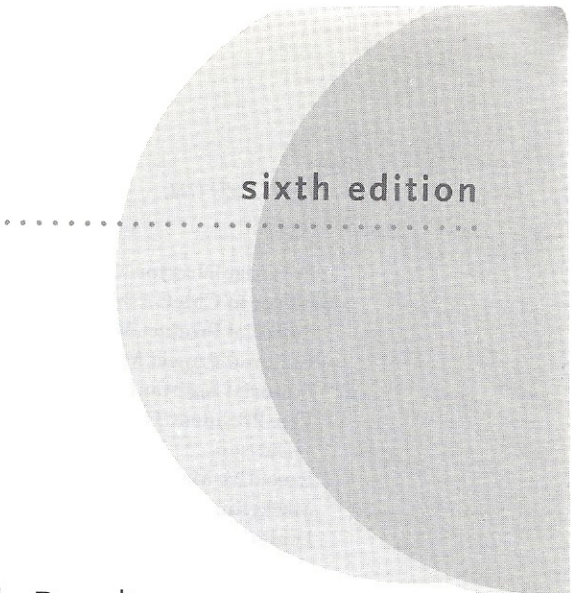




sixth edition

Core Questions in Philosophy

A Text with Readings

Elliott Sober

University of Wisconsin–Madison

PEARSON

2013

Boston Columbus Indianapolis New York San Francisco Upper Saddle River
Amsterdam Cape Town Dubai London Madrid Milan Munich Paris Montréal Toronto
Delhi Mexico City São Paulo Sydney Hong Kong Seoul Singapore Taipei Tokyo

Freedom, Determinism, and Causality

Chapter Outline

The Problem of Freedom

Examples of Unfree Acts

Are All Behaviors Like Those Produced by Brainwashing and Compulsions?

A Clash of Plausible Conceptions

What Is Causality?

Determinism

Indeterminism

Does Indeterminism Make Us Free?

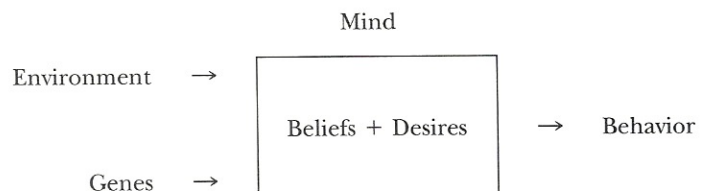
Causality Is the Issue, Not Determinism

What Does Determinism Say about the Causation of Behavior?

Determinism Differs from Fatalism

Although dualists, identity theorists, and functionalists disagree about a lot, they all grant that the mind and the physical world causally interact. Your beliefs and desires cause your body to move in various ways. In addition, mental states themselves have causal antecedents in the physical world. What you now believe and the preferences you now have—indeed, your personality as a whole—can be traced back to experiences you have had. These experiences were themselves caused by items in your physical environment. In addition, modern science recognizes that some features of your mind may be influenced by the genetic endowment you received from your parents.

So just as the human mind has effects on the physical environment, so too does the physical world affect our mental states. The following diagram represents these causal relationships:



The Problem of Freedom

The puzzle about the existence of human freedom can now be given a preliminary formulation. Your beliefs and desires, and hence your behavior, are caused by things outside your control. You didn't freely choose the genes you have or the sequence of environments in which you grew up. If you didn't freely choose them, how can it be said that any of your behaviors is the result of free choices on your part? How can you be responsible for actions that were caused by events (long ago) over which you exercised no control? It looks like you are no more free than a computer; a computer behaves as it does because it was programmed to do so, and so, apparently, do you.

Another way to see the problem is to attend to a different feature of the above causal picture. Suppose your behavior is the result of your beliefs and desires just as a computer's behavior is the result of its programming. There is a feature of the computer's situation that seems also to characterize your own. Given the computer's program, it can't act differently from the way it does. Suppose a computer is programmed to compute the sum of two numbers. This means that if you input 7 and 5, then the computer can't fail to output 12. The computer can't act other than the way it does.

Are we like computers in this respect? Given the beliefs and desires we presently have, isn't it inevitable that we do precisely what we do? Our beliefs and desires leave open what we will do no more than a computer's program leaves open what it will do. This fact about the computer, and about ourselves if we are like the computer, seems to entail that we are not free agents. The reason is that if an action is performed freely, then it must have been possible for the agent to have done otherwise. If I freely lift a cup of coffee to my lips, then it must have been possible for me to refrain from lifting the cup to my lips. But given the beliefs and desires I had, I couldn't have done anything other than lift the cup to my lips. Our actions are the inevitable consequences of the minds we have, just as a computer's output is the inevitable consequence of its program.

I've just pointed out two features of the causal relationships depicted in the diagram on the preceding page. Each suggests its own argument for the thesis that no human action is free. I'll call the first argument the *Distant Causation Argument*; it focuses on the idea that our behaviors are caused by factors (our genes and our early childhood environment) that were beyond our control. I'll call the second argument the *Could-Not-Have-Done-Otherwise Argument*; it focuses on the claim that it is impossible for us to act other than the way our beliefs and desires cause us to act. Both these arguments will be discussed later. Before reading further, write out each of these arguments, with premises and conclusions stated carefully, and make sure that what you come up with is an argument that is deductively valid. Once you do this, it should be clear that if we sometimes act freely, at least one premise in each argument must be false. Notice also that both these arguments reach a conclusion of total generality; each concludes that *not one* of our actions is performed freely. This goes beyond the more modest idea that *some* of our actions aren't performed freely.



Examples of Unfree Acts

It is controversial whether the Distant Causation Argument and the Could-Not-Have-Done-Otherwise Argument are right in their claim that human beings never act freely. However, it is not especially controversial that some human actions are not performed freely. Here I want to give two examples. The first is a behavior produced by *brainwashing*. Consider the case of Patty Hearst. Heiress to the newspaper fortune, Hearst was kidnaped and abused mentally and physically by her captors for several months in 1974. She then participated with them in a bank robbery. Later, she was caught and brought to trial. There was never any doubt that Hearst helped rob the bank. The question was whether she did so of her own free will. The defense attorneys tried to establish that Hearst didn't have free will at that time; they argued that her captors had so distorted her mental faculties that she was a mere pawn in their hands. Her actions were an expression of *their* wants, not of *hers*, or so they argued. The prosecution tried to show that Hearst was a free agent; they argued that even though she had been abused, she was still a willing participant in the bank robbery. The prosecution won the case, and Patty Hearst went to jail. Quite apart from whether this was the right outcome, I want to draw your attention to an idea on which both the defense and the prosecution agreed: People who do what they do because of brainwashing aren't acting of their own free will. Here, then, is one kind of behavior that I think we can safely regard as unfree.

The second category of unfree behavior was described by Freud. Freud describes a man who obsessively washes his hands. He is caught in the grip of a compulsion. Even after normal people would recognize that their hands are clean, the compulsive handwasher keeps scrubbing away. Sometimes the compulsion is so extreme that the person's flesh is

eaten away, exposing the bone. “They can’t help themselves,” we may want to say. Another example of this sort is kleptomania. A kleptomaniac is someone driven by the compulsion to steal. Even when they recognize that stealing is ruining their lives, kleptomaniacs find themselves powerless to change their behavior. Perhaps some people steal of their own free will; this does not seem to be true of kleptomaniacs.

Even philosophers who think that we sometimes act freely usually concede that brainwashing and compulsions rob us of our freedom. The question is whether there are *other* categories of behavior that are genuinely free. The Distant Causation Argument and the Could-Not-Have-Done-Otherwise Argument answer this question in the negative.

Are All Behaviors Like Those Produced by Brainwashing and Compulsions?

To decide whether we ever act freely, you need to decide whether some of our behaviors differ significantly from the unfree behaviors just described. If brainwashing robs us of freedom, what should we say about the way a normal upbringing shapes us into the kinds of people we are? If indoctrination robs people of their freedom, what effect does education have on the possibility of free action? If a victim of brainwashing isn’t responsible for what he or she does, how can we say that “normal” individuals are responsible for what they do?

Shifting now to the examples of compulsive behavior, we can ask—if compulsive behavior is unfree, what should we say about normal cases of rational deliberation in which people act on the basis of the wants they have? Perhaps the only difference between someone said to have a compulsion and a “normal” person is that they have different wants. It is unusual to want to wash your hands two hundred times a day, but not so unusual to want to wash them once after they get covered with dirt. If this is the only thing that distinguishes compulsive behavior from normal behavior, why say that the one is any less free than the other? To understand what freedom is, we need to answer questions such as these.

A Clash of Plausible Conceptions

The problem of freedom involves an apparent clash between two very fundamental ways we have of conceiving of ourselves. First, there is the idea that we are part of the causal network. Our actions don’t spring from nothing; rather, they trace back to the beliefs, desires, and other mental features we possess. These mental characteristics also have their causal antecedents, in our genes and environment. Second, there is the idea that (at least sometimes) we perform actions of our own free will. Is there an unresolvable conflict between these two ideas, or can they be reconciled?

The arguments considered above concerned two different stages of the causal process represented in the figure. The Distant Causation Argument concerns the relationship of your actions to your genes and environment. The Could-Not-Have-Done-Otherwise Argument concerns the relationship of your actions to your beliefs and desires. In spite of this difference, the two arguments have something in common. Both assert that your actions are caused, and both assert that some fact about how your actions are caused shows that all of those actions are unfree. As noted before, if you think that some actions are performed freely, you must reject one or the other of these two premises.

What Is Causality?

For the rest of this chapter, I want to focus on the second of these key concepts. What does it mean to say that some events “cause” others? Understanding causality has been a very deep philosophical problem at least since David Hume’s work in the eighteenth century. I won’t attempt to get to the bottom of this cluster of problems. I will, however, try to clarify what causality is—enough so that we can better understand how causality and freedom are related.

What does it mean to say that striking a match caused the match to ignite? This doesn’t mean that the striking was, all by itself, enough to get the match to light. After all, besides being struck, the match had to be dry and there had to be oxygen in the air. So the first fact about causality is this: *A cause need not be a sufficient condition for its effect.* The second fact about causality is that there are usually many ways to get a particular effect to occur. Striking the match caused it to light, but that doesn’t mean that striking the match was the only way to get the match to catch fire. Using a magnifying glass to focus sunlight on the match head would have done the trick. And putting the match into a heated frying pan also would have worked. So the second fact is this: *Causes often are not necessary for their effects to occur.* (See Chapter 12 to review the definitions of necessary and sufficient conditions.)

I now want to note a difference between a cause of an event and what we may term *the whole cause* of that event. Striking the match is a cause of its lighting. It is, however, only part of the whole set of causally relevant facts. Suppose I somehow were able to list all the causally relevant facts about the match at a given time. At that time, the match is struck in a certain way, there is oxygen present, the match is dry, and so on. Given all this information, what can we conclude about what will happen next?

Determinism

Can we say that the match *may* light? Yes. Can we say something more—namely, that the match *must* light, given this complete specification of all the earlier causal facts? The idea that a complete description of the causal facts guarantees what will happen next is the thesis of *determinism*. This thesis says that if you list all the causally relevant facts pertaining to the match and its environment at a given time, these facts uniquely determine what will happen next. The match’s future is not left open by its present state. Given a complete description of the match’s present state, there is only one option as to what will happen next.

Sometimes, we describe the causally relevant facts about an object so that the description does leave open what will happen next. For example, suppose we say that a pair of dice is fair. If this is all we know, we should conclude that the probability that the dice will land double-six on the next roll is $1/36$. The fact that the dice are fair and that you’re now rolling them does not allow you to say what *must* happen. All you can say is that the dice *may* land double-six, but it is also true that they *may* fail to do so. This does not mean that the pair of dice violates the thesis of determinism. That thesis says only that a *complete* description of the system determines what will happen next. Perhaps causal determinism is true and my description of the dice is incomplete. This has some plausibility. For example, I didn’t describe exactly how the dice are rolled, what the surface is like on which they land, or what the wind conditions are that affect them as they leave your hand. Causal determinism says

only that if *all* the causally relevant facts are set out, these will leave open only one possible future for the pair of dice.

Indeterminism

Is determinism true? Before I answer this question, let's be clear on what it would be for determinism to be false. If determinism is false, then the world is indeterministic. This means that a complete description of the causal facts at one time leaves open what will happen next. In such a universe, all you can say is that the complete present state of a system makes some futures more probable than others; even a complete description of the present will leave open more than one possible future.

Until the twentieth century, determinism was a plausible and widely accepted thesis about the world. Newton's laws of motion, for example, are deterministic in character. You may recall from high school physics that those laws do not make use of the concept of probability. For example, Newton's law " $F = ma$ " says that if a billiard ball of mass m is acted on by a force of magnitude F , the ball will have an acceleration equal to F/m . The law does not say that this will "probably" happen, as if there are other possibilities that could happen instead. Rather, the law says what must happen if the object is acted on in a certain way. This Newtonian picture about how physical objects move provides a suggestive model for how *all* events in nature ultimately will be described. Living things are more complicated than billiard balls; creatures with minds are more complicated than many living things. The idea I want to consider, however, says that all things that are made of matter are ultimately governed by the laws of physics. So, since Newtonian theory is deterministic, the idea is that the behaviors of living things and of things with minds must also be deterministic in character. The thought behind this generalized Newtonian thesis is that "determinism percolates up." If elementary particles are deterministic, so is everything that is made of elementary particles. If a person's mind is a material object, then his or her beliefs, desires, and subsequent behaviors are governed by deterministic laws. I'm not saying that Newton was right about elementary particles, and I'm not saying that the mind is a physical thing made of elementary particles (recall that dualism denies this). Rather, I want you to consider a certain idea: *If* all matter is deterministic and *if* a person's mind is a material thing, then human behavior is physically determined.

One of the *if*'s in what I've just described—the idea that matter is deterministic—wasn't much questioned until the twentieth century. It was then that Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, and Erwin Schrödinger developed the Quantum Theory. This theory is now interpreted in different ways by physicists, but the standard interpretation (which is called "the Copenhagen interpretation," for Bohr's hometown) is that the Quantum Theory says that the behavior of particles is not deterministic. According to this interpretation of the theory, even a complete description of a physical system leaves open what its future will be like. Some futures will be more probable than others, but the number of possibilities is always greater than one. In short, the present does not determine the future—chance is part of the way the world is.

It is by no means settled that the Copenhagen interpretation is the best interpretation of the Quantum Theory. Nor is it inconceivable that this very well-confirmed scientific theory will one day be replaced by another, which will say that the universe is deterministic. But what seems clear now is that one can't simply *assume* that determinism must

be right. Perhaps the universe is deterministic, and then again, perhaps it is not. This is a scientific question to be settled by scientific investigation. One can't decide *a priori* whether determinism is true.

Suppose we are made of matter. Suppose that our psychological characteristics aren't due to the presence of some immaterial substance (as Cartesian Dualism asserts), but are consequences of how the matter we are made of is structured. If this is right, then I suggest that our behavior must be like the behaviors of physical particles. If chance influences the behavior of particles, then chance also influences the behavior of people. That is, I'm advancing the thesis that *indeterminism* percolates up. If physical things don't obey deterministic laws, then our beliefs and desires don't determine what our actions will be. Rather, those beliefs and desires make some actions vastly more probable than others. Similarly our genes plus the environments we inhabit do not determine what our thoughts and wants will be. Again, the relationship is probabilistic, not deterministic.

Most philosophers who have written about the issue of human freedom have not worried about the implications of the Quantum Theory. Usually they have assumed that matter is deterministic and then have considered what this implies about the question of whether we are free. This is entirely understandable for people such as David Hume, who wrote about the issue of freedom long before the Quantum Theory came on the scene; Hume was writing in the heyday of the Newtonian world picture.



Does Indeterminism Make Us Free?

If the world is indeterministic, how does that fact affect the issue of whether we are free? My suspicion is that the shift from determinism to indeterminism does not make much of a difference. The reason I say this is that if you suspect that determinism rules out

freedom, you'll probably be inclined to think that we wouldn't be free if indeterminism were true instead.

Suppose you think we can't have free will on the grounds that our thoughts and wants are causally determined by factors outside our control. We don't freely choose the genes we have or the environments we inhabit in early childhood. These are thrust upon us. They shape the kinds of people we are as well as the specific beliefs and desires we have. Given all this, how can our actions be regarded as free? This is the thought expressed in the Distant Causation Argument. Maybe you find the Distant Causation Argument somewhat plausible. The question I want to ask is whether you would change your mind about freedom if chance were introduced into the above story. That is, suppose that your beliefs and desires were due to genes, environments, *and chance*. I suggest that if determinism robs you of freedom, chance seems to rob you of freedom as well.

The same point applies to the Could-Not-Have-Done-Otherwise Argument. Suppose you agree with this argument's thesis—that our actions can't be free, since they are inevitable, given the beliefs and desires we have. Would introducing chance into this story make more room for freedom? I think not. If the fact that your beliefs and desires determine your action makes you unfree, I think you'd still be unfree if your actions were caused by your beliefs, desires, *and chance*. To make this point graphic, consider a kind of brain surgery. Suppose you are now a deterministic system: Your beliefs and desires determine what you will do. I now offer you a brain implant, whereby a tiny roulette wheel is introduced into your deliberation processes. If you lack free will when you are a deterministic system, would the operation make you free? This seems implausible. Before the operation, you were a slave to your beliefs and desires. After the surgery, you are a slave to your beliefs, desires, and to the implanted roulette wheel. The shift from being a deterministic system to being an indeterministic system has not made a difference as far as the question of freedom is concerned.

Causality Is the Issue, Not Determinism

My suggestion is that determinism *and* indeterminism *both* pose a problem for human freedom. The reason is that causality can exist in an indeterministic universe just as much as it can in a deterministic one. If your mental states are caused by factors outside your control, how can you be a free agent? Whether these causal factors *determine* your behavior is not essential.

It isn't hard to visualize how some events can cause others in a deterministic universe. If striking the match causes the match to light, determinism tells us that the striking completed a set of causal conditions that determines that the match must light. But how can some events cause others if determinism is false? The following example (due to Fred Dretske and Aaron Snyder, "Causal Irregularity," *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 39, 1972, pp. 69–71) shows, I think, that this is possible. Suppose a roulette wheel is connected to a gun, which is pointed at a cat. If I spin the roulette wheel and the ball lands on 00, this will cause the gun to fire, which then will kill the cat. Suppose that the roulette wheel is an indeterministic system—spinning the wheel does not determine where the ball will drop. Now suppose I spin the wheel and the ball happens to fall on 00,

thereby killing the cat. It seems to me that my spinning the wheel caused the cat to die, even though the process is not deterministic. The death of the cat *traces back* to my spinning the wheel. For this to be true, it is not required that my spinning the wheel *made it inevitable* that the cat would die. This is why it is possible to have causation without determinism.

Thus, my suggestion is that the real problem is not to see whether determinism and freedom can be reconciled, but to see whether causality and freedom can be reconciled. However, since the traditional positions about freedom all focus on deterministic causation, I'll do the same.

What Does Determinism Say about the Causation of Behavior?

To fix ideas, let's be clear on how the thesis of determinism would apply to the diagram given earlier. This diagram represents the idea that your genes and environment cause your present mental state, and that this, in turn, causes your behavior. What do these causal relations mean if causality is understood deterministically? Let's suppose for a moment that this diagram is *complete*. That is, suppose it represents *all* the factors that influence your mental state and your subsequent behavior. What does the thesis of determinism say about this chain? It asserts the following: Given your genes and environment, you couldn't have had a set of beliefs and desires different from the set that you in fact possess, and given your beliefs and desires, you couldn't have performed an action different from the action that you in fact produced. Determinism, recall, is the thesis that the facts at one time uniquely determine what comes next.

Determinism Differs from Fatalism

Determinism is an entirely different doctrine from the idea termed *fatalism*. You can understand what fatalism says by seeing how it figures in the Greek myth about Oedipus. Oedipus was a victim of fate. The Fates decreed that he would kill his father and marry his mother. In the story, Oedipus does these things in spite of himself. The Fates somehow ensured that Oedipus would find himself in this sorry state of affairs no matter what choices he made and no matter what he did.

Determinism says that the present determines the future; it does *not* say that the future is cast in stone, unaffected by what is true of the present. Determinism is entirely consistent with the idea that what happens at a later time *depends* on what happened earlier. Determinism does not rule out the idea that if the past had been different, the present would be different. Determinism does not rule out the idea that I can affect what the future will be like by now acting one way rather than another. Fatalism denies this; it says that the future is *independent* of what you do in the present.

Newton said that billiard balls are deterministic systems. If you hit the ball in a certain way (call it W_1), then the ball will move to a certain position (call it P_1) on the table. But Newtonian physics also says that if you hit the ball in some *other* way (W_2), the ball will move to a *different* position (P_2). Notice that in this theory, the present *makes a difference* to the future. The future is controlled by the present.

What would it be for Oedipus to be a deterministic system? This does not require us to think that there are such things as the Fates. Oedipus would be a deterministic system if his actions were deterministically controlled by his beliefs and desires. If Oedipus has one set of beliefs and desires (call it S_1), then he produces one action (call it A_1). But if he had had a different set of beliefs and desires (S_2), his action would have been entirely different (A_2).

Here is a picture of Oedipus according to which he is a deterministic system, but fatalism is false: Oedipus's beliefs and desires, plus the environment he was in, ensured that he would kill his father and marry his mother. But if he had had a different set of beliefs and desires, he would not have done this.

It is easy to confuse determinism and fatalism, even though they are very different ideas. In fact, they are almost opposite in what they say. Fatalism says that our present beliefs and desires make no difference as far as what actions we will perform and as far as what will happen to us. In a sense, fatalism says that our beliefs and desires are impotent; they don't have the power to make a difference. But determinism, if we model it on the Newtonian idea, says that our beliefs and desires are *not* impotent; they causally control what we do and thereby powerfully influence what happens to us.

According to fatalism, there is no point in *trying* to do something. If it is fated that you will get an *A* in a course, you will get an *A* whether you try to get one or not; and if it is fated that you will get a *D*, you will, whether you try to avoid this fate or not. On the other hand, to think that your efforts influence what happens to you—to think that trying makes a difference to the grade you will receive—is to reject fatalism.

Greek mythology talked about the Fates. I'll assume that there are no such beings. I'll assume that fatalism is false. This leaves open the separate question of whether determinism is true. As I've noted, most previous writers on the free will problem have assumed that causality requires determinism. I hope you see why I reject this assumption; I think that causality is a fact about the world we inhabit, whether or not determinism turns out to be true.

Review Questions

1. What is the Distant Causation Argument? What is the Could-Not-Have-Done-Otherwise Argument? What do these arguments have in common? How do they differ?
2. Two examples of unfree actions were given. What were they?
3. What does the thesis of determinism assert? What is indeterminism? How do these theses employ the concept of a "sufficient condition" and the concept of a "complete description"?
4. An unusual sort of brain surgery was described in this chapter. What was it and what relevance does it have to the problem of free will?
5. What is fatalism? Is it accurately described by the saying, "que sera, sera" ("whatever will be, will be")? How does fatalism differ from determinism?

A Problem for Further Thought

Suppose the Fates decided to get Oedipus to kill his father and marry his mother by controlling what Oedipus thinks and wants. If this were so, would what happens to Oedipus be an example of determinism, fatalism, both or neither?



“Compatibility” Defined

Before proceeding, I need to define a piece of terminology from logic. To say that two propositions are *compatible* is to say that the truth of one wouldn't rule out the truth of the other. Incompatibility means conflict; if one proposition were true, the other would have to be false. Two propositions can be compatible even though neither is, in fact, true. And two propositions can be incompatible even though both are false. Consider the following three statements:

- (1) My shirt is green all over.
- (2) My shirt is red all over.
- (3) My shirt is torn.

Propositions (1) and (2) are incompatible; (1) and (3) are compatible. Do these facts about incompatibility and compatibility tell you what color my shirt is? Do they tell you whether the shirt is torn? The answer to both questions is *no*.

Incompatibilism and Compatibilism

Incompatibilism is a thesis about the problem of free will. It doesn't claim that determinism is true. It also doesn't claim that we are unfree. It merely asserts an if/then statement: *If determinism is true, then we aren't free.*

If two propositions (*D* and *F*) are incompatible, there are three possibilities: *D* is true and *F* is false; *D* is false and *F* is true; or *D* and *F* are both false. What is excluded by the claim of incompatibility is that both propositions are true. Of the three possible positions an incompatibilist can take, two have been prominent in philosophical discussion. The first holds that determinism is true and that we aren't free. This position has come to be called *hard determinism*. The second says that we are free and that our actions are not causally determined. This position is called *libertarianism*. These two positions agree that freedom and determinism can't both be true, but they disagree about which proposition is true and which is false.

Opposed to incompatibilism is the idea that determinism does not rule out the possibility that we are free. This view, not surprisingly, is called *compatibilism*. In principle, there are four possible subvarieties of compatibilism. If propositions *D* and *F* are compatible, then the options are (1) *D* and *F* are both true; (2) *D* and *F* are both false; (3) *D* is true and *F* is false; or (4) *D* is false and *F* is true. Of these four possible positions, only one has been discussed much in the philosophical literature. This view is called *soft determinism*; it holds that our actions are both free and causally determined. The basic idea here is that freedom does not require the absence of determinism, but rather requires that our actions be caused in a particular way.

So the basic menu of standard positions is as follows:

- I. Incompatibilism (if determinism is true, then we lack freedom).
 - A. Hard Determinism: Incompatibilism and determinism are true, so we lack freedom.
 - B. Libertarianism: Incompatibilism is true and we are free, so determinism is false.
 - C.
- II. Compatibilism (if determinism were true, that wouldn't rule out the possibility that we are free).
 - A. Soft Determinism: Compatibilism and determinism are true, and we are free.
 - B, C, D.

Note that this outline leaves some possible positions unlabeled. Be sure you understand what the unlabeled options are. My own view falls under II.B; I'm a compatibilist. As explained in the previous chapter, I don't think one can assume that determinism is true. I do, however, think that some of our actions are performed freely. The kind of compatibilist position I endorse will be described in the next chapter.

The three labeled positions display three patterns of similarity and difference. Soft determinism and libertarianism agree that we are free; hard and soft determinism agree that

determinism is true; and hard determinism and libertarianism agree that incompatibilism is correct. To understand how these three positions are related, we can schematize each as endorsing an argument. Let F be the proposition that some of our actions are free, and let D be the proposition that determinism is true. Here is each position's characteristic argument:

<i>Hard determinism:</i>	$\begin{array}{l} \text{If } D, \text{ then not-}F \\ D \\ \hline \text{Not } F \end{array}$
<i>Libertarianism:</i>	$\begin{array}{l} \text{If } D, \text{ then not-}F \\ F \\ \hline \text{Not } D \end{array}$
<i>Soft determinism:</i>	$\begin{array}{l} F \\ D \\ \hline F \text{ and } D \text{ are compatible} \end{array}$

Note that each of these arguments is deductively valid. Our task is to figure out which of the premises are plausible.

Libertarianism

I'll begin by considering libertarianism. The philosopher C. A. Campbell (1897–1974) is the libertarian on whom I'll focus. Before I describe how Campbell defends libertarianism, let me note that "libertarianism" in the problem of free will is an entirely different doctrine from the idea that goes by that name in political philosophy. Libertarians in political philosophy argue that the state should not interfere in buying and selling or in other spheres of life. This is a *normative* view—a claim about the way things ought to be. On the other hand, libertarianism in the problem of free will is a *descriptive* claim, not a normative one. It asserts that we are free agents and that determinism is false. Libertarianism as a view about free will does not say whether it is good news or bad that we have free will.

THE NORMATIVE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM

Libertarianism, soft determinism, and hard determinism take different stances on the question of whether we, in fact, are free. They don't advance claims as to whether it is a good thing or a bad thing to be free. In other words, these theories concern *descriptive*, not *normative*, issues.