

Libertarianism

Some people endorse a view called *incompatibilism*, which states that free will is incompatible with *determinism*. No free action could possibly be determined, they think. More informatively, incompatibilists think it is impossible that someone's freely acting be causally guaranteed to happen by things that occur before she freely acts. Some people hold a view called *libertarianism*, which states both that incompatibilism is true and that someone actually performs a free action. Other people reject incompatibilism. They hold to *compatibilism*, which is the view that it is possible that previous happenings in the world could absolutely causally guarantee—that is, could cause in a deterministic way—that someone freely acts. In this chapter, I argue that libertarianism is, for the time being at least, the most sensible view.

§1 Our Strategy

I'd like to begin by talking a bit about *how* we'll inquire into the nature of free will. Put simply, we'll experiment. Doing philosophy well, surprisingly enough, is much like doing science well. Philosophers and scientists both strive to begin with firm, settled, and well-behaved data—data on which we can be quite confident. For philosophers, these data often include our clear ideas and intuitively true convictions. Philosophers learn from our clear ideas and intuitive convictions by using them to test conjectures, that is, by using them to test competing candidate ways of thinking accurately about the world.

Just like scientists, philosophers test controversial conjectures by subjecting them to rigorous and logical experimentation. Many experiments, whether scientific or philosophical, have both a control group and a test group. The control group is set up in a way that carefully removes irrelevant factors and confounding variables, keeping the experimenter's data clean and clear. A test group is just like the control group but with one exception: in a test group, the experimenter deliberately alters an isolated

(independent) variable so that she can discern what other differences (dependent variables) might play out.

For philosophers, the laboratory is the mind, which is why their experiments are often called thought-experiments. In carrying out thought-experiments, the reliable instrument of choice is logical reasoning. Applying principles of sound reasoning enables us to falsify (that is, to rule out) some conjectures by ferreting out how those conjectures are inconsistent with reliable data. In a nutshell, philosophers, much like scientists, enjoy collecting uncontroversial data and establishing results about certain controversial conjectures by way of carefully conducted experiments. Nelson Goodman (1953: 31) offers sound advice:

A philosophic problem is a call to provide an adequate explanation in terms of an acceptable basis. If we are ready to tolerate everything as understood, there is nothing left to explain; while if we sourly refuse to take anything, even tentatively, as clear, no explanation can be given. What intrigues us as a problem, and what will satisfy us as a solution, will depend upon the line we draw between what is already clear and what needs to be clarified.

This chapter honors this method. We'll get clear about what we're discussing when we inquire in the nature of free will. Then, we'll carefully describe a clear and uncontroversial situation where someone acts freely, which will serve as our Control Case. Then we'll run some thought-experiments, some Test Cases. Our testing procedure will be the act of thinking clearly, drawing logical inferences to establish some interesting results. In particular, we'll alter some variables in our Control Case to see what logically plays out. This chapter's experiments are designed to help us discover that the conjecture of compatibilism does not square with our firm and clear and intuitive convictions about free will. And if compatibilism is wrong, then the opposite conjecture, *incompatibilism*, is true. Let's turn now to gathering some fairly firm, clear, and uncontroversial data on free will.

§2 Some Reliable Data

Getting clear about what we mean by ‘free will’ better ensures that the rest of our study is not frivolous. For, if we fail to solidify more carefully what we mean, then we cannot satisfactorily address controversial conjectures. Paul Benson (1987: 465) explains,

Without some initial, relatively fixed beliefs about free action to start with, we would not know what we are theorizing about. And, apart from questions concerning the subject of our theory, we would not have any motivation to theorize; nor would we have much of a clue about how to begin. Part of the reason why free action has been the occasion for such controversy and confusion is that philosophers have not worked hard enough to display the intuitive origins and motivating questions for their favored theories of free action.

This section, §2, follows Benson’s recommendation. I’ve scoured the professional philosophical literature on free will to see what other *experts* have to say, and there’s quite a bit of consensus on some initial, relatively fixed beliefs about free will we can take for granted. So let’s get started.

Exercising our free will means acting freely. There’s wide consensus among philosophers who are experts on free will that we sometimes act freely. So, we’ll take it for granted too. We should reject the claim that we sometimes act freely *only* upon grasping seriously compelling reasons for this rejection, where these reasons consist of data that seem even more obviously true. Philosophy should stoop to fact. Thomas Reid (1895: 29) wisely instructs,

For though, in matters of deep speculation, the multitude must be guided by the philosophers, yet, in things that are within the reach of every man’s understanding, and upon which the whole conduct of human life turns, the philosopher must follow the multitude, or make himself perfectly ridiculous.

What else is obvious about acting freely, besides the fact that we sometimes do it? Most experts on free will share a strict and demanding, yet intuitive, notion of free action that includes at least three features: (i) at the moment someone acts freely, she has both a power to act a certain way as well as a power not to act in that way, (ii) when acting freely, the agent herself is an ultimate source of change in the world, and (iii) this type of free action is required by the strongest sense of moral responsibility that

one may properly ascribe to a person. Commenting on this third point, (iii), Peter van Inwagen (1993: 185, 1990: 278) says, “It is a common opinion that free will is required by morality.” He (1999: 343) explains:

The main interest of the free-will problem, for most philosophers, derived from their belief that moral responsibility was impossible without free will—without the ability to do otherwise. This belief was the main reason most philosophers had for *caring* about free will enough to invest time and ink in a debate about whether anyone had it or what it was compatible with.

Touching on points (i) and (ii), Gary Watson (1987: 145) maintains that “any reasonable conception” of free will must capture the right interpretation “of two different features of freedom...—namely, self-determination (or autonomy) and the availability of alternative possibilities.” I find Watson’s claim insightful. According to nearly every expert, someone’s acting freely implies that she has the power to refrain from performing the action she actually performs—call this power *dual ability*. Moreover, and even more important for purposes of this chapter, someone’s acting freely implies that she *herself* ensures which of the available courses of action materializes; she is self-determining, somehow being an ultimate source or an underived originator of change in the world.

Now, all of that was a mouthful. If you’re grasping at least 50% of the last several paragraphs, you’re doing just fine. At this point, I want to emphasize that what I’ve claimed above is not terribly controversial. In fact, I’m going to drive this point home. In the balance of this section, I deploy abundant textual evidence, data points, that some of the most authoritative voices in the free will literature *begin* their inquiry into the nature of free will by noting that acting freely has the three features mentioned above.

Data Points that (i) Freely Acting requires Dual Ability

- Aristotle (*NE* III 5, 1113b6-8). “[W]hen acting is up to us, so is not acting...” and “...where it is in our power to act it is also in our power not to act, and *vice versa*.”

- John Searle (1984: 95). “In normal behaviour, each thing we do carries the conviction, valid or invalid, that we could be doing something else right here and now, that is, all other conditions remaining the same. This, I submit, is the source of our own unshakable conviction of our own free will.”
- Richard Double (1991: 12). Free will implies “that free agents have the ability to choose and to act differently than they actually do.... The point here is that free agents do not have to make the choices they do; they have the ability...to choose otherwise.”
- Thomas Reid (1895: Essay 4, Chapter 1; Essay 1, 65). A person is free at some time only when she has power over the determinations of her own will at that time. Her action is free at least partly in virtue of her exercising this power in producing her action. ** A person’s having the power to [freely] perform an action A implies that she has the power not to perform A.
- Peter van Inwagen (1983: 8). “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, courses of action that it is impossible for him to carry out more than one of—each of these courses of action is such that he can, or is able to, or has it within his power to carry it out.”
- Carl Ginet (1995: 69; 1990: 9). “By a *free* action I mean one such that until the time of its occurrence the agent had it in her power to perform some alternative action (or to be inactive) instead. ** Two or more alternatives are *open to me* at a given moment if which of them I do next is entirely up to my choice at that moment: Nothing that exists up to that moment stands in the way of my doing next any one of the alternatives.”
- Randolph Clarke (2003: 15). “When an agent acts with free will, she is able to do other than perform the action that she actually performs; she has a choice about what whether she performs the action; what she does is up to her.”
- Ted Honderich (1988: 385; 1993: 2). “...[O]ur actions are such that our futures are in part *open, alterable, or unfixd*. ** Each of us is supposed to have a kind of personal power to originate choices and decisions. Thus on a given occasion, with the past just as it was and the present and ourselves just as they are, we can choose or decide the opposite of what we actually do choose or decide.”

Data Points that (ii) Freely Acting requires Ultimate Origination

- Gary Watson (1987: 145, 146). “Any reasonable conception” of free will must capture the right interpretation “of two different features of freedom...—namely, self-determination (or autonomy) and the availability of alternative possibilities. Even classical compatibilism made room, or tried to make room, for both. ** “An agent’s free action requires that her action be self-determined in the sense that she herself makes the difference as to whether or not she performs that specific action.”

- John Locke (1894: Book 2, Chapter 21, §48). If someone is “under the determination of some other than himself” then there is “want of liberty.”
- Benedict Spinoza (1677: Point 1, Proposition 11). “That thing is called ‘free’ ... is determined to act by itself alone.”
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962: 442). “The rationalist’s dilemma: either the free act is possible, or it is not—either the event originates in me or is imposed on me from outside...”
- Daniel Dennett (1995: 55 note 1). “How can a person be an author of decisions, and not merely the locus of causal summation for external influences?” [Dennett takes this question to be among an incomplete list of questions that composes the problem of free will.]
- Michael Zimmerman (1988: 24-5). “If one strictly freely wills an event, then (and only then) one’s volition is, in a sense, ‘truly one’s own’; one is, in a sense, the ‘source’ of one’s volition (and hence of the action that comprises it).”
- Thomas Reid (1895: 602). “If the person was the cause of that determination of his own will, he was free in that action, and it is justly imputed to him, whether it be good or bad.”
- Laura Ekstrom (2000: 3) describes one’s free action as being “up to oneself.” A free agent is “fully *self-directed* in her action.”
- Thomas Flint (1998: 23). “Self-determination lies at the very heart of freedom; to say that an act of mine was free, but was ultimately determined by someone or something other than me, someone or something whose determining activity was utterly beyond my power to control, is to speak nonsense.”
- Peter van Inwagen (1983: 11, *his emphasis*). “[T]he concept of an agent’s power to act [freely] 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.”
- Randolph Clarke (1996: 26). “An agent’s having multiple courses of action that she *might* perform does not suffice for the agent’s having freedom; rather, the agent must exercise a causal power in such a way that she is a source of her activity.”
- Ted Honderich (1993: 2; 1988: 389). “Each of us is supposed to have a kind of personal power to originate choices and decisions.” ** We have a pre-philosophical and pre-theoretical “idea or whatever of a determinate centre, a self, which is uncaused in its activity and which is not superfluous.”
- Alvin Plantinga (1990: 31). “[T]he notion of a person as an ultimate source of action” lies at the heart of certain important controversies regarding free will.
- Randolph Clarke (2003: 15). When an agent acts with free will she “...determines, herself, what she does; she is an ultimate source or origin or initiator of her behavior.”

- Timothy O'Connor (1996: 143, 145-6). We are "self-determining" beings. ** In acting freely, "...I am quite literally the cause (source, point of origination) of my own behavior." When we freely make choices for consciously considered reasons, how we act is "up to us."
- Susan Wolf (1990: 10). "[T]here is a requirement that the agent's control be ultimate—her will must be determined by her self, and her self must not, in turn, be determined by anything external to itself."
- C.A. Campbell (1957: 156-7, 160; 1966: 131-5; and 1967: 48-9, *his emphasis*). A free agent is "the *sole* author," and "the *self* determines" her action.
- Robert Nozick (1981: 313). "We want it to be true that in that very same situation we could have done (*significantly*) otherwise, so that our actions will have *origivative* value."
- Robert Kane (1996: 4, 15, 78, 196). Free will is "the power of agents to be the ultimate creators (or originators) and sustainers of their own ends or purposes."

Data Points that (iii) Moral Responsibility requires Freely Acting

- Derk Pereboom (2001: 10). "...[F]or an agent to be morally responsible for an action is just for the action *really to belong to the agent*. Equivalently, but in classical phrasing, for an agent to be morally responsible for an action is for it to be *imputable* to the agent."
- Ted Honderich (1996: 858). "...[O]rigination has to be a fact if we are to have everything we want in connection with freedom, responsibility, and so on."
- John Bishop (1989: 1). Moral responsibility requires "the 'origivative' ability to initiate events in the natural world."
- Susan Wolf (1990: 10-11, *emphasis added*). "...[B]eings who can purposefully *initiate* change should have a different status in the world from that of those who merely execute it. It makes sense that such beings should have a special significance, for they are *sources* of value (and disvalue) rather than mere carriers of it."
- Aristotle (*EE* II 6, 1223a9-15, *emphasis added*). "And since excellence and badness and the acts that spring from them are respectively praised or blamed—for we do not give praise or blame for what is due to necessity, or chance, or nature, but *only for what we ourselves are causes of*; for what another is the cause of, for that he bears the blame or praise—it is clear that excellence and badness have to do with matters *where the man himself is the cause and source of his acts.*"
- Richard Double (1991: 12). "Free will seems, at first blush, to be something without which our moral responsibility for our actions will be jeopardized."

- Daniel Dennett (1995: 55). Addressing the problem of free will involves answering the question, “How can we make sense of the intuition that an agent can only be responsible if he could have done otherwise?”
- Peter van Inwagen (2001: 10). Historically, philosophers assumed an inseverable connection between moral responsibility and free will, namely, that “...if one is morally responsible for anything, it follows logically that one has had a free choice about something.”
- William Rowe (1991: 237). “If you are morally responsible for your action then you must have played a role in causing your action and the action must have been done freely. I take this claim to be widely accepted, if not self-evident. ... We all agree that this claim is true. What we disagree about is the proper account of what it is for an agent to cause her action or to do it freely.”
- Kane (2002b: 407-8). One is ultimately morally responsible only if one performs some free action at some time.
- Aristotle (*NE* III 5, 1113b7). “...if to act, where this is noble, is in our power, not to act, which will be base, will also be in our power, and if not to act, where this is noble, is in our power, to act, which will be base, will also be in our power.”
- Alvin Plantinga (1990: 30). “But how can I be responsible for my actions if it was never within my power to perform any action I didn’t in fact perform and never within my power to refrain from performing any I did perform?”
- Carl Ginet (1997: 85). “...[A]n agent can be morally responsible for her action only if it is a free action: an agent can merit credit or blame for something she did only if she could have done otherwise.”
- Stewart Goetz (1988: 306). “...[M]oral responsibility presupposes the explaining of free human actions in terms of reasons.”
- Peter van Inwagen (1993: 185). “The judgment that you shouldn’t have done X implies that you should have done something else instead; that you should have done something else instead implies that there was something else for you to do; that there was something else for you to do implies that you *could* have done something else...”
- Thomas Reid (1895: 621). “Another thing implied in the notion of a moral and accountable being, is power to do what he is accountable for. That no man can be under a moral obligation to do what it is impossible for him to do, or to forbear what it is impossible for him to forbear, is an axiom as self-evident as any in mathematics. It cannot be contradicted, without overturning all notion of moral obligation; nor can there be an exception to it, when it is rightly understood.”

Commentary on Data Points

These data points count as fairly firm, well-behaved, clear, clean, intuitively true convictions. While compiling these assertions from the experts, I was struck by two things. First, there's considerable redundancy in what these scholars are saying, and yet these scholars neither quote nor cite others when describing these intuitive features of free will—this fact suggests they are capturing intuitively true features of free will rather than surprising features discovered by some other authority figure. Second, virtually none of these experts above offers arguments for the above assertions, due to the fact that these assertions seem so utterly obvious. Until these common-sense beliefs are shown mistaken, and shown mistaken from reasons in the form of beliefs even more intuitively true, we may safely assume that these philosophers have latched onto something quite significant (and true).

To summarize, an agent has *dual ability* precisely when she acts a certain way while having it within her power not to act in that way. Acting with dual ability implies that up until the moment the agent acts freely, she has it within her power to refrain from so acting. Regarding Ultimacy, the idea is that acting freely requires being an ultimate source, underived originator, or initiator of something. Acting freely implies being a self-determined, self-directed, sole author of change in the world. Robert Kane (2002a: 5) summarizes our data points, "...[W]e believe we have free will when (a) it is 'up to us' what we choose from an array of alternative possibilities and (b) the origin or source of our choices and actions is in us and not in anyone or anything else over which we have no control."

§3 Control Case

Now that we're clear about what we're talking about, let's use these reliable data to run some tests and learn a few interesting things, from a philosophical point of view. Let's first describe our Control Case—namely, an uncontroversial possible situation where someone freely acts.

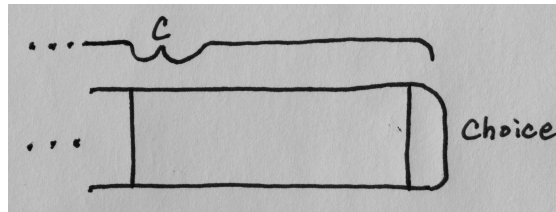
Meet Sam Slug. Suppose Sam carefully deliberates about whether or not to lie. He considers a few of his reasons for lying. He has a goal he'd very much like to achieve and believes that by lying he would secure that goal. So he desires to lie, in order to secure his goal. Sure, he understands lying might be a bad idea. But he wants to lie anyway. He's human, conflicted about what to do, having many desires. *In addition* to wanting to lie, Sam wants to avoid lying. He wants to tell the truth. Sam's deliberations include thinking about potential consequences of telling the truth, and some of these potential future situations seem pretty good to him. So, Sam is torn about what to do. He has a choice to make—a free choice. And which choice he makes is up to him, in the strongest possible terms. If he were to freely choose to lie, he would be morally responsible in the sense that he would deserve some blame. On the other hand, we may consistently suppose, Sam realizes that if he were to choose *not* to lie, he would not deserve blame. After cool, calm, and careful deliberation, Sam freely chooses to lie. With this choice, Sam freely forms the intention to lie. And he tells the lie, with his vocal cords. Sam's freely choosing to lie is blameworthy. His choosing to lie is a free action, in the strongest possible terms.

Two things are worth noting about Control Case. First, notice that the free action at stake is Sam's freely *choosing* to lie rather than another action he may perform, such as his speaking the lie with his vocal cords. There is wide consensus among experts in the free will literature that a choice counts as the best candidate for executing free will at the most fundamental level, especially when moral responsibility applies. Aristotle (*EE* II, 1228a10-17) explains:

Further, we praise and blame all men with regard to their choice rather than their acts (though activity is more desirable than excellence), because men may do bad acts under compulsion, but no one chooses them under compulsion. Further, it is only because it is not easy to see the nature of a man's choice that we are forced to judge of his character by his actions. The activity then is more desirable, but the choice more praiseworthy.

Second, there is obviously a causal history leading up until and including the exact moment Sam freely chooses to lie. **Everyone in the debate agrees that Sam does not choose in a causal vacuum. Everyone agrees that many factors causally influence, that is, at least causally contribute to, his choosing freely.**

Please read those last two sentences again, and, for good measure, again. By stipulation, let '*complete circumstances C*' denote everything that causally contributes in any way, shape, form, or fashion to Sam's freely choosing to lie.



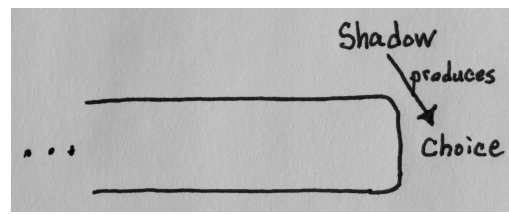
The complete circumstances *C* in which Sam freely chooses may very well include any of the following: Sam's deliberations about whether or not to lie, his desires, his beliefs, his memories, his brain states, his hormone levels, his genetics, any environmental conditions, the way Sam was raised by his caregivers, *et cetera*. Nature? Nurture? Yes, and yes. Lump them all together in *complete circumstances C*. Anything that pushes or pulls on Sam from a causal point of view, include it in *C*. For example, if just prior to Sam's free choice Sam hears a bird chirping, which causally influences his choice in even but the smallest way, then *C* includes Sam's hearing the bird chirping. If a memory of his mother's scolding him for once lying to Suzy Sizbom flashes into Sam's consciousness, and this memory causally influences his choice in whatever way, small or large, then let *complete circumstances C* include this causal influence as well. If the breaking of a covalent chemical bond that occurs in the center of his occipital lobe causally influences his free choice, then include it. Whether the candidates are physical or non-physical, if they causally contribute in the slightest way to his freely choosing to lie, include them in *C*. In short, spell out the *complete circumstances C* as richly as you please, provided that it's uncontroversial that Sam *freely* chooses to lie.

§4 Our Tests: a sequence of comparisons

Now let's experiment and learn a few things.

Test Case #1

Take our Control Case, but minimally change the following causal factors influencing Sam's choice. Meet Shadow, an extremely powerful and competent demon who's hell bent on making Sam Slug choose to lie. So, rather than Sam's deliberations, beliefs, desires, memories, brain states, and so forth causally influencing Sam's choice, let Shadow directly cause the event, *Sam's choosing to lie*. So, the complete circumstances C^* in which Sam chooses to lie in Test Case #1 are different than the circumstances C in Control Case. C^* includes Shadow and her nefarious causal activity. Unbeknownst to Sam, Shadow directly secures and directly makes *Sam chooses to lie*.

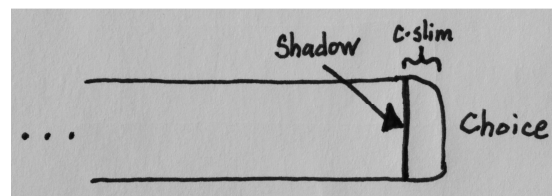


Verdict: in Test Case #1, although Sam chooses to lie, Sam does not *freely* choose to lie. At least one reason is this: Sam is in no way an ultimate source or originator of change in the world. If anyone were a blameworthy source of Sam's unfortunate lying, it would be Shadow, not Sam.

Test Case #2

Go back to Control Case. Consider again the complete circumstances C in which Sam freely chooses. Remember, C includes the entire causal history of Sam's free choice. Now, focus on only those circumstances *within* C that occur for a span of 90 seconds immediately before and during Sam's free choice—call these local circumstances *C-slim*. Now, for Test Case #2, imagine a wild and crazy possible situation wherein Shadow, who's hell bent on making Sam choose to lie, perfectly understands,

according to her perfect understanding of the laws of nature, that *C-slim*'s occurrence would absolutely causally guarantee that Sam choose to lie. Suppose Shadow also understands that she has the power to bring about *C-slim*. Imagine Shadow, using her perfect knowledge of these facts, ensures that Sam chooses to lie by directly producing circumstances *C-slim*, which in turn predictably and absolutely causally guarantees that Sam chooses to lie. In brief, Shadow makes Sam choose to lie by using *C-slim* as a tool.

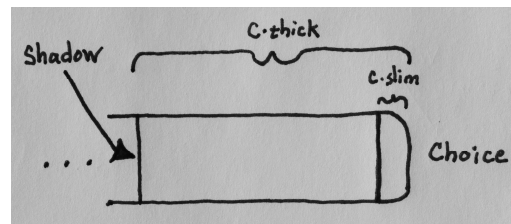


Verdict: in Test Case #2, although Sam chooses to lie, Sam does not *freely* choose to lie. Sam is in no way an ultimate source or originator of change in the world. If anyone were a blameworthy source of the unfortunate lying, it would be Shadow, not Sam.

Test Case #3

Return to Control Case. Consider again the circumstances *C* in which Sam freely chooses. *C* includes more of the causal history of Sam's choosing than just the 90 seconds included in *C-slim*. Sure, *C* includes *C-slim*. But *C* also includes lots of stuff that occurs immediately before *C-slim*, as well as lots of stuff that occurs before that, and before that, and so forth. Now focus on only those circumstances *within C* that occur over a span of several days immediately before Sam chooses—call them *C-thick*. Now, for Test Case #3, imagine a possible situation where Shadow uses *C-thick* as a tool to absolutely guarantee Sam's lying choice, just like she used *C-slim* as a tool in Case #2. Shadow perfectly understands that each and everything that happens within *C-thick* at a given moment absolutely causally guarantees the next things that happen within *C-thick*. Suppose also that for those 90 seconds at the

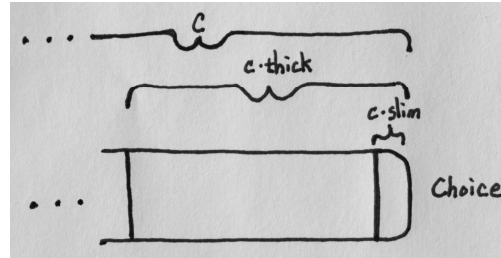
very end of *C-thick* (which, remember, just is *C-slim*), *C-slim* absolutely causally guarantees *Sam's choosing to lie*. Now, in the same way that in Case #2 Shadow absolutely ensures that Sam chooses to lie by perfectly arranging *C-slim* to occur, we may suppose that in Case #3 Shadow absolutely ensures that Sam chooses to lie by perfectly arranging that *C-thick* happens. While we place Shadow's dominating influence deeper into the past, she's just as effective and controlling in Case #3 as she is in Case #2.



Verdict: in Test Case #3, although Sam chooses to lie, Sam does not *freely* choose to lie. Sam is in no way an ultimate source or an underived originator of change in the world. Sam in no way exercises any power of ultimate origination. He's mere putty in the grip of Shadow. If anyone were a blameworthy source of Sam's unfortunate lying, it would be Shadow, not Sam.

Test Case #4

Imagine a possible situation where we slightly modify Test Case #3 as follows. Remove Shadow, but keep *C-thick*. In this Test Case #4, just like in Case #3, imagine that the laws of nature absolutely causally guarantee and perfectly govern what happens in the sense that each and everything happening within *C-thick* absolutely guarantees the next thing that happens in *C-thick*, which eventually includes *C-slim*, which in turn absolutely guarantees that Sam chooses to lie.



What's a proper verdict in Test Case #4? I submit that even though Sam chooses to lie, Sam does not *freely* choose to lie. Why? Because if Sam is not an ultimate source or underived originator in Test Case #3 (where Shadow prowls, predicts, plots, produces, and perfectly ensures that *C-thick* absolutely guarantees Sam's choice), then simply removing Shadow's presence does not automatically equip Sam with any ultimate origination. The absence of someone else's compelling, powerful influence does not imply any positive exercise of any ultimate origination power on Sam's part. Therefore, there's no ultimate origination in Test Case #4. And since freely acting requires ultimacy, then Sam does not freely choose to lie. His choice is a direct and absolute product of his past. Perhaps a source of his choice lies in *C-slim*. Perhaps a source of *C-slim* lies in whatever absolutely causally guaranteed it, which in turn had a source in whatever caused it, and so on and so forth. But there's no candidate for any ultimate source anywhere in the vicinity of Sam's choice. Therefore, Sam does not freely choose to lie in Test Case #4.

The Big Implication

There must be an interesting difference between Control Case, where Sam freely chooses, and Case #4, where Sam chooses but not freely. Notice, however, that Case #4 *just is* the compatibilist's best description of someone's choosing freely. Why? Because circumstances *C-thick* deterministically cause Sam's choosing to lie, and *C-thick* may in turn be deterministically caused by prior events, which may be deterministically caused by even earlier events, and so forth. So, since Sam does not freely choose under the compatibilist's best description of a free choice, compatibilism is mistaken. Therefore,

incompatibilism is true; and, since it's most sensible to think that someone actually acts freely, libertarianism is the most sensible view.

§5 The Control Case Unpacked

So what's so special about Control Case? I think an important part of the answer lies in the fact that the *complete circumstances C* (which, remember, includes *C-thick*) in which Sam freely chooses cannot absolutely causally guarantee Sam's freely choosing. Rather, Sam acts in and is influenced by C, and somehow he's also an ultimate source. But how? At this point, one may raise the following objection: it *seems* that if Sam exhibits no ultimacy when *C-thick* deterministically causes his choice, then simply removing the deterministic link between *C-thick*, on the one hand, and *Sam's choosing to lie*, on the other hand, would not automatically equip Sam with the ultimacy that free will requires. If there's ultimacy in Control Case, there has to be something else, some other consideration, from a philosophical point of view, that captures how Sam is an ultimate originator.

Is there a theory of free will that provides a principled way to describe the deeper nuances inherent in Control Case such that Sam, in choosing freely, demonstrates ultimacy? Fortunately, the answer is Yes. Recall Aristotle (*EE II 6, 1223a9-15, emphasis added*) who points us in the right direction:

And since excellence and badness and the acts that spring from them are respectively praised or blamed—for we do not give praise or blame for what is due to necessity, or chance, or nature, but *only for what we ourselves are causes of*; for what another is the cause of, for that he bears the blame or praise—it is clear that excellence and badness have to do with matters *where the man himself is the cause and source of his acts*.

Aristotle's remarks suggest that an agent himself or herself, the person, just is the cause of something—that is, the agent himself or herself strictly and literally causally produces some change in the world. This insight lies at the heart of a theory of free will called *agent-causation*.

Suppose that, upon closer philosophical inspection of Control Case, Sam's free choice just is the event, *Sam's directly producing his intention to lie*. Every choice has an intentional component to it in that there is some goal to try to achieve. On this proposal, the free choice just is an agent-causal event, where the cause = Sam, and the effect = an intention to lie.

- Choice = (Sam \rightarrow Intention)

This view nicely captures how Sam is an ultimate source. For example, were we to begin by looking at all of the harmful consequences of his lying and trace backward their causal histories with the hopes of discovering who's responsible, then we may trace things back to Sam's lying. And we may further trace the cause of his lying back to his intending to lie, and then finally back to the man, Sam, himself. The free choice itself—namely, *Sam's causing his intention to lie*—captures that Sam is an ultimate source, since Sam is clearly the direct source of his intention, as he gets the ball rolling in the first place.

Wait, you may be wondering: what causally produces Sam's free choice? In other words, what causally produces *Sam's directly producing his intention to lie*? For example, if something were to absolutely causally guarantee his choice, by deterministically causing (*Sam \rightarrow Intention*), then there would be no ultimacy for Sam. Our Test Cases taught us this much.

Notice the challenge in the form of a rhetorical question, here, is not about what merely causally contributes to (*Sam \rightarrow Intention*). It's utterly obvious that there are mere causal contributors to, mere causal influences of, Sam's free choice. Everyone in the debate agrees that Sam does not choose freely in a causal vacuum. Everyone agrees that many factors at least causally contribute to his choosing freely. For example, Sam's free choice may have necessary causal conditions, that is, conditions without which he would have been unable to make a choice. But necessary causal conditions need not be sufficient causal conditions. The difference with respect to free action is night and day.¹ So, the crucial

¹ For an account of mere causal influence/contribution, which is distinct from full-fledged causal production (e.g., deterministic causation), see Botham (2008: 135-152; 211-215).

question, by contrast, is about what might absolutely causally guarantee (*Sam* → *Intention*). What factors might together count as a sufficient causal condition for (*Sam* → *Intention*)?

This question, rather than posing a damning challenge to agent-causation, actually highlights the signature virtue of agent-causation. For, it turns out that there are very good (and independent!) reasons for thinking it is impossible for something, whether Shadow or anything else, to directly causally produce an agent-causal event such as (*Sam* → *Intention*). Timothy O'Connor has advanced at least five separate arguments for this claim, and I have deepened and made more rigorous each of them.² If at least one of these arguments succeeds (and I have yet to see anything close to a compelling objection to any of them), then the agent-causal view provides an independent and principled way to describe how Sam's free choice—that is, Sam's directly causing something—*necessarily* captures the ultimacy that free will requires. For while there may be mere causal contributors of one's free choice, there cannot be any deterministic causes of one's free choice.

Conclusion

Through a sequence of thought-experiments, we learned that compatibilism fails to satisfy our clear and intuitive commitments about free will, especially the commitment that one's acting freely requires that one is an ultimate source of change. By contrast, the view of agent-causation provides a principled incompatibilist account for how one is an underived originator when one makes a free choice. So, if someone actually acts freely (which seems pretty obvious), the most sensible view of free will is the libertarian view of agent-causation.

² See O'Connor (1996: 147), (1995b: 186), (2000: 53, 61), and (2002: 135-6); and Botham (2008: 117-131; 216-218).

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