FREE WILL: A COMPATIBILIST ACCOUNT

By RYAN L. COLE

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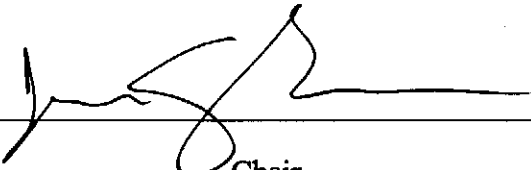the requirements for the degree of

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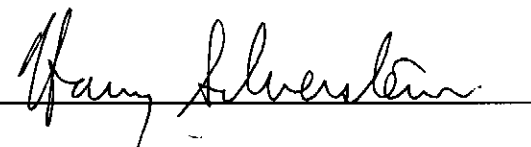WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
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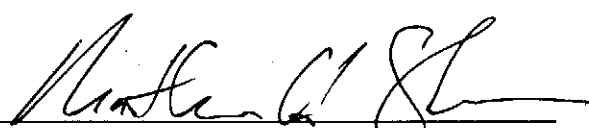To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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Abstract

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This paper is a defense of the compatibility of free will and determinism. My primary

thesis is that free will and determinism are compatible. The account of free will advocated by the

author is a modified version of the dispositional analysis. In the discussion of this account, the

paper covers the anatomy of free will along with an outline of determinism and a presentation of

the consequence argument against the compatibility of free will and determinism. Once the

groundwork for the problem is laid, a short history of the conditional analysis that includes

classical and contemporary advocates and its detractors is covered. The paper then reviews the

state of the contemporary accounts and attempts to provide a modified analysis that will help

support this compatibilist position.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother

who believed in me even when I did not

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a defense of the compatibility of free will and determinism. My primary thesis is that free will and determinism are compatible. The account of free will advocated by the author is a modified version of the conditional analysis. In the discussion of this account, the paper covers the anatomy of free will along with an outline of determinism and a presentation of the consequence argument against the compatibility of free will and determinism. Once the groundwork for the problem is laid, a short history of the conditional analysis that includes classical and contemporary advocates and its detractors is covered. The paper then reviews the state of the contemporary accounts and attempts to provide a modified analysis that will help support this compatibilist position.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTOURS OF FREE WILL

This section describes the necessary ingredients for free action and the concepts used to account for free actions. To begin, the paper outlines the definition of 'free will' that will be used throughout remaining work. It then goes on to describe alternatives. Finally, it covers the use of *ability sentences*, *moral responsibility*, and *free will skepticism* and how these concepts are used to better understand free will.

For the purposes of this paper, a person has free will iff she performs some free acts; a person performs a free act iff the act is up to the person. For example, consider a person who, under normal circumstances, raises her hand. By the provided definition, the identifiable quality that differentiates a freely performed act like hand raising from a forced hand raising is that the hand raising was up to the agent. In addition, this paper supposes that, in order for an action to be up to an agent, a person must have alternatives. Thus, in the case of hand-raising, if that person did not have the option not to raise her hand then her hand raising would not be up to her.

Many of the leading contemporary philosophers in free will and moral responsibility would similarly characterize free actions as those which are up to us. Such philosophers include Robert Kane (1996), Galen Strawson (2002), Peter van Inwagen (1983), Roderick Chisholm (1982), and C.A. Campbell (1951). Describing the consequence argument, van Inwagen writes:

> If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not *up to us* what went on before we were born, and neither is it *up to us* what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not *up to us* (my italics; 1983, v).

In this text, van Inwagen can be seen as clearly endorsing the view that free will is about whether our actions are up to us. Along similar lines, Galen Strawson most famously wrote that we are free when "what we do is wholly and entirely *up to us* in some absolute, buck-stopping way" (my italics; 2002, 451). Although this is written within the context of ultimate freedom, Strawson's use of the phrase 'up to us' remains comparable to the use presented in this paper.[1] Finally, Chisholm writes "if the man was responsible for what he did, then, I would urge, what was to happen at the time of the shooting was something that was entirely *up to the man* himself" (1982, 23). In this text we can see a similarity to both Strawson and van Inwagen in the explanation of free will.[2] These authors along with others, while differing in what free will requires or even if we have free will, articulate free will in the same basic fashion.

In addition, it is assumed in this paper that having alternative possibilities of action available to a person is a necessary condition for free action.[3] Van Inwagen is often famously quoted as requiring alternative possibilities as a necessary component of free will. He writes:

> When I say of a man that he "has free will" I mean that very often, if not always, when he has to choose between two or more mutually incompatible courses of action—that is, course of action that is impossible for him to carry out more than one of—each of these

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[1] While Galen Strawson does not use the phrase 'up to us' repeatedly throughout his paper, he does define ultimate responsibility as an up-to-us-ness which he does use repeatedly. Further, he also adopts this language in the article "Free Agents" (2004, 385).

[2] Chisholm, as well as many others, believes that free will is necessary for moral responsibility. He writes "The metaphysical problem of human freedom might be summarized in the following way: Human beings are responsible agents; but this fact appears to conflict with a deterministic view of human action" (1964, 23). In this text, Chisholm clearly establishes his belief that free will and responsibility are connected. Thus, in this context of the provided quote, responsibility is being used in the same sense that one might say that the man acted freely.

[3] The phrases 'alternatives possibilities of action', 'alternative possibilities', and 'alternatives' are all used as synonyms in this paper. However, the phrase 'alternative possibilities' will be term most predominately adopted throughout the paper.

course of action is such that he can, or is able to, or has it within his power to carry out (1983, 8).

While van Inwagen explains that *alternative possibilities* are not always necessary for *free action*, he clearly states that there is a strong relationship between these two concepts. Carl Ginet writes "I have freedom of action at a given moment if more than one alternative action is then *open to me.*" He goes on to describe openness as "Nothing that exists up to that moment stands in the way of my doing next any one of the alternatives" (1990, 90). To illustrate, when choosing between different kinds of ice cream one could be said to have different alternative possibilities of action from which to choose. On the other hand, if one is picking from a deck of cards all of which are the same – say, the ace of spades – one would not have alternative possibilities about whether or not one picks an ace of spades. Similarly, if a plane takes off at 4:00 pm for Alaska and it is the only plane that leaves for that place at that time, a person planning to fly to Alaska on that day would not be said to have alternatives for plane departure available to him or her.[4] Further, these alternative possibilities might relate to the abilities of an agent at a given time. For example, it might be possible for one to hold one's breath for 5 minutes, but not possible for one to hold one's breath for 3 days.[5] These examples of alternative possibilities, or the lack thereof, demonstrate a more common sense approach to alternative possibilities. With respect to actions that are up to me, alternative possibilities indicate the range of options that are available to me. This can be seen in the example of the plane that departs at 4:00 pm. While it might be up to a person to either leave at 4:00 or not leave at all, that person does not have it up to him to leave at either 4:00 pm or 5:00 pm. Thus, one could say that while she can leave at 4:00, she cannot leave

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[4] This example is taken from Keith Lehrer and Richard Taylor's article "Time, Truth, and Modalities" (1965).

[5] It is conceptually possible for someone to be genetically engineered or equipped with a device that would enable that person to hold her breath for three days. These examples are meant to demonstrate that at particular times each person has physical limitations as to what she could do at that time.

at 5:00. Here we can see instances where an action is free with respect to the various options that are available to that person.[6] In this regard, if there is only one option available to a person, the action performed by that person would not be considered freely performed. But it most cases of action, the person has the ability to perform the action or not.

This relationship between free action, alternatives, and actions that are up to an agent is often expressed with the aid of ability sentences. These sentences employ ability terms like able and 'can' and their cognates and are expressions about the kinds of abilities that are required for free actions. Ability sentences have the form "S can do A" where S is some person and A is an action. Examples include "Sally can ride her bicycle" and "Jaime can catch the bus." As a necessary condition for free action, particular ability sentences pertaining to the performance of an action must be true in order for that action to be free.

For this reason, many of the most distinguished philosophers working in free will and moral responsibility employ an analysis of 'can' in developing their arguments and theories on these topics. Two notable philosophers writing on this topic are G.E. Moore(1951) and J. L. Austin (1970). Moore writes "the view that right and wrong depend upon what the agent absolutely can do—at once involves us in an extremely difficult controversy—the controversy concerning Free Will" (1912, 103). Austin along with a host of others responds to Moore's analysis. In this tradition, van Inwagen explicitly writes "'Free will', then, is to be defined in terms of 'can'" (1983, 8). He goes on to explain that "the concept of the power or ability of an agent to act" is essential to free will and related to the use of 'can' (1983, 8). As with other philosophers that analyze the use of the word 'can,' what it would mean to have the power or ability for an agent to act would need to be explained in more detail.

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[6] A course of action is *available* to a person if acting in the specified manner is up to the agent.

This paper also assumes that free will is necessary for moral responsibility. This is to say that when a person is praiseworthy or blameworthy for an action, that person must have freely performed that action. In light of the previous remarks about free will, one is morally responsible for one's actions only if that person's actions are up to her. The relationship between moral responsibility and free will is easily demonstrated with a simple example. If, for instance, a child were to give her father a gift, under normal circumstances, it would be understandable to praise the child for the kind act. However, if the child had given the gift under the orders of her mother, the fact that the child gave the gift would not be as praiseworthy. Since both cases were the same with the exception of the mother's intervention in one, the reason for the change in praise for the gift giving would be that the giving action was not up to the child.[7] Although this does not even conclusively prove that free will is necessary for moral responsibility, it does illustrate the nature of the relationship between the two concepts that will be assumed in this paper.

Finally, although this paper adopts the view that alternative possibilities are necessary for moral responsibility, not all philosophers adopt this view. Derk Pereboom (2001) and John Martin Fischer (2004) both would agree that a necessary condition for moral responsibility is that an agent's action must be up to her, but they would disagree that alternatives possibilities of action are necessary for moral responsibility. In particular, they argue that alternative possibilities of action are not necessary for an agent's action to be up to her. Their view is called the 'source view.' While our views have a common core – the actions that we are morally responsible for are up to us – our respective focuses on the subject of free will and moral responsibility differ.[8] Pereboom, Fischer, and other source theorists are primarily concerned with

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[7] This example refers to the act of giving the gift and the change in praise for that specific action. One might praise the child for obeying her mother. However, the child would no longer be praised for giving the gift.

[8] Due to the differences in focus for the source theorists, the particular view on the necessary conditions for free will, apart from its relationship to moral responsibility, is often not explained. Fischer, for example, argues that

the necessary conditions for moral responsibility; whereas this paper tries to give a compatibilist account of alternative possibilities and free will as traditionally understood.[9] As such, this paper will not address Fischer's criticisms of alternative possibilities nor Pereboom's arguments against our actions being up to us.

The number of philosophers that hold this view is extensive. Moore (1912), Moritz Schlick (1939), C.A. Campbell (1951), van Inwagen (1983), Kadri Vihvelin (2004), and others all support this basic tenet. Van Inwagen writes:

> Now van Inwagen's arguments for this conclusion, whether they are good or bad, presuppose that there is an inseverable connection between moral responsibility and the power to do otherwise, however flexible this connection might be. The inseverable connection is this: if one is morally responsible for anything, it follows that one has had a free choice about something (2004, 219).

Van Inwagen's assertion that moral responsibility and free will are connected echoes a long held view by all the listed philosophers about the relationship between the two concepts. For them, the motivation behind discussions about free will stem from its inherent relationship to moral responsibility. Working within this set of literature, this paper similarly holds that free will is a necessary condition for moral responsibility.

Although many people believe that they act freely, it is possible to construct examples where people hold this belief, but they are not free. It is the task of the philosophers to

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alternative possibilities are necessary for free will, but free will is not necessary for moral responsibility. Pereboom, however, while agreeing that alternative possibilities are not necessary for moral responsibility, offers no position on whether alternative possibilities are necessary for free will.

[9] In particular, source theorists like Pereboom and Fischer are concerned with the direct argument (the argument that determinism undermines moral responsibility). This paper addresses the traditional argument (the argument that determinism undermines alternatives). So, while the two arguments are clearly related (van Inwagen references both of them in his book), dealing with both arguments would be out of the scope of this paper.

evaluate these skeptical accounts and explain their significance. Hypnosis is one such example. Under hypnosis, a person can be given suggestions such that even when that person is no longer under hypnosis she still responds to specific triggers that make her want to perform particular actions. While the agent may believe that she is acting of her own free will, particular unknown influences affect the person's actions. While these agents are under hypnosis, the decisions made as a result of the hypnotist's prompts are often not considered freely performed. Accordingly, when evaluating this example, or one like it, the philosopher must explain what about hypnosis undermines free will and what this says about the field as a whole. Within the free will literature, there are two major issues that philosophers deal with. Is free will compatible with determinism? And, are people free? It is the goal of this paper to make headway answering the former question.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONSEQUENCE ARGUMENT

This section utilizes and builds upon the description of free will detailed in the preceding section through an explanation of a central argument against the compatibility of free will and determinism.[10] In outlining this argument, this section will first explain the thesis of determinism used in the consequence argument along with other concepts used in the argument. Next, the section covers the consequence argument itself. Finally, the different positions taken on the consequence argument are provided.

The consequence argument, as articulated by van Inwagen, argues that a particular conception of determinism and free will cannot both be true. In its most basic form, the thesis of determinism for the argument "is the thesis that there is at any instant exactly one physically possible future" (van Inwagen 1983, 3). By this definition, the thesis of determinism both describes what will happen along with what will not. For example, given my physical location in the world (Pullman, Washington) along with all the other facts about the state of the world and that I have no extra-ordinary abilities of motion, I cannot now make it the case that I will be in London in five minutes. Thus, by this example, one could say that I am determined not to be in London within the next five minutes. The thesis of determinism also describes what will happen in addition to what will not. For example, suppose that for this example that the thesis of determinism is true and that a ball is dropped from some height H at a time T. Given the laws of nature and the state of the world at T (when the ball is dropped), there would be a true proposition that would state when exactly the ball will strike the ground.[11] This is to say that the

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[10] The argument against the compatibility of free will and determinism is called the consequence argument.

[11] This paper will stick to van Inwagen's definition of propositions unless otherwise stated. He writes "a proposition expresses the state of the world at t provided it is a true proposition that asserts of some state that, at t, the world is in that state" (1983, 60).

laws along with the state of the world at the time the ball is dropped would determine when the ball will hit the ground. For both the negative and positive accounts of the thesis of determinism, the relationship between these propositions is defined in the same manner. In basic propositional logic, the thesis is written as $(P_0 \& L) \rightarrow P$, where P_0 is a proposition about the state of the world at time t_0 (t_0 denotes a moment of time in the past), L represents a proposition of all the laws of nature, and P denotes any true proposition about the future.[12] This logical formula reads that if there is a true proposition about the world that describes the past state of the world and a proposition that is the conjunction of all the laws of nature, then any true proposition about the future follows. When applied to the dropping ball example, if P_0 is taken to be a proposition that expresses the state of the world when the ball is dropped and P is a proposition that expresses the time when the ball hits the ground, the formula would read that it is necessarily the case that given the state of the world (which includes dropping the ball) and the laws of nature, the dropped ball will fall at a determined time.[13]

As might be noted, the thesis utilizes both the concept of *the past* and *the laws of nature*. While the concept of *the past* is relatively straightforward, the *laws of nature*, particularly the relationship those laws have with the past and future, can be considerably more complex. Among the most famous articulations of the consequence argument, van Inwagen spends the most time explicating what the laws of nature are. He writes "Ontologically speaking, a law of nature is a proposition: some propositions have the feature *being a law of nature* and some don't, and which do and which don't is a matter utterly independent of the present state of scientific knowledge and the history of scientific knowledge" (1983, 60) For van Inwagen, there are some propositions

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[12] '&' refers to the conjunction operator, and '→' refers to the conditional operator.

[13] Note that the thesis of determinism makes no mention about causal relationship between agents, their actions, or the effects of their actions. Although a theory of causation could be provided, and some do (Ekstrom 1998; Vivhlin 1995), this is not a necessary component of the argument.

that make it the case that some propositions are true, while others are not. On this conception, the truth of these propositions is independent of human observation and activity.[14] In short, the laws of nature can be viewed as universal propositions that make it the case that certain particulars interact, not the other way around.[15]

Other formulations of the consequence argument similarly explicate the laws of nature in this manner. Carl Ginet writes "By *a law** of nature* is meant any true universal generalization such that no one has it open to her make it the case that an exception to it occurs" (1990, 105).[16] Although Ginet explicitly states that exceptions cannot be made for a law of nature to in fact be a law, this claim is implied when van Inwagen explains that there is no action that a person could take that would make the laws of nature false. Hence, the description of the laws of nature provided by both van Inwagen and Ginet are similar in substantive ways.[17]

Using a particular description of both the thesis of determinism and the free will thesis, the consequence argument tries to demonstrate that the free will thesis and the thesis of determinism cannot both be true. In one of the more straight-forward versions of the

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[14] Van Inwagen writes "Let us say that a proposition *expresses the state of the world at t* provided it is a true proposition that asserts of some state that, at t, the world is in that state" (1983, 60).

[15] Although it is not explored in this paper, the laws of nature need not be universals that dictate particulars. For instance, John Perry explains that one might accept a weak conception of the laws of nature (though he does not accept this position) (2004). According to the weak conception, the laws of nature do not determine what will happen, but only reflect what will. Hence, a proposition of all the laws of nature would be akin to statements like all men who smoke die before the age of seventy. Assuming this is a true generalization about smoking men, it is not a law of nature on the strong conception—the conception being assumed in this paper—that the men die before the age of seventy. It just happens to be the case.

[16] Ginet uses '**' to distinguish between the conception of laws of nature as propositions that cause future propositions to be true from general propositions that are true about any future propositions (1990, 105).

[17] James Lamb and David Wiggins also published their own versions of the consequence argument against free will. However, their account of determinism similarly echoes both Ginet and van Inwagen, but is nuanced in a manner that would detract too much from this paper.

consequence argument, van Inwagen frames our actions and their relationship to propositions in terms of our ability to render propositions false. He defines this ability as follows:

> That is, we might understand '*s* can render *p* false' to mean 'It is within *s*'s power to arrange or modify the concrete objects that constitute his environment in some way such that it is not possible "in the broadly logical sense" that he arrange or modify these objects in that way and *p* be true' (1983, 67).

This ability need not refer to any metaphysically exotic mechanism in order to be true. In fact, rendering propositions false is akin to our common sense notion of what it is for our action to be up to us, what it is for us to have the ability to act. Van Inwagen focuses on the ability of an agent to make some change about the world such that some future proposition about the world is made false. To illustrate, imagine Alice is participating on a game show. She is given three doors to choose from each respectively labeled one, two, and three. She is further told that she is only allowed to choose one door. There are three possible propositions that Alice can render true: That Alice opens door number one, that Alice opens door number two, or that Alice opens door number three. Alice, by choosing, renders one of the future propositions true and the others false.[18]

This relationship between a person and propositions about the world also articulates the concept of some proposition about some future event being *up to an agent*. In order for some proposition to be up to an individual, there must, at the least, be a relationship between our actions and the truth of some future propositions. In this regard, if Alice could only make it the case that Alice chooses door one, then that proposition would not be up to her. It is this ability to

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[18] Within the literature, some disagree with the sense of ability that van Inwagen portrays in his formulation of the consequence argument (Stump and Fischer 2000). Van Inwagen notes that one need not rely on the use of ability for the formulation of the consequence argument. Ginet's version does not (Van Inwagen 1997, 375). The notable difference between Ginet and van Inwagen is that Ginet's articulation of alternative possibilities does not rely on the abilities of the agent, but rather the position of agents with respect to their world.

act such that our actions render propositions true or false that the consequence argument tries to undermine if the thesis of determinism is true.

Using a provided description of propositions being up to us, the consequence argument claims that if the thesis of determinism is true, people cannot be free. Van Inwagen gives the argument as six premises and a conclusion. In the argument, P denotes the future proposition that J does not raise his hand at some time T in the future; J denotes a judge who will "prevent the execution of a sentence of death upon a certain criminal" if he raises his hand (1983, 68). P_0 is a proposition about the state of the world at some time t_0 in the past before J was born, and L denotes "the conjunction into a single proposition of all the laws of nature" (1983, 70). He writes:

(1) If determinism is true, then the conjunction of P_0 and L entails P.

(2) It is not possible that J could have raised his hand at T and P be true.

(3) If (2) is true, then if J could have raised his hand at T, J could have rendered P false.

(4) If J could have rendered P false, and if the conjunction of P_0 and L entails P, then J could have rendered the conjunction of P_0 and L false.

(5) If J could have rendered the conjunction of P_0 and L false, then J could have rendered L false.

(6) J could not have rendered L false.

(7) If determinism is true, J could not have raised his hand at T (1983, 70).

To summarize, the argument begins by stating a consequence of the thesis of determinism. Next, it states that the provided action is incompatible with another possible action. In this case, it cannot both be the case that one raises his hand and he does not raise his hand (proposition 2). However, since that J raises his hand is implied by the past and the laws of nature, he must

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render one of these propositions false in order to avoid raising his hand (proposition 3, 4 and 5). But, no one can change the laws of nature (proposition 6). Nor can anyone change the past. Hence, he cannot raise his hand if determinism is true (proposition 7). The main motivating idea at work in this and other versions of the consequence argument is that since propositions about the past and laws of nature cannot be rendered false, free actions are impeded by the truth of the thesis of determinism.

Given the long history of the discussion surrounding the problem of free will and determinism, the responses to this argument are diverse. Contemporary free will theorists divide the responses to this question into two major categories based on the author's position on the compatibility of free will and determinism. Philosophers who assume that the free will thesis and the thesis of determinism cannot both be true are classified as incompatibilists. Those who assume that the free will thesis and the thesis of determinism can both be true are compatibilists. Within each respective position, the responses are further divided. For the incompatibilists, if one believes that the thesis of determinism is false and that some people have free will, then one is a libertarian. However, if one believes that people are not free because the thesis of determinism is true, one is a hard determinist. A compatibilists that believes that both the free will thesis and the thesis of determinism are true is a soft determinist.

While a majority of contemporary philosophers working in the field of free will tend towards incompatibilism on the basis of this argument, the preferred position, if it were considered defendable, would be compatibilism. According the incompatibilist there is nothing wrong with the consequence argument and as a result one of two intuitive positions has to be rejected. However, if the compatibilist is correct in his assessment of the consequence argument, neither position would have to be abandoned. With that being said, if the compatibilist can give a

compelling argument as to why the consequence argument is flawed, the compatibilist position

should be adopted over the incompatibilist one.[19]

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[19] One might argue that determinism is not intuitive. In fact, it would seem that, at least on very small scales, that determinism is not true at all. However, many activities that people regularly engage in must be determined. For example, taking medicine and making food both require that the world be determined. If not, one would not be able to blame cooks for bad food or doctors for inadequate care. Moreover, we need our actions to have some determined result if we expect to be held responsible for them. Finally, it would seem that much of the world is determined and there does not seem to be any reason (aside from possibly the consequence argument) that agents would be the exception to the rule.

CHAPTER FOUR

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMPATIBILIST RESPONSES

The historical roots of the compatibilist position on the free will argument goes as far back as at least as Hobbes. Although Hobbes did not encounter the same formal version of the consequence argument that has been presented here, he faced issues similar to the ones found in van Inwagen's version of the argument. Hobbes states that although man is determined, that fact by itself does not undermine his free will.[20] He writes "each propension of a man during his deliberation, is as much necessitated and depends on a sufficient cause as anything else whatsoever…[free will is] to do what he has a fancy to do, though it be not in his will or power to choose his fancy, or choose his election or will" (1654, 21). In this text, he explains that our propensities for action are as determined as everything else in the world. Nevertheless, the fact that people are determined does not undermine their free will. For Hobbes, as well as many other compatibilists, people are free when they act without some factor that would prevent them from doing what they want to do or forces them to act in an undesired manner. And, since determinism does not necessarily prevent people from doing what they want to do, our actions are free.[21]

Adopting a position similar to that of Hobbes, Morris Schlick explains that the consequence argument hinges on a mistake. Namely, the contention that free action entails being able to change the laws of nature is to misunderstand the relationship between the laws of nature and man. Rather, causal determinism is more akin to a particular description of events and their

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[20] Hobbes describes our actions in terms of necessity, but uses the term in a manner that is similar to how causal determination has been defined. Chappell writes "More revealing is the connection that Hobbes sees between necessity and causation. A cause, he holds, is something that necessitates its effect, that makes it necessary for the effect to occur" (Chappell 1999, xvi).

[21] Hobbes writes "a free agent is he that can do if he will and forbear if he will; and that liberty is the absence of external impediments" (1654, 39).

relationship, not the often associated image of being forced. He writes "The natural law is not a *pre*scription as to how something should behave, but a formula, a *de*scription of how something does in fact behave" (Schlick 1939, 57).[22] In other words, causal determination describes who we are and what we would do in a given situation; it does not limit what a person can do any more than a ball's roundness could inhibit a ball's shape or movement. Although Schlick does not mention van Inwagen's formulation of the consequence argument, since it wasn't written during Schlick's lifetime, Schlick's point could be understood with respect to van Inwagen's formulation. Since Schlick argues that free will is not limited by the truth of causal determinism, he would contend that the ability to render propositions about the past or the laws of nature false is a mistaken claim about the abilities that one must have to act freely. In terms of the version of the consequence argument presented above, Schlick would have to reject premise (4) of van Inwagen's argument.[23] In rejecting this premise, he would argue that there are other abilities that an agent possesses that should be analyzed when deciding whether a proposition can be rendered false. Hence, if one is going to correctly identify what about an action makes it free, one must formulate this property in terms other than strictly a causal relationship.

Although he does not mention Schlick in his paper, G.E. Moore devises just such a tool for analysis. Called the conditional analysis, Moore writes "Our theory, therefore, has not been maintaining, after all, that right and wrong depend upon what the agent absolutely *can* do, but only on what he can do, if he chooses" (his italics; Moore 1912, 103). Although Moore's

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[22] Schlick actually makes two points here. First, the correct way of understanding causal determinism is as a description. Second, that the consequence argument equates causal determinism with legal or moral compulsion. While many compatibilists agree with the first point, the second point is unique to Schlick. Further, both J.L. Austin (1970) and C.A. Campbell (1951) do an effective job of showing that the second point is false. For these reasons, I will not spend much time belaboring the second point.

[23] Premise (4) states: If J could have rendered P false, and if the conjunction of P_0 and L entails P, then J could have rendered the conjunction of P_0 and L false.

discussion of free will is written in terms of moral responsibility, his analysis applies to free will. He explains that what we mean when we say that an action was freely performed is that if the person had so tried (desired, willed, or intended, etc), she would have acted differently.[24] In this text, Moore makes a distinction between "what an agent absolutely can do" and "what he could do, if he choose." Respectively speaking, this distinction is called the categorical 'can' and the conditional 'can.' It is similar to the different kinds of action described by Schlick. Knowing this, it is no surprise that Schlick, having read Moore, advocates an analysis similar to the conditional analysis offered by Moore. Schlick writes "It is of course obvious that I should have acted differently had I willed something else" (1939, 62). Here Schlick remarks that our experience of free will is not that we can cause a different state of affairs given the way things are (categorical "can"), but that if the relevant circumstances were different, we would act differently. This is not to say that the conditional analysis, first popularized by Moore, is used by Schlick in the same way that Moore would have used the analysis.[25] Rather, the conditional analysis provides a useful manner to talk about free will in a way that is different from the account provided by the incompatibilists.

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[24]This is slightly different than what Moore writes. He expresses the conditional as S could have A, if M, where S is some agent, A is an action, and M is trying. The *could* has been replace with *would* to avoid the infinite regress pointed out by Chisholm (1964, 27). In addition, Moore uses the term 'chosen' rather than 'tried'. While each of the terms do not have the same meaning, the term 'tried' is going to be adopted in this paper for the sake of simplicity.

[25] Moore has been chosen to represent the conditional analysis because he is most often associated with it. However, the criticisms slung at the conditional analysis do not necessarily apply to Moore's account of the conditional analysis. In fact, Moore gives two additional conditions for free will along with the conditional analysis. He writes "(2) that similarly we often should have chosen differently, if we had chosen to choose; and (3) that it was almost always possible that we should have chosen differently, in the sense that no man could know for certain that we should not so choose" (1912, 115). Knowing that there will be particular differences between Moore and the other advocates of the single conditional analysis, I will confine my discussion to the conditional analysis.

The appealing quality of Moore's analysis is that it seems to allow one to give an account of free actions in terms of the abilities that an agent possesses. The relationship between an agent's abilities and the conditional analysis can be seen in what the analysis demonstrates about an agent. For example, suppose one wanted to test whether the last action of raising one's hand was a free action. According to the conditional analysis, one would simply ask whether he would have not raised his hand if he had tried not to do so. Assuming the answer was in the affirmative, the solution would assert that in the given situation the hand raiser had the ability to do otherwise.[26] As a result, the action was free.

Free will, if it is understood in terms of abilities, resolves the consequence argument by rearticulating what it would mean to have the ability to render propositions false.[27] Applying the conditional formulation, the ability to render propositions false is explicated in terms of conditionals. To explain, the ability to render a proposition false has the general form S can do A at T, where S is an agent, A is an action, and T is some time. The conditional interpretation of this statement would be S will do A at T if S tries to do A at T. In regards to the consequence argument, by changing the account of free will, the effectiveness of the argument is similarly altered. In particular, the claim made in premise (2) that it is not possible that an agent could have raised his hand and that he did not is denied. By Moore's account, an agent is able to do otherwise provided the past was different. Thus, even though an agent performs a particular action that does not mean that the opposite action was not possible. Since the ability to act

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[26] J. K. Campbell in "Compatibilist Alternatives" and Clarke in "Dispositions, Abilities to Act, and Free Will: The New Dispositionalism" points out that there are differing degrees to which a person might have the ability to act. For the time being, an ability to act can be considered as an action that could have taken place in a specified environment had the agent tried.

[27] The focus here is on the *ability* to render a proposition false, not what it takes or means to render a *proposition* false. An analysis of this kind would be out of the scope of this project. J. K. Campbell (2008) does an interesting analysis of this in "Touchdowns, Time, and Truth."

provided that the past is different does not lead to a contradiction, the truth of determinism does

not conflict with free will. As a result, the consequence argument is no longer effective.

While there are several challenges to the conditional analysis, the most devastating comes

from Lehrer who argues that the conditional analysis of "can" does not correctly capture the

meaning of the term for agents that cannot try.[28] First, consider the following three propositions:

(1) Smith would move if he tried to move.

(2) Smith cannot move if he does not try. [29]

(3) Smith does not try.

In this text, Proposition (1) is presented as the conditional interpretation of "S can move."

Proposition (2) is about a person who does not have the ability to move unless a particular

condition obtains. This interpretation should be fairly intuitive. For example, it would be wrong

to say that a comatose person can walk. Now, knowing that Smith is comatose, one can derive a

contradiction from (1) and (2). Namely, if (1) is the interpretation of "can" and (2) and (3) imply

that Smith cannot move, then from these three propositions one gets the conclusion that Smith

both can and cannot move. This is a contradiction so one of them must be false. Since (2) and (3)

are taken for granted, the only remaining proposition to reject would be the conditional analysis,

for (1) cannot mean S can move. Further, this argument is not dependent on the specific features

of the counter example. It can be formulated for more general cases. The general format has this

form:

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[28] C.A. Campbell in "Is Free Will a Pseudo Problem" levels a criticism similar to Lehrer's criticism and, in addition, argues that the conditional analysis does not give a proper account of moral responsibility. J. L. Austin in "Ifs and Cans" argues that the conditional interpretation of *can* does not correspond to how the word is commonly used. These criticisms, while interesting, fall outside the scope of this project.

[29] This is not to say that trying itself is a necessary condition for the ability to act. Rather, if an agent does not try, it could be the case that the agent does not do so because she cannot. Thus, we might also say, that the agent will never try.

(1') S will do X if condition C obtains.

(2') S cannot do X if condition C does not obtain.

(3') Condition C does not obtain (1966, 196).

Using the same procedures applied to the preceding argument, one derives the contradiction that S both can and cannot do X. Hence, the conditional analysis of "can" is incorrect.

Lehrer's criticism of the single conditional analysis points out that the translation of the word 'can' as a conditional does not adequately capture the meaning of the word.[30] This loss in meaning can be viewed as the inadequate account of an agent's abilities. In particular, his criticism brings to light that the antecedent condition for action, the act of trying, also presupposes the ability to try. Lehrer provides an example to illustrate the point. He writes:

> Suppose that I am offered a bowl of candy and in the bowl are small round red sugar balls. I do not choose to take the balls because I have a pathological aversion to such candy. It is logically consistent to suppose that if I had chosen to take the red sugar ball I would have taken one, but, not so choosing, I am utterly unable to touch one (1968, 44).[31]

In this example, Lehrer illustrates this point by stipulating that the agent in question does not have the supposed ability to try and thus lacks the ability to do. In other words, if one could not try to grab the red candy, then one could not have chosen the red candy. Since the antecedent of the conditional analysis specifies that the agent tries, the subsequent conclusions based on this assumption would seem to beg the question. That is, the question is not whether she would if she tried to, but whether trying to choose the red candy – and thus choosing the red candy – is even

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[30] Vihvelin in "Free Will Demystified: A Dispositional Account" compares the attacks on the single conditional analysis of 'can' as similar to criticisms of conditional analyses of dispositions. Nonetheless, she tries to analyze free will in terms of dispositions.

[31] The girl's pathological aversion to the red candy and her inability to try, for this example, mirrors a comatose patient's inability to try. In both examples, one is to assume that if the agent did try to perform an action (grabbing the red candy or walking), the agent would perform the action.

possible.[32] Here we can see that by asserting that she could try to perform the desired action, the conditional analysis assumes that she has the ability to try.[33]

Although one might be tempted to use a second conditional analysis of trying in order to determine whether the agent had the ability to try, this conditional analysis would simply prompt an additional conditional analysis that would lead to an infinite regress of conditional analyses.[34] To illustrate, consider the conditional analysis: S would do A, if S tried to A. If one applied a conditional analysis to the antecedent of the conditional, the resulting analysis would be the following conjunction. ((S tried to A)→(S would do A)) and ((S tried to try to A)→(S would try to A)). However, one could always ask whether S freely tried to try to A in which case another conditional analysis would have to be given. As one can see, the conditional analysis quickly leads to an infinite regress. In an attempt to solve the infinite regress problem, Donald Davidson proposed that the ability to try need not be understood in terms of a conditional analysis, since acts like trying are of a different category than acts like hand raising (1973). However, even if Davidson is right about the ability to try, he does not answer whether the agent is able to try. Berofsky writes:

> There is no significant difference between my inability to act and inability to enter a state.
>
> If my blameworthiness requires that I have been able to choose otherwise, then why

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[32] Upon reflection, this seems to be a natural question. Just as one might ask whether an agent's action is up to him, one might similarly ask if one's intention is up to the agent. In particular, one would ask whether there has been some influence that would make it the case the agent's intention is not up the agent. It is this ground under which the debate between the compatibilist and incompatibilist is fought. The two camps disagree about whether the truth of the thesis of determinism is an influence that could make it the case that an agent's intentions are not up to that agent.

[33] The claim is trivial because nothing important is said

[34] Chisholm points out this infinite regress in "Human Freedom and The Self" (1982).

would it not equally require that I have been able to enter the state of wanting otherwise

(186).

Berofsky explains that while making the ability to try not causally related to our other actions

might stop the infinite regress, it does not address whether the agent is able to try. Since that is

the question the conditional analysis was attempting to answer, Davidson's solution to the

infinite regress problem falls short.[35]

In a different attempt to give an account of free will, Vihvelin looks to the literature on

dispositions. She remarks that there is a striking similarity in the debate concerning the

dispositions of normal objects and the criticisms of the single conditional analysis of abilities.

She writes "Objects and persons have dispositions and abilities by having intrinsic properties that

are the causal basis of the disposition. And some of the arguments that were made against the

simple Conditional Analysis of agent ability count equally against a simple Conditional Analysis

of dispositions" (2004, 429). In short, the problems with the analysis of abilities pointed out by

Lehrer are similar to the problems with the conditional analysis of dispositions. Since the two

fields are so similar, amendments to the conditional analysis of dispositions might similarly be

applied to the conditional analysis of abilities.[36]

The conditional analysis of dispositions, like the analysis of abilities, describes these

properties of objects with regard to the conditions for their manifestation. Wood, for example, is

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[35] One other related attempt to solve this problem could also be Harry Frankfurt's system of desires (Frankfurt "Freedom of the will and the concept of a person"). In Frankfurt's system, a person is responsible when that person has a system of desires that agree and the person has the ability to reflect back further. For example, an agent who acts because he wants to and wants to want to act in that way would be responsible. However, with regard to the infinite regress problem, this approach has its own problems. But, covering both Frankfurt, the infinite regress problem, and the relationship between them is beyond the scope of this paper.

[36] J. K. Campbell, and Smith take a similar stance on the relationship between free will and alternative possibilities (Campbell 2005; Smith 2003). The analysis will focus on Vihvelin because she gives the most detailed analysis of the relationship between dispositions and free will.

said to be flammable. That is, when fire is applied to wood it is disposed to burn. David Lewis writes "something x is disposed at time t to give response r to stimulus s iff, if x were to undergo stimulus s at time t, x would give response r" (1997, 143). With regard to the wood example, the flame is the stimulus that gives the response (burning) at the time the flame is applied. This can also be applied to the analysis of abilities. In this case, an agent would have the ability to raise his hand at a time given that he tries iff when he tries to raise his hand at that time, he raises it. Here we can see the parallels between the conditional analysis of dispositions and the analysis of abilities.

The conditional analysis of both dispositions and abilities fails with regard to its inability to deal with their finkish qualities. Lewis provides an account of finkish qualities. He writes "[the conditional analysis] could be false that if x were to undergo s, x would give response r. And yet, so long as s does not come along, x retains its disposition. Such a disposition, which would straight away vanish if put to the test, is called *finkish*" (1997, 144). Here he explains that it is possible that some stimulus be applied to an object such that the object retains its disposition yet fails to manifest it. Vihvelin uses an example of a sorcerer that protects fragile glass with a spell to illustrate the point. She writes:

> A sorcerer takes a liking to a fragile glass, one that is a perfect intrinsic duplicate of all the other fragile glasses off the same product line. He does nothing at all to change the intrinsic properties of the glass. He only watches and waits, resolved that if ever his glass dropped or struck, he will quickly case a spell that changes the glass, renders it no longer fragile, and thereby aborts the process of breaking (2004, 435).

In her example, a spell is the stimulus that removes the fragile quality of the glass. This stimulus is applied simultaneously with the stimulus that would break the glass were it dropped. As a

result, the conditional analysis of dispositions is wrong, for the conditional is false even though the glass (when not dropped) has the disposition. A similar problem can be seen in the red candy example. When presented with the redness of the candy this simultaneously removes her ability to try to grab it. Thus, the conditional analysis of abilities, like the conditional analysis of dispositions, incorrectly claims that the girl can grab the candy. In both cases, the finkish quality of dispositions or abilities provides a counterexample to their respective conditional analyzes.

Drawing on the lessons learned from the literature on the failure of the conditional analysis, Vihvelin adapts Lewis' analysis of dispositions for the analysis of abilities.[37] She calls this analysis the "Revised Conditional Analysis of Ability" (abbreviated RCAA). She writes:

> S has the ability at time t to do X iff, for some intrinsic property or set of properties B
>
> that S has at t, for some time t' after t, if S chose (decided, intended, or tried) at t to do X,
>
> and S were to retain B until t', S's choosing (deciding, intending, or trying) to do X and
>
> S's having of B would jointly be an S-complete cause of S's doing X (2004, 438).

To explain, an agent when he performs an action has an intrinsic property or set of properties that is the agent's ability to perform the action. An agent has the ability to perform that action at a specified time, if that agent has that intrinsic property (or set of properties) at that time and retains it (or them) long enough to perform the action. For example, there is some set of properties required for bicycle riding. John has this ability to ride his bicycle, iff when he tries to ride a bicycle, he retains the properties required for bicycle riding long enough to ride the bike. In regards to the red candy example, RCAA would conclude that the girl does not have the ability to pick the red candy. When the girl is presented with the candy the red causes the girl to

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[37] Lewis' account of dispositions is as follows:
> Something *x* is disposed at time *t* to give response *r* to stimulus *s* iff, for some intrinsic property *B* that *x*
> has at *t*, for some time *t'* after *t*, if *x* were to undergo stimulus *s* at time *t* and retain property *B* until *t'*, *s*
> and *x*'s having of *B* would jointly be an x-complete cause of *x*'s giving response *r*.

lose the property required for trying. Thus, since she did not retain the set of properties required for the ability to pick the red candy, she would not have that ability.

An additional benefit of the RCAA is that it moves the conditional analysis away from the too familiar label of a hypothetical.[38] She writes: "the debate was case in terms of the question of whether attributions of agent ability are 'categorical,' on the one hand, or 'hypothetical,' 'conditional,' or 'constitutionally iffy,' on the other. We are now in a position to see that this was a false dilemma" (2004, 440). She points out that the conditional analysis does not merit the connotation of fantasy that is typically associated with it.

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[38] Almost since its conception, the single conditional analysis has been labeled as the hypothetical analysis. This is presumably because the posited mental state of the agent did not in fact exist when the action was performed. The hypothetical account of *can* is contrasted with the categorical analysis which asserts that the agent must have a causal ability not accounted for by the single conditional interpretation.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEFENSE

In this section, I outline a weakness in Vihvelin's dispositional account of ability and provide a defense of it. To begin, the section covers a possible necessary condition for abilities – the incompatibilist criterion – and why Vivhelin's dispositional account does not satisfy that condition. Next, the section outlines problems with the incompatibilist criterion and offers a comparable alternate condition. Finally, using the proposed alternate condition, Vihvelin's dispositional account is defended.

The consequence argument is committed to a particular criterion for abilities, namely the following:

> … an agent can do *X* only if his doing *X* can be an extension of the actual past, holding the laws fixed (Fischer 1994, 88; cf. Ginet 1990, 102-3).

Call this the 'incompatiblist criterion.' To explain, a person has the ability to perform an action only if he is able to perform two or more actions from a set of mutually incompatible actions each of which is an extension of the same past (where this entails holding the laws of nature fixed). The past together with the laws of nature will be called the 'broad past.' Two actions are mutually incompatible iff performing one of the actions excludes the performance of the other. Clearly, the satisfaction of the incompatibilist criterion for abilities requires indeterminism. To illustrate, consider a case where an agent raises her hand. In order for the hand-raising event to be a free action, by this criterion, it must be the case that she could have either raised or not raised her hand given the exact same broad past.

Van Inwagen's formulation of the consequence argument, and in particular premise (4) of that argument[39], has a close connection to the incompatibilist criterion. According to premise (4) of the consequence argument, in order for an agent to render a proposition false, given determinism, that agent must be able to render a proposition about the broad past false. An agent could perform this task iff he is able to perform an action that is inconsistent with the broad past. However, if an agent cannot satisfy the incompatibilist criterion and determinism is true, then he is not able to perform an action that is inconsistent with the broad past. Given determinism, such an agent can only perform one action that is an extension of the past, so that agent cannot perform an action that is inconsistent with the broad past. Hence, an agent that cannot satisfy the incompatibilist criterion similarly cannot render a proposition about the broad past false, so long as determinism is true. The incompatibilist criterion and premise (4) of the consequence argument stand or fall together.

In addition to its relationship to the consequence argument, the incompatibilist criterion is thought by the incompatibilist to distinguish actions that are up to the agent from those that are not. Agents that satisfy this criterion are thought to be unrestricted by the past and, as a result, their actions are up to them. Proponents of the incompatibilist criterion would adopt the thesis that an agent that can perform two or more actions from a set of mutually incompatible actions each of which is an extension of the broad past would not be obstructed from performing any of these actions. That is, if an agent was prevented by the broad past, that agent would not be able to perform the prevented action. Thus, if the incompatibilist criterion is satisfied, then nothing about the past would prevent that agent from performing those actions, according to the incompatibilist. Further, if nothing about the past prevents an agent from being able to perform

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[39] Recall (4): "If J could have rendered P false, and if the conjunction of P_0 and L entails P, then J could have rendered the conjunction of P_0 and L false" (1983, 70).

two or more actions from a set of mutually incompatible actions then that agent's action would be up to that agent (since there is no one else for the action to be up to). Thus, according to the incompatibilist, if an agent satisfies the incompatibilist criterion, then that action would be up to that agent.

For Vihvelin, whether an agent has abilities is not contingent on satisfying the incompatibilist criterion. Rather, abilities are best understood as sets of dispositions. She writes "To have an ability is to have a bundle of dispositions" (2004, 431). These dispositions are similar to the dispositions of other objects. Thus, for Vihvelin, our ability to act is made up of dispositions each of which is similar to the disposition of a glass to break, although considerably more complex. This view of abilities is called 'the dispositional account.' It picks up where the conditional analysis left off. Vihvelin argues that the problem with the conditional analysis of abilities was that it did not account for the role intrinsic properties play for abilities. She writes "The Simple Conditional Analysis of Abilities is false because it does not take into account the fact that persons have abilities *by having intrinsic properties that are the causal basis of ability*" (2004, 438). For our purposes here, intrinsic properties are closely related to dispositions. Thus, according to the account, the similarity between the dispositional sense of 'can,' like "glass can break," and the ability sense of 'can', like "Jaime can swim," derives from their dispositional origin (2004, 431). Thus, our abilities are better understood as bundles of dispositions. As a result, our ability to act is no more undermined by determinism than is an unbroken glass's disposition to break.

Since Vihvelin's dispositional account of abilities is a compatibilist account, it is not burdened by the incompatibilist criterion. If the incompatibilist criterion is not satisfied by the

dispositional account of abilities, then incompatibilists who require the criterion will believe that

actions that are a result of these dispositions are not up to us. Van Inwagen writes:

> The concept of a causal power or capacity would seem to be the concept of an invariable
>
> disposition to react to certain determinate changes in the environment in certain
>
> determinate ways, whereas the concept of an agent's power to act would seem not to be
>
> the concept of a power that is dispositional or reactive, but rather the concept of a power
>
> to *originate* changes in the environment (1983, 11).

In this text, van Inwagen sets up the dispositional account of abilities in contrast to the "power to

originate changes in the environment." Here van Inwagen suggests that origination is a necessary

condition for free action and that this condition cannot be satisfied in a manner that is compatible

with the thesis of determinism, due to the consequence argument and considerations about the

connection between the incompatibilist criterion and our actions being up to us. As van Inwagen

explained, agents that act to certain determinate changes in the environment in certain

determinate ways cannot originate change. Thus, an agent that does not satisfy the

incompatibilist criterion cannot originate change. Further, since the power to originate change is

a necessary condition for actions to be up to us, an account of free action that is not burdened by

the incompatibilist criterion would similarly fail to account for how our actions are up to us.

Another point against the dispositional account is that although the dispositional account

is supported by compatibilists (Fara 2005; Vihvelin 2004; Smith 2003), the account of abilities

could also be held by incompatibilists. Randolph Clarke writes:

> But even if having the ability in question is having a bundle of dispositions, having that
>
> ability might require indeterminism, for it might require indeterministic dispositions.

Identifying the requisite ability with a bundle of dispositions thus leaves unaddressed the

main point of contention between compatibilists and incompatibilists (2008, 5).

Clarke explains that some dispositions are indeterminate. For example, some radioactive

materials are disposed to indeterminately produce gamma rays. Thus, it is possible for an object

to have an indeterminate disposition. Hence, an agent's abilities could similarly be a bundle of

indeterminate dispositions, even if the dispositional account is true. Thus, an incompatibilist

could consistently hold that abilities are a bundle of dispositions. Moreover, an indeterministic

ability need not be randomly manifesting like the production of gamma rays. The example of

indeterminate dispositions demonstrates that a disposition need not have a causal structure (2008,

6). And, as such, an agent's dispositions would also not need a causal structure. Hence, the

dispositional account of abilities would leave open a large range of incompatibilist accounts of

abilities.

Vihvelin's dispositional account of abilities does not need to address what an

incompatibilist like Clarke regards as the fundamental disagreement between compatibilist and

incompatibilists. Vihvelin's dispositional account argues that abilities are to be understood as

sets of dispositions and that dispositions are clearly compatible with determinism. However,

something might possess a disposition, but still not manifest that disposition even if under the

'right' conditions. For example, imagine that a sorcerer has cast a spell on a glass vase such that,

if the glass vase is struck, the spell will activate and keep the vase from breaking. In this case, the

vase has a disposition (fragility), but will never manifest that disposition due to the spell.

Similarly, a disposition could indeterminately manifest itself, but the object may still retain that

disposition, even without ever manifesting it. Vihvelin's dispositional account refers to the

dispositions, not the manifestation of the dispositions. Thus, Clarke's criticism that some objects indeterminately manifest dispositions is not effective against Vihvelin's dispositional account.

A criterion for abilities different than with the incompatibilist criterion could require that the agent act differently depending on the situation. This alternate criterion for abilities would establish what agents can do in regard to how they would act in a spectrum different situations. Intuitively, this would give us a better idea of whether or not the agent's actions are responsive to his reasons (cf. Fischer 1998), for different situations (reasons) would then be expected to yield different actions. According to this alternate criterion, an agent has an ability to act only if in at least some alternate situations the agent would act differently (where other facts about that agent are held fixed). For example, suppose a judge is ruling on a case and by raising her hand the defendant goes free and by not raising her hand the defendant receives the death sentence. By this criterion, if there is no situation in which the judge would not raise her hand, then her action would seem to be compelled and thus not free.

A distinctive feature between the two criteria is that the incompatibilist must provide some aspect of an ability that cannot be capture in a compatibilist account. These different criteria are adopted in order to ensure that all aspects of an ability are captured in an account of free action. Since compatibilism does not require rejecting one of two intuitive propositions (that agents must be able to render a proposition about the past or laws of nature false), provided that the compatibilist position would be *prima facie* true. As such, the compatibilist criterion, as long as it captures all aspects of free action, should be adopted over it incompatibilist counterpart.

The alternate criterion does a better job than the incompatibilist criterion in distinguishing between agents who act compulsively from those who do not. For instance, consider Lehrer's red candy example noted earlier in this paper. In this example, a girl is presented with two candies;

one of the candies is the color red, and the other is not (green in this case). The girl also has a pathological fear of red. As a result, whenever presented with a choice between a red candy and one of a different color, the girl will always pick the candy of the other color. Thus, the girl clearly does not have the ability to pick the red candy. According to the incompatibilist criterion, the girl's picking the non-red candy is a free action only if she is also able to pick the red candy, given the same past and laws. She cannot pick the red candy because facts about the girl's past make it the case that she has a phobia of red. However, this criterion, if applied to a normal agent like Jane from our previous example, would also determine that the agent does not have the ability to pick the red candy. For instance, suppose that the girl has no phobias or any other disabilities that might prevent someone from picking the red candy. However, this girl likes the green candy (apple flavor) over the red candy (cinnamon flavor). Thus, upon being presented with the two candies, the girl picks the green candy. Further, this girl, whenever in that exact situation, will always pick the red candy. As a result, according to the incompatibilist criterion, the girl was not free to pick the red candy. Thus, for the incompatibilist criterion, there is no difference between the girl with the phobia and the one without. Hence, the incompatibilist criterion does not distinguish between people with compulsions from those without.

The alternate criterion, on the other hand, does distinguish between agents with a compulsion from those without. On the alternate criterion, an agent can act only if there is some alternate situation in which that agent would perform a different action. For instance, consider the girl who, in the previous example, is offered a red candy and a green candy, but has a pathological fear of red. Due to this phobia of red, one might radically change the girl's past and, in those situations, the girl would still pick the red candy. An alternate criterion, one reflective of the fact that the girl's actions are based on her reasons, would allow for a person lacking a

phobia to act differently. In this case, there would be many circumstances in which a normal girl (Jane) would pick the red candy. For example, Jane might pick the red candy because she recently ate some apples and is tired of an apple flavor. Or, in a more drastic circumstance, a gunman threatening her life could give her reason to pick the red candy.

The alternate criterion for abilities differentiates normal agents from compelled agents better than the incompatibilist criterion. For example, suppose Jane goes to the local ice cream shop and must decide between two flavors of ice cream, chocolate or vanilla. Jane figures that, since today is Vanilla Day, she will buy the vanilla. By the incompatibilist criterion, in order for Jane to have the ability to pick the chocolate, it must be possible that in the same situation, Jane would pick the chocolate. However, since that it is Vanilla Day is a fact about the broad past, together with other facts about Jane, it might not be possible that Jane will pick the chocolate. Thus, according to the incompatibilist criterion, Jane does not have the ability to pick chocolate. The alternate criterion, on the other hand, would say that Jane does have the ability to pick chocolate. On this criterion, Jane has the ability to pick chocolate since there are situations in which Jane would pick the chocolate. The alternate criterion does not penalize Jane for making choices based on reasons. Intuitively, Jane has the ability to pick chocolate and the alternate criterion gets this right while the incompatibilist criterion does not.

On a similar point, the incompatibilist criterion does not always differentiate agents whose actions up to them from those whose actions are not up to them, for the incompatibilist criterion does ensure that an action is up to the agent. Even if the incompatibilist criterion were satisfied, the incompatibilist would still have to differentiate between actions performed due to luck from those that are free. For example, imagine that Joe, a novice golfer, one day gets lucky while playing golf (some random event occurs), and sinks a hole in one. The random event

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would make it the case that Joe is able, given the same broad past, to either sink the hole in one or not sink the hole in one. Thus, he would satisfy the incompatibilist criterion. However, even so, since Joe's hole in one was due to some random event (an involuntary muscle twitch or slight shift in the wind for example), he could not correctly be said to have the ability to sink a hole in one. That is, one random occurrence does not give one the ability to perform that act. Moreover, even if Joe had this ability, if the cause of the action was a random event, it would hardly be the case that it is Joe that sunk the hole in one. Since the incompatibilist criterion neither ensures that it is Joe that performed the action nor that Joe has the ability to perform the action, the criterion does not differentiate between actions that are up to us and those that are not.

Since the incompatibilist criterion does not differentiate actions that are up to an agent from those that are not, van Inwagen's criticism of the dispositional account of abilities similarly fails on these grounds. He argues that, in order for an agent to perform a free action, that agent must have the ability to originate change in the environment and agents that have this ability must satisfy the incompatibilist criterion. However, the incompatibilist criterion does not guarantee that an agent's actions up to the agent. Thus, accounts that do not satisfy this criterion are not necessarily worse off in this way from those that do.[40] Hence, the dispositional account of abilities is no worse off in this regard than one that satisfies the incompatibilist criterion.

Given the limitations of the incompatibilist criterion outlined above, there remain few reasons to accept the incompatibilist criterion as a necessary condition for free action. The criterion does not distinguish normal agents from compulsive any better than an alternate criterion would nor ensure that our actions are up to us. One might suggest that the consequence argument provides a reason for endorsing the incompatibilist criterion. However, it has been

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[40] For example, Ned Markosian in "A Compatibilist Version of The Theory of Agent Causation" gives a compatibilist account of agent causation that allows for origination yet does not satisfy the incompatibilist criterion.

shown also that the incompatibilist criterion is really a presumption of the consequence argument. Thus, the incompatibilist criterion does not distinguish agents with abilities from those without in a non-question begging way.

Conclusion

The claims of the compatibilist are straight-forward and, frankly, almost boring. People act freely when their actions are up to them. And, our actions are up to us when we are responsive to reasons and are able to do what we want to do. Not surprisingly, in order for people to be responsive to reasons and act the way they want to, they need to have a number of abilities. The broad past does not inherently undermine these abilities. It no more prevents our actions from being up to us than our legs keep us from walking. Taking into account all the different aspects of action can be difficult, but the conditional analysis, while initially flawed, with only a few modifications to pick up the pieces it leaves behind, seems to fulfill the task. Provided no one wants to be able to change the past or laws of nature, the compatibilist account of free will describes what people can do without being undermined by determinism.

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