Otherwise.

John Locke encouraged the separation of the adjective free, which describes deliberation, from the (adequate) determination of the will.

Other glosses - Adequate Determinism, Alternative Possibilities, Deliberation, Done Otherwise

## Future Contingency

The most famous Future Contingent is Aristotle's Sea Battle (De interpretatione 9). The Principle of Bivalence says that the statement “There will be a sea battle tomorrow” is either true or false. And either way necessarily binds the truth of the future contingent event.

Diodorus Cronus' “Master Argument” denied any future contingency.

Aristotle, ever sensible, decided that there was no present truth or falsity to a future contingent statement. He denied that the truth of a proposition is a necessary truth, and thus denied Logical Determinism. Indeed, contingency means that the event depends on the future, and so does its truth.

Many Stoics appear to have regarded the truth of future contingent statements as predetermining all future events. But Chrysippus denied necessity even as he affirmed fate and physical causal determinism.

Modern philosophers (especially J. Łukasiewicz) have developed a three-valued logic to handle such statements, but not with complete success.

Other glosses - Determinism, Principle of Bivalence, Master Argument, Standard Argument



## G

### Guidance Control

John Martin Fischer separates an agent's control into two kinds. The first he calls "guidance control" - the kind of control needed to initiate or originate an action, by being "reasons-responsive" and taking ownership of the action, meaning the agent can say the action was "up to me." For Fischer, this includes steering a vehicle which is on a fixed track and actually can only make determined turns.

Another kind of control is "regulative control" - the kind needed to choose between "alternative possibilities." Fischer describes guidance control as happening in the "actual sequence," where regulative control refers to "alternative sequences" of events. Derk Pereboom uses the related terms source and leeway incompatibilism.

Other glosses - Actual Sequence, Alternative Possibilities, Alternative Sequences, Control, Direct Argument, Leeway Incompatibilism, Origination, Reasons-Responsive, Source Incompatibilism

## H

### Hard Determinism

Hard Determinism was coined by William James to describe determinists who fully accept the negative implications of determinism. They reject any free will. They deny the voluntarism of Thomas Hobbes, the negative "freedom from" external constraints on our actions. They also deny any positive "freedom to" originate our actions, to be the authors of our lives, the claim that things "depend on us" (in Greek ἐφ' ἡμῖν).

Other glosses - Compatibilism, Determinism, Hard Incompatibilism, Origination, Up To Us, Voluntarism

### Hard Incompatibilism

Hard incompatibilists deny any indeterminism in the "actual sequence" of events. No event "originates" in the agent. Since nothing is "up to us," they argue for the incompatibility of determinism and moral responsibility.



Hard incompatibilists deny both free will and moral responsibility. They call free will an “illusion” and some call for revisionism. William James called such thinkers “hard determinists.” Derk Pereboom coined the new term for those who are agnostic on indeterminism and deny free will and moral responsibility, whether determinism is true or not.

Other glosses - Actual Sequence, Agnostic, Illusion, Indeterminism, Origination, Revisionism, Source Incompatibilism, Up To Us

## Hierarchy Of Desires

Harry Frankfurt formulated the idea of a Hierarchy Of Desires. First-order desires or volitions are desires to act. Second-order desires are desires to desire, for example, to want to act. The theory invites a regress of willings, and recalls the comments of John Locke and Arthur Schopenhauer. “We are free to will, but can we will what we will?”

Frankfurt says moral responsibility requires a first-order desire with which the agent “identifies,” which means she has a second-order desire that is consistent with the first-order desire that moves her to action.

Other glosses - Moral Responsibility

## I

## Illusion

It is now common among hard incompatibilists to call free will an illusion. This may be because of Frankfurt Examples that claim to prove that Alternative Possibilities do not exist. Or it may be because of the standard argument against free will. In any case, the real illusion is determinism, in its many forms.

Illusionists are often revisionists calling for an end to retributive punishment.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Frankfurt Examples, Hard Incompatibilism, Standard Argument, Retributivism, Revisionism

## Incompatibilism

Incompatibilists come in two kinds. Both claim that determinism is incompatible with free will. One kind were called “hard determinists” by William James. They deny free will. The other are libertarians. They deny determinism.

Today many incompatibilists declare themselves agnostic about the “truth” of determinism and say the incompatibilities extend to indeterminism as well.



Derk Pereboom coined “hard incompatibilism” to describe agnostics on determinism who deny both free will and moral responsibility. They call free will an “illusion” and some call for revisionism.

The traditional argument for incompatibilism assumes alternative possibilities and the ability to do otherwise. The Consequence Argument and Direct Argument do not.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Alternative Possibilities, Broad Incompatibilism, Consequence Argument, Determinism, Done Otherwise, Direct Argument, Hard Incompatibilism, Indeterminism, Illusion, Indeterminism, Illusion, Leeway Incompatibilism, Semicompatibilism, Source Incompatibilism, Traditional Argument

## Indeterminism

Indeterminism is the idea that some events are uncaused, specifically that they are random accidents with only probabilistic outcomes. In ancient times, Epicurus proposed that atoms occasionally swerve at random, breaking the causal chain of determinism and allowing for moral responsibility. In modern physics, we now know that atoms constantly swerve, or move indeterministically, whenever they are in the presence of other atoms. The universe is irreducibly random on the atomic scale. Laws of Nature are therefore probabilistic or statistical. Although for large objects, the departure from classical laws of motion is usually entirely insignificant, indeterministic quantum noise plays a role in the two-stage model of free will.

Other glosses - Causality, Causa Sui, Determinism, Laws of Nature, Moral Responsibility, Probability

## Indirect Argument

The Indirect Argument for the incompatibility of determinism and moral responsibility depends on avoidability or the ability to do otherwise. If the agent does not have alternative possibilities, she cannot do otherwise, and she cannot be morally responsible.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Basic Argument, Consequence Argument, Direct Argument, Standard Argument

## Information Objection

The Information Objection claims that Frankfurt examples can not prove that Alternative Possibilities do not exist, because the information needed by an intervener to block alternatives does not exist until the moment of an agent’s decision.



Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Frankfurt Examples, Kane-Widerker Objection, Standard Argument, Yes-No Objection

## Intellect

Intellect is often contrasted with Will, when the latter is identified with the desires and passions and the former identified with reason. From Aquinas to Hume, some philosophers argued that acts of will are always based on emotions and desires, not the pure intellect that generates, evaluates, and deliberates the alternative possibilities.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Deliberation, Evaluation, Reasons-Responsive

## K

### Kane-Widerker Objection

Robert Kane and later David Widerker objected to Frankfurt-style examples that posit a demon or intervener who allows the agent to do “freely” whatever the intervener wants her to do. The objection notes that the intervener can not know what an agent is going to do without assuming the agent is determined and the intervener has Foreknowledge. This is an epistemic objection.

The intervener needs a “prior sign” of the causal chain. Such a sign is an event that leads causally to the decision, and thus Frankfurt examples “beg the question” by assuming determinism. Information about the agent’s decision does not exist until she makes her decision (the ontological Information Objection), so Frankfurt’s hypothetical intervening demon (much like the similar Laplacian demon or God’s Foreknowledge) can not exist.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Frankfurt Examples, Information Objection, Yes-No Objection

## L

### Laws of Nature

The “Laws of Nature” are often cited in compatibilist arguments as controlling events, together with the “Fixed Past.”

The idea appears often in determinist/compatibilist accounts of whether an agent could have done otherwise. “One could only have



done otherwise if either the Fixed Past or the Laws of Nature had been different,” goes the argument. The Fixed Past refers primarily to the obvious fact that past events are not changeable.

The usual conclusion is “There is but one possible future, and it is determined at each moment by the Fixed Past and the (deterministic) Laws of Nature.”

However, the real Laws of Nature, beginning with the most fundamental laws of physics, are indeterministic and probabilistic, reflecting the availability of alternative possibilities..

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Compatibilism, Determinism, Done Otherwise, Fixed Past

## Leeway Incompatibilism

Leeway Incompatibilism requires indeterminism in the “alternative sequences” provided by alternative possibilities, to establish incompatibility of determinism and moral responsibility. By contrast, Source Incompatibilism depends on actions that originate within the agent in the “actual sequence.” Derk Pereboom coined this term, which is a variation on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP).

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Source Incompatibilism

## Liberty of Indifference

Liberty of Indifference (*liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*) is an ancient case of two options so similar that only a miniscule effort is needed to choose one over the other. This seemed to be a case where even an immaterial mind might move a material body. It was also argued that where options are identical, randomness would suffice to choose one. Some philosophers argued that this randomness was at the heart of free will, showing its absurdity and unintelligibility. In a famous example typical of philosophical test cases, the scholastic teacher Jean Buridan placed an ass equidistant between identical bales of hay. Since animals lack our God-given liberty, Buridan argued, the ass would starve to death.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities,

## Liberty of Spontaneity

Liberty of Spontaneity was Descartes’ (and the Scholastics’) term for what Thomas Hobbes called Voluntarism. Spontaneity translates the Greek *automaton* (αὐτόματον).



Descartes contrasted it with Liberty of Indifference, but they are not proper opposites. It is more properly contrasted with Libertarian “Free Will” and with Berlin’s Positive Freedom, which is the “freedom to” choose or act that comes with genuine Alternative Possibilities and results in actions that are “up to us,” that we originate.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Liberty of Indifference, Self-Realization, Voluntarism

## Logical Fallacy

The Logical Fallacy is to assume that purely logical (and linguistic) analysis can yield “truths” about the world. Logical positivism was in practical terms a logical fallacy. The hundreds of papers published on Harry Frankfurt’s attacks on the idea of alternative possibilities are a prime example. Nothing is logically true of the physical world. Modal analyses using the idea of possible worlds shows that anything that is not internally contradictory can be postulated of some possible world.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Frankfurt-style Examples,

## Luck Objection

The Luck Objection to free will and moral responsibility arises because the world contains irreducible indeterminism and chance. As a result, many unintended consequences of our actions are out of our control.

We are often held responsible for actions that were intended as good, but that had bad consequences. Similarly, we occasionally are praised for actions that were either neutral or possibly blameworthy, but which had good consequences.

In a deterministic world, it is hard to see how we can be held responsible for any of our actions. Counterintuitively, semicompatibilist philosophers hold that whether determinism or indeterminism is true, we can still have moral responsibility.

At the other end of the spectrum, some libertarians are critical of any free will model that involves chance, because the apparent randomness of outcomes would make such free will unintelligible, because it would be a matter of luck.

Unfortunately, much of what happens in the real world contains a good deal of luck, giving rise to many of the moral dilemmas that lead to moral skepticism.

Whether determinist, compatibilist, semicompatibilist, or libertarian, it seems unreasonable to hold persons responsible for the unin-



tended consequences of their actions, good or bad. In many moral and legal systems, it is the person's intentions that matter first and foremost.

And in any case, actions need not have moral consequences to be free, that would commit the moral restrictivism of restricting free decisions to moral decisions.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Consequentialism, Control, Determinism Objection, Moral restrictivism, Indeterminism, Mind Argument, Moral Luck, Standard Argument, Randomness Objection

## M

### Manipulation Argument

The Manipulation Argument grows out of the accepted loss of control and moral responsibility for agents who are addicted or induced to act by hypnosis and the like. As with the hypothetical interveners in Frankfurt-style cases, these arguments often postulate counterfactual manipulators - such as evil neuroscientists who control the development of persons from the egg (as in *Brave New World*) or condition them in their formative years (like a "Skinner box" reinforcing selected behaviors). The argument says that if we deny responsibility when such manipulators have control, why not deny it when causal determinism (or random indeterminism) is in control?

The Manipulation Argument is only meant to enhance the intuition of lost control, in order to support the Consequence Argument and similar Determinism Objections in the standard argument against free will. Derk Pereboom's Four-Case Argument is a well-known example of a Manipulation Argument.

Other glosses - Consequence Argument, Control, Moral Responsibility, Standard Argument

### Master Argument

The Master Argument was first formulated by Diodorus Cronus, a late 4th-century philosopher of the Megarian School, who argued that the actual is the only possible and that some true statements about the future imply that the future is already determined. He formulated a "Master Argument" to show that if something in the future is not going to happen, it was true in the past that it would not happen.



This is related to the problem of future contingency, made famous in the example of Aristotle's Sea-Battle in *De Interpretatione* 9. Aristotle thought statements about the future lacked any truth value.

Note that the truth value of a statement made in the past can "actually" be changed if an event does or does not happen, showing that the "fixed past" has some changeability.

Other glosses - Actualism, Basic Argument, Consequence Argument, Future Contingency, Principle of Bivalence, Standard Argument

## Mind Argument

The Mind Argument is Peter van Inwagen's name for the Randomness Objection in the standard argument against free will. Alfred Mele calls it the "Luck Objection."

Van Inwagen named the Mind Argument for the journal *Mind*, where most of the randomness objections were published, especially R. E. Hobart's 1934 classic "Free Will As Involving Determination And Inconceivable Without It."

Other glosses - Luck Objection, Randomness Objection, Standard Argument

## Modal Fallacy

The Modal Fallacy usually involves possible or contingent statements that are falsely claimed to be necessary. For example:

This proposition is true. (contingent)

If it is true, it cannot be false. (contingent)

If it cannot be false, then it is true and necessarily true (modal fallacy).

Ted Warfield claims that his colleague Peter van Inwagen's Consequence Argument contains contingent premises that make it a modal fallacy. Warfield has reformulated a purely necessary form of the argument. Unfortunately, necessary arguments do not apply to the world.

Other glosses - Consequence Argument

## Modest Libertarianism

Modest Libertarianism is a concept proposed by Alfred Mele for consideration by Libertarians. It is a two-stage model of free will in which indeterminism is limited to the early stages of the deliberation process



which consider alternative possibilities that may or may not “come to mind.” Modest libertarianism is a variation of Daniel Dennett’s 1978 two-stage “Valerian” decision model, in his provocative essay “Giving Libertarians What They Say They Want.”

Mele feels that randomness anywhere in the causal chain leads to his Luck Objection, a variation on the standard Randomness Objection.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Indeterminism, Luck Objection, Randomness Objection

## Moral Luck

Moral Luck is Thomas Nagel’s notion that since an action’s consequences are beyond the agent’s control, randomness makes moral responsibility a matter of chance. This is often framed as the Luck Objection, a variation on the randomness objection. Since there is irreducible randomness in the universe, there are no doubt many cases where luck enters into moral situations, but not universally. Many actions are adequately determined and have reliable and predictable consequences, enough to establish the general concept of moral responsibility.

Other glosses - Adequate Determinism, Consequentialism, Control, Luck Objection, Moral Responsibility, Standard Argument, Randomness Objection

## Moral Restrictivism

Moral Restrictivism is to assume that free choices are restricted to moral decisions. Robert Kane does this, as did Plato and the Scholastics. This is not to deny that moral responsibility is historically intimately connected with free will and even dependent on the existence of free will (for libertarians and broad compatibilists). Any decision can be free. Our freedom to act also includes merely practical, financial, and fiduciary judgments, as well as occasional non-rational flip-of-the-coin decisions and even misjudgments.

Other glosses - Moral Responsibility, Restrictivism

## Moral Responsibility

Moral Responsibility is historically tightly connected to the problem of free will, but it is an moral restrictivism to require that free choices be moral decisions.

Other glosses - Moral Restrictivism



## Moral Sentiments

Moral Sentiments arguably would exist whether or not determinism is “true.” David Hume first made this argument, but Peter Strawson made it famous in current debates, with his agnosticism about determinism vs. free will, in favor of a Humean Naturalism that takes our moral sentiments as givens that are beyond the skepticism of logic and critical thought.

Note that Hume the Naturalist had no problem “Deriving Ought from Is” - something shown logically impossible by Hume the Skeptic.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Moral restrictivism, Naturalism

## Moral Skepticism

Moral Skepticism challenges the idea that there are always rational and best answers to moral questions. Because there are various theories of morality - deontic, pragmatic, utilitarian, etc, it is easy to construct moral dilemmas and paradoxes. Moral skeptics like Walter Sinnott-Armstrong believe these are real problems in life and cannot be explained away by clever arguments.

Note that moral skepticism tends to lead to relativism and moral nihilism in the absence of objective values.

Other glosses - Moral Responsibility

## N

### Narrow Incompatibilism

Narrow Incompatibilism is Randolph Clarke’s synonym for John Martin Fischer’s concept of Semicompatibilism. Clarke distinguishes it from his term Broad Incompatibilism.

Narrow Incompatibilism is incompatible with free will, but not with moral responsibility.

Other glosses - Broad Incompatibilism, Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, Moral Responsibility, Semicompatibilism

### Naturalism

Naturalism is the position that the Laws of Nature (assumed to be deterministic) apply to human beings and their actions, because humans are natural things, continuous with animals and other things that lack



free will. The position originated with David Hume and has been developed in the moral responsibility debates by Paul Russell.

Naturalists tend to be revisionists on retributive punishment.

Assuming that free will is restricted to morally responsible agents is an example of the Moral restrictivism. One way of seeing the continuous nature between animals and humans is to recognize that animals, like children, have a will and freedom of action, they just lack moral responsibility.

Other glosses - Determinism, Moral restrictivism, Laws of Nature, Moral Responsibility, Restrictivism, Revisionism

## Naturalistic Fallacy

G. E. Moore in Principia Ethica claimed that ethics is human, not natural. So ethical claims can not be supported by appeals to natural properties, like pleasure or utility. Moore thinks “good” cannot be defined. It is an elemental essential property.

Moore’s ethical non-naturalism resembles David Hume’s denial that “ought” (human ethics) can be derived from “is” (nature).

Note the conflict with Naturalists for whom natural behaviors are moral behaviors, and “un-natural” behaviors are bad.

Other glosses - Moral restrictivism, Moral Responsibility, Naturalism

## O

### Ontological

Ontology is the study of real things existing in the world. A crisis in philosophy emerged when Locke and Hume, and later Kant, observed that all our knowledge comes to us through our perceptions. We cannot know the “things themselves” behind the perceptions. Moreover, our perceptions may be illusions.

The existence of real ontological chance is often denied by those who claim that randomness and probability are merely the result of human ignorance. Chance, they say is an epistemic problem, not an ontological one.

Other glosses - Epistemic, Illusion, Probability, Randomness



## Origination

Origination is the idea that new causal chains can begin with an agent, something that is not predetermined to happen by events prior to the agent's deliberation (between alternative possibilities) and decision. Origination accounts for creativity.

Ted Honderich is "dismayed" because the truth of determinism requires that we give up "origination" with its promise of an open future. For him, limiting freedom to classical compatibilist voluntarism means we are not the authors of our own actions. They are not up to us.

Other glosses - Agent Causal, Alternative Possibilities, Causa Sui, Up To Us, Voluntarism

## Ought From Is

David Hume famously criticized philosophers for talking about the way things are and suddenly describing the way they ought (or ought not) to be, as if the ought had been deduced from the is.

Moore's naturalistic fallacy similarly denies that ethical rules can depend on natural facts.

Other glosses - Moral restrictivism, Naturalistic Fallacy

## Ought Implies Can

Ought Implies Can (sometimes abbreviated K) is the deontic principle, usually attributed to Immanuel Kant, that an agent ought to do a moral act only if she actually can do it, if she has control.

Other glosses - Control, Done Otherwise, Voluntarism

## P

### Possible Worlds

Gottfried Leibniz argued that necessary truths are true in all possible worlds. David Lewis appears to have believed that the truth of his counterfactuals was a result of believing that for every non-contradictory statement there is a possible world in which that statement is true. This is called modal realism. It implies the existence of infinitely many parallel universes, an idea similar to the controversial many-world interpretations of quantum mechanics.



The astronomer David Layzer analyzes questions of free will in terms of many possible worlds.

It is a bit ironic that philosophers, who are skeptical about our ability to obtain knowledge of the real external world, are optimistic about many possible worlds.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Modal Fallacy, Quantum Mechanics

## Pre-Determinism

Pre-Determinism is the idea that a strict causal determinism is true, with a causal chain of events back to the origin of the universe, and one possible future.

It is what most philosophers mean when they say that free will is compatible with determinism, and when they use determinism in the standard argument against free will.

Other glosses - Causality, Compatibilism, Determinism, Standard Argument

## Principle of Alternate Possibilities

The Principle of Alternate (sic) Possibilities (or PAP) was formulated as follows in 1961 by Harry Frankfurt in order to defend compatibilism from the apparent lack of alternative possibilities in the deterministic world of classical compatibilism.

PAP: A person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise.

Frankfurt maintained that PAP was false, and that agents could be free and morally responsible without alternative possibilities and the capability to do otherwise in the same circumstances.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Determinism, Done Otherwise, Moral Responsibility, Same Circumstances

## Principle of Bivalence

The Principle of Bivalence is that for any proposition  $p$ , either  $p$  is true or  $p$  is false. It is the reason the standard argument against free will is framed as two horns of a dilemma. Either determinism is true or false. Most philosophers do not want to give up the idea of causal determinism, so opt to be compatibilists.



Bivalence is also known as “the law of the excluded middle.” There is no middle term between true and false. This becomes the basis for the idea that there is no tertium quid or middle between chance and necessity, perceived as logical opposites.

The Principle of Bivalence is also the basis for Logical Determinism, in which the present truth of a statement implies its truth in the future.

Other glosses - Determinism, Future Contingency, Standard Argument

## Probability

Probability has often been a way to deny real chance. The great mathematicians who invented the calculus of probabilities, which governs games of chance, thought that there was nothing random really going on. For them probability was merely a result of human ignorance. The problem was epistemic, not ontological.

Deterministic Laws of Nature guarantee we could predict the future, if only we had all the information needed. Laplace’s demon, a supreme intelligence, could know the future, as God foreknows it, if he knew the positions and velocities of all the particles in the universe.

Today we know that the Laws of Nature are not deterministic. Not only are they probabilistic, but irreducibly random, due to the underlying quantum mechanics that has replaced classical mechanics as the proper description of the universe’s fundamental particles.

The laws become arbitrarily close to certain in the limit of large numbers of particles (billiard balls, planets), leading to the illusion of perfectly deterministic laws.

Probability is the explanation for alternative possibilities and unpredictable “uncaused” causes (*causa sui*) that are the “free” part of “free will.”

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, *Causa Sui*, Determinism, Epistemic, Foreknowledge, Illusion, Laws of Nature, Ontological, Quantum Mechanics

## Q

### Quantum Mechanics

The development of Quantum Mechanics in the late 1920’s marked the end of physical determinism.

Quantum mechanics has replaced classical mechanics as the proper description of the universe’s fundamental particles. But note that in the



limit of macroscopic objects with large numbers of particles, the quantum laws correspond exactly to (i.e., become the same as) the classical laws. This is Neils Bohr's correspondence principle.

Deterministic Laws of Nature have been replaced with probabilistic laws. Quantum events can start new "causal chains" with events that are unpredictable from prior events, self-caused events that are *causa sui*.

Quantum phenomena are behind the generation of alternative possibilities that are the "free" part of "free will."

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, *Causa Sui*, Determinism, Laws of Nature, Probability

## R

### Randomness Objection

The Randomness Objection is the second horn in the traditional dilemma of free will. Either determinism is true or indeterminism is true. In neither case can there be any moral responsibility. Note that the great asymmetry between determinism and indeterminism has led philosophers to favor the kind of deterministic or causal explanations that are the apparent basis for laws of nature. But determinism is an illusion.

Indeterminism is a greater threat to moral responsibility than determinism, since it is associated with many negative ideas, such as chance. Nevertheless, many philosophers declare themselves agnostic on this objection to free will. The randomness objection is the core idea behind Peter van Inwagen's Mind Argument.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Determinism Objection, Illusion, Indeterminism, Luck Objection, Mind Argument, Standard Argument

### Reactive Attitudes

Reactive Attitudes were identified by Peter Strawson as feelings that we would naturally have even if we were convinced of the truth of determinism (or indeterminism). Strawson was an early agnostic, claiming he could not make sense of either). Reactive Attitudes include gratitude and resentment, and our normal tendency to praise or blame, punish or reward. Strawson modeled his naturalist claims in the face of skepticism about free will after David Hume, who overcame his own famous skeptical views to claim ethical truths could be found in naturalism.

Other glosses - Naturalism



## Reasons-Responsive

Reasons-Responsiveness describes an agent who has the kind of control needed to initiate or originate an action. Being “reasons-responsive” and taking ownership of the action means the agent can say the action was “up to me.” John Martin Fischer calls this “guidance control” in the “actual sequence” of events that figure in the “Direct Argument” for source incompatibilism. Fischer’s account of moral responsibility is like Thomas Aquinas’ and Susan Wolf’s account of free actions as those guided by reasons.

Other glosses - Actual Sequence, Control, Direct Argument, Origination, Source Incompatibilism, Up To Us

## Regulative Control

John Martin Fischer separates an agent’s control into two kinds. The first he calls “guidance control” - the kind of control needed to initiate or originate an action, by being “reasons-responsive” and taking ownership of the action, meaning the agent can say the action was “up to me.” The other kind of control is “regulative control” - the kind needed to choose between “alternative possibilities.” Fischer describes these options as happening in the “actual sequence” or “alternative sequences” of events. Derk Pereboom uses the related terms source and leeway incompatibilism.

Other glosses - Actual Sequence, Alternative Possibilities, Alternative Sequences, Control, Direct Argument, Guidance Control, Leeway Incompatibilism, Origination, Reasons-Responsive, Source Incompatibilism

## Restrictivism

Restrictivist theories claim that the number of “free” actions is a tiny fraction of all actions. Robert Kane, for example limits them to rare “self-forming actions” (SFAs) in which weighty and difficult moral decisions are made. Limiting freedom to moral decisions is the moral restrictivism. Peter van Inwagen restricts free will to cases where the reasons that favor either alternative are not clearly stronger. This is the ancient liberty of indifference. Susan Wolf restricts free decisions to those made rationally according to “the True and the Good.”

Other glosses - Liberty of Indifference, Self-Forming Action

## Retributivism

Retributivism describes punishment that is deserved because the agent was morally responsible for the crime. Many hard incompatibilists



who think free will is an illusion, and many naturalists, are revisionists calling for an end to retributive punishment.

Susan Wolf has pointed out the strange asymmetry between praise and blame. Those opposed to punishment for retributive reasons (as opposed to practical consequentialist reasons) are often in favor of praise for good deeds. This reflects the ancient Platonic view that we are responsible only for the good we do. Our errors we blame on our ignorance, which is, unfortunately, no excuse before the law.

Other glosses - Illusion, Moral Responsibility, Naturalism, Revisionism

## Revisionism

Revisionists hope to change popular attitudes about free will and moral responsibility, bringing them more into line with the views of modern philosophy. A leading issue is the widely held view among current philosophers that free will is an illusion. Revisionists conclude there should be an end to retributive punishment.

Other glosses - Illusion, Moral Responsibility, Retributivism

## Rule Beta

Rule Beta is Peter van Inwagen's "Third Argument" for incompatibilism. Van Inwagen argues against the compatibilism of determinism and moral responsibility. It is a Transfer Principle of unavoidability (one has no choices and can not do otherwise ).

$p$ , and no one has, or ever had, any choice about that. If  $p$  then  $q$ , and no one has, or ever had, any choice about that. Hence,  $q$ , and no one has, or ever had, any choice about that.

Rule Beta wraps the ancient and physical dilemma of determinism in analytical logical window dressing. It is identical to the Determinist Objection in the standard argument against free will.

Other glosses - Done Otherwise, Logical Fallacy, Moral Responsibility, Standard Argument, Transfer Principle

## S

### Same Circumstances

Determinists argue that, given the Laws of Nature and the Fixed Past, it is impossible for an agent to act differently in Exactly the Same Circumstances. Libertarians demand such Dual Rational Control and the ability to Do Otherwise as a freedom condition.

Other glosses - Done Otherwise, Fixed Past, Laws of Nature



## Self-Determination

Self-Determination is the idea of a positive freedom, a freedom for actions that we originate, actions that are “up to us.” Such acts constitute the essence of Free Will. This is Mortimer Adler’s term, adopted also by Robert Kane. Adler called it the *Natural Freedom of Self-Determination*. to indicate it is a universal property. It is a Determined De-Liberation.

Other glosses - Determination, Determined De-Liberation, Origination, Self-Perfection, Self-Realization, Up to Us

## Self-Forming Action

Self-Forming Actions (SFAs) are Robert Kane’s idea of free actions in the distant past that contribute to our character and values. When we act out of habit today, we trace the Ultimate Responsibility (UR) for those actions back to those SFAs. Although current habitual actions may seem (adequately) determined, they are still self-determined and thus free.

We can be responsible for current actions that are essentially (viz. adequately) determined by our character and values, as long as we formed that character ourselves by earlier free Self-Forming Actions. For Kane, SFAs in turn require brains that are not deterministically caused by anything outside the agent.

Other glosses - Self-Determination, Tracing, Ultimate Responsibility

## Self-Perfection

Self-Perfection is the idea from Plato to Kant that we are only free when our decisions are for reasons and we are not slaves to our passions. Mortimer Adler’ called it the *Acquired Freedom of Self-Perfection*. to indicate it is acquired in moral development. It is also used by Robert Kane. Adler cites many theologically minded philosophers who argue that man is only perfect and free when following a divine moral law (the moral restrictivism). Sinners, they say, do not have free will, which is odd because on their account sinners are presumably responsible for evil in the world despite an omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent God.

Other glosses - Moral Restrictivism, Restrictivism, Self-Determination, Self-Realization

## Self-Realization

Self-Realization is the idea of freedom as freedom from coercions that make our actions not up to us. It is known as Freedom of Action.



Mortimer Adler' called it the *Circumstantial Freedom of Self-Realization*. to indicate it depends on external circumstances. Today this negative freedom recognizes internal coercions as well, such as addictions or mental disabilities. This is the classical compatibilist definition of freedom, also known as voluntarism. It is also used by Robert Kane.

Other glosses - Compatibilism, Self-Determination, Self-Perfection, Voluntarism

## Semicompatibilism

Semicompatibilism is John Martin Fischer's name for the compatibilism of moral responsibility and determinism (or indeterminism). It is contrasted with classical compatibilism, the broader idea that free will is compatible with determinism.

Randolph Clarke calls these respectively Narrow and Broad Incompatibilism.

Classical compatibilists are determinists. Semicompatibilists avoid the determinist label, claiming to be agnostic about the "truth" of determinism or indeterminism. Semicompatibilism grew out of the apparent success of Harry Frankfurt's attacks on the Principle of Alternate Possibilities.

Other glosses - Agnostic, Compatibilism, Determinism, Frankfurt Examples, Indeterminism, Narrow Incompatibilism

## Soft Causality

Soft Causality is the idea that most events are adequately determined by normal causes, but that some events are not precisely predictable from prior events.

Soft Causality includes occasional quantum events, which are only probabilistic and statistical. This means that they are not strictly caused by prior events, although they may be causes of subsequent events. They depend on chance in the form of irreducible quantum indeterminacy

Their unpredictability leads us to call them uncaused events, which in turn become uncaused causes (*causa sui*) that start new causal chains.

Other glosses - Adequate Determinism, Causality, Causa Sui, Determinism, Indeterminacy, Indeterminism

## Soft Compatibilism

Soft Compatibilism is one of Alfred Mele's terms. Soft compatibilists know, as a result of quantum physics, that determinism is not true. They think that some indeterminism, in the right places, might be useful. For



soft compatibilists, the right place is in what John Martin Fischer calls the Actual Sequence, where it breaks the causal chain of determinism back to the Big Bang. This position is also known as Source Incompatibilism.

Note that soft compatibilists accept the traditional Voluntarism of Thomas Hobbes and David Hume. Even if determinism were true, they say, there would still be Freedom of Action.

Other glosses - Compatibilism, Determinism, Freedom of Action, Free Will, Hard Compatibilism, Origination, Source Incompatibilism, Voluntarism

## Soft Determinism

Soft Determinism was coined by William James to describe compatibilists, who accepted the truth of determinism. They claimed free will was the voluntarism of Thomas Hobbes, the negative “freedom from” external constraints on our actions. This is called “Freedom of Action” to distinguish it from Freedom of the Will

Other glosses - Compatibilism, Determinism, Freedom of Action, Free Will, Hard Determinism, Origination, Voluntarism

## Soft Incompatibilism

Soft Incompatibilism says that free will is incompatible with pre-determinism, and that pre-determinism is not true. It is preferable to the loose usage of the plain “incompatibilist” to describe a libertarian, since it is ambiguous and also used for determinists.

Soft Incompatibilism stands in contrast to Hard Incompatibilism, which maintains that pre-determinism is true and free will does not exist. It is not incompatible with an adequate determinism.

Soft Incompatibilism involves Soft Causality. Soft Incompatibilists accept occasional quantum events, which are only probabilistic and statistical, since they break strict causal chains back to the Big Bang with uncaused causes (*causa sui*) that start new causal chains. It resembles Al Mele’s Soft Libertarianism.

Other glosses - Adequate Determinism, *Causa Sui*, Soft Causality, Soft Libertarianism, Pre-Determinism

## Soft Libertarianism

Soft Libertarianism is one of Alfred Mele’s terms. Soft libertarians think that some indeterminism, in the right place is useful. For soft lib-



ertarians, the right place is in what John Martin Fischer calls the Actual Sequence, where it breaks the causal chain of determinism back to the Big Bang. This position is also known as Source Incompatibilism.

Soft libertarianism differs from Mele's modest libertarianism in that it does not require robust alternative possibilities (APs). APs produce what John Martin Fischer calls the Alternative Sequences.

Mele also develops a model for "Daring Soft Libertarians." Daring soft libertarians, he says, especially value a power to make decisions that are not deterministically caused - a certain initiatory power. This model reaches out to Robert Kane's idea of Ultimate Responsibility, in which we can be responsible for current actions, ones that are essentially determined by our character and values, as long as we formed that character ourselves by earlier free actions that he calls Self-Forming Actions (SFA). SFAs in turn require brains that are not deterministically caused by anything outside the agent.

Other glosses - Compatibilism, Determinism, Freedom of Action, Free Will, Hard Compatibilism, Origination, Source Incompatibilism, Voluntarism

## Source Incompatibilism

Source Incompatibilism or "Sourcehood" focuses on indeterminism in the "actual sequence" of events, an event that "originates" in the agent, to establish the incompatibility of determinism and moral responsibility.

Hard incompatibilists deny this indeterminism. By contrast, Leeway Incompatibilism depends on the ability to do otherwise in "alternative sequences."

Other glosses - Actual Sequence, Alternative Sequences, Consequence Argument, Direct Argument, Hard Incompatibilism, Indirect Argument, Leeway Incompatibilism, Origination

## Standard Argument

The Standard Argument against Free Will is a dilemma with two horns, the Determinism Objection and the Randomness Objection.

If determinism is "true" all our actions are determined and we lack free will and moral responsibility. If indeterminism is "true" all our actions are random and we are equally unfree and not responsible.

A subtle combination of randomness and adequate determinism is required for a two-stage model of free will.



Other glosses - Basic Argument, Consequence Argument, Determinism Objection, Direct Argument, Indirect Argument, Randomness Objection

## Strongest Motive

Given the alternative possibilities for action, the agent might appear to be determined to select the strongest motive. But given the complexity of an agent's character and values, motives and reasons, feelings and desires, the idea of an obvious "strongest motive" has been discredited. Some philosophers say that the strongest motive was, after the fact, whatever the agent chose, reducing it to a tautology.

Other glosses - Akrasia, Alternative Possibilities, Self-Forming Action, Weakness of Will

## Tracing

Tracing is the idea that an agent's responsibility (or non-responsibility) for some action or the consequence of an action is not limited to the agent's thoughts or actions at the moment immediately prior to the action or consequence, but can be traced back to earlier actions, from which responsibility can be transferred. Difficulties arise establishing that the consequences could reasonably have been foreseen by the agent.

Other glosses - Consequence Argument, Consequentialism, Moral Responsibility, Transfer Principle

## Traditional Argument

The Traditional Argument for the incompatibility of determinism and moral responsibility has three steps:

1. If determinism is true, no agent could have avoided acting as she did act - could have done otherwise.
2. An agent is only responsible for actions if she could have done otherwise (the Principle of Alternative Possibilities).
3. Thus, if determinism is true, no agent is morally responsible.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Consequence Argument, Done Otherwise, Direct Argument, Incompatibilism, Moral Responsibility

## Transfer Principle

A Transfer Principle says that an agent's responsibility or non-responsibility (or avoidability or unavoidable) for an action can be



transferred to the consequences of that action, or to the probable consequences (strong transfer), or to consequences that could reasonably have been foreseen by the agent (weak transfer). John Martin Fischer developed the Principle of Transfer of Non-Responsibility as a variation on Peter van Inwagen's "Third Argument" or Rule Beta. Robert Kane's Ultimate Responsibility is Transfer of Responsibility from Self-Forming Actions long ago to current actions, however automatic and habitual.

Other glosses - Consequence Argument, Moral Responsibility, Rule Beta, Self-Forming Actions, Ultimate Responsibility

## U

### Ultimacy

Ultimacy or the Ultimacy Condition is often used by determinists, hard incompatibilists, and illusionists to deny moral responsibility. Galen Strawson's Basic Argument is a good example of denying Ultimacy by an infinite regress of responsibility for our character.

Other glosses - Basic Argument, Consequence Argument, Responsibility, Ultimate Responsibility

### Ultimate Responsibility

Ultimate Responsibility (UR) is Robert Kane's concept that we can be responsible for current actions, ones that are essentially determined by our character and values, as long as we formed that character ourselves by earlier free actions that he calls Self-Forming Actions (SFA).

Other glosses - Responsibility, Self-Forming Action

### Undetermined Liberty

A decision that involves chance, which selects at random from a number of alternative possibilities that appear equally valuable or useful. When the second stage of evaluation does not produce a Determined Deliberation, the agent can "flip a coin" and yet take responsibility for the decision, however it comes out.

Note that an undetermined liberty is not random in the absolute sense of having no connection with character, values, motives, feelings,



desires, etc. It is randomly chosen from within a subset of alternative possibilities that all are rational. An undetermined liberty is a liberty of indifference, but it is still a determination that is adequately determined. Robert Kane's SFAs are undetermined liberties.

Other glosses - Adequate Determinism, Determination, Determined Deliberation, Liberty of Indifference, Up To Us

## Up To Us

The idea that we are the originators of our actions was first described by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* with the Greek phrase ἐφ' ἡμῖν, "up to us," or "depends on us."

Agent causal libertarians insist that our actions begin with something inside our minds. (Aristotle had also said some actions begin ἐφ' ἡμῖν - "in us".) They describe this variously as non-occurrent causation, contra-causal freedom, metaphysical freedom, a *causa sui*, or simply non-causal freedom.

If our actions are not "up to us," if we feel they "happen to us," then we cannot feel morally responsible for them.

Other glosses - Agent Causal, Moral Responsibility, Origination,

## V

### Volition

Volition is another word for Will. It implies the moment of decision or choice and commitment to a course of action, as distinguished from earlier moments of deliberation and evaluation of alternative possibilities. Aquinas, who identified five or more stages, called this moment the *electio* or choice.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Deliberation, Free Will, Voluntarism

### Voluntarism

Voluntarism is the classical compatibilist definition of freedom as freedom from coercions that make our actions not up to us. Today this negative freedom includes internal constraints as well, such as addictions or mental disabilities.



Mortimer Adler and Robert Kane call this self-realization, contrasting it with the libertarian positive freedom of self-determination. Honderich calls it voluntariness, contrasting it with the libertarian freedom of origination, without which, he says, we are not the authors of our own actions.

Other glosses - Liberty of Spontaneity, Origination, Self-Determination, Self-Realization, Up To Us

## W

### Weakness of Will

Weakness of Will (akrasia) describes actions taken against one's better judgment. Rationalism assumes there is always a single best way to evaluate an agent's options or alternative possibilities, so that weakness of will is fundamentally irrational.

Other glosses - Akrasia, Alternative Possibilities, Strongest Motive

## Y

### Yes-No Objection

The Yes-No Objection claims that Frankfurt examples can not prove that alternative possibilities do not exist, because the agent's decision to act or not to act, to do or not to do, can always wait until the last possible moment, so a hypothetical intervener would have to block alternatives ahead of time and thus constitute an external coercion that denies the agent's compatibilist voluntarism or negative freedom.

Other glosses - Alternative Possibilities, Frankfurt Examples, Information Objection, Kane-Widerker Objection, Voluntarism

