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PHL 431

### Hard Determinism and the illusion of choice [free will]

In this class we have discussed many authors who spoke about the topics of causation and free will. In this paper I will argue against free will using the topics of the other papers that did not ask the question, “does free will exist?” In essay 1, I wrote about author David Lewis’s paper “causation”. In this paper David Lewis speaks about causation and causal dependence. He differentiates the two and gives a definition to causal dependence that is important for my argument. He defines a causal dependence relationship using a counterfactual argument, if *c* did not occur neither would have *e*. He does not concern himself with the “true cause” of an event in his paper but I argue the true cause would have a causal dependent relationship with the event. In essay 2, I wrote about author Hellen Beebe’s paper “causing and nothingness”. In this paper she writes about how absences cannot be causes. She gives three arguments to deny her argument and she refutes all three. I, however, believe that one of her arguments were valid and sound, that absences can be causes and that actually, every absence that does occur is a cause. I wrote about Roderick Chisholm paper “Human Freedom and the self” in essay 3. He talks about transeunt causes, an event that caused another event to happen, and immanent causes, an agent that causes an event to happen. In this essay I argued that all events would technically be transuent events all stemming from many transuent events at the cellular and molecular level that would eventually lead to any action performed. And lastly in essay 4, in Harry Frankfurt paper “Alternative possibilities and Moral Responsibility” he spoke about alternative possibilities, which he claims there are none, and I agree. In this essay I will use aspects of each of these authors arguments along with arguments of my own to argue that free will does not exist because any event that occurs in any given time and space in a space time continuum, is the only event that could have ever occurred.

I will begin with David Lewis’s paper “causation”. In this paper he talks about the difference between causal relationships and relationships with causal dependence. I believe David Lewis was able to do a fine job of distinguishing causation and causal dependence. He

distinguishes causation from causal dependence by using the counter-factual account of the argument, if  $c$  did not occur neither would have  $e$ , as an intrinsic property of causal dependence. An examples of a causal dependence relationship can be a barometer and the pressure surrounding the instrument. If the increased pressure surrounding the instrument is the cause  $c$  of the barometer pressure reading increasing  $e$ , then  $c$  is the cause of  $e$ . But if there were no air pressure increase then there would be no barometer reading increase suggesting a causal dependence of  $c$  to  $e$ . An example of a causal relationship can be lighting piece of wood on fire. You can imagine a scenario where you are burning a log and the log catches on fire, but there are many cases where you can burn a log for a long period of time where the log would never catch on fire, such as if the log was wet, or if the oxygen concentration in the room is insufficient. This is because there is no causal dependence relationship between the flame of a torch and the log catching on fire and I argue that this is not the “true” cause. I argue that the true cause of an event will have a causal dependent relationship with that event. Although burning the wood would be ‘a’ cause it would not be the “true” cause of the wood catching on fire, this is because of the causal chain. Although  $c$  was the cause of the effect  $e$ , through the causal chain,  $e$  is not dependent on the cause  $c$  but instead is more dependent on the cause  $d$ . An infinite number of events can occur between cause  $c$  and effect  $e$  within the causal chain and I argue that there are an infinite number of events that must occur for this event to cause an effect.

In Hellen Beebe’s paper “causing and nothingness” she claims that absences cannot be a cause, I disagree. She uses this argument to deny her own argument, “The absence of an event type  $A$  caused event  $b$  iff had an  $A$  type event occurred than  $b$  would not have occurred”. She says using this definition works and would accept absences as causes, but the only problem is this would mean that every absence, in the terms of one event, would be the cause of this single event. For example, if the absence of me watering my plants is a cause of my plants dying, so is the absence of Vladimir Putin watering my plants. I agree with this premise. I believe that every absence, in terms of one event, is one cause of that event. During the actuality of an event, as I stated in the previous paragraph, there can be an infinite number of events that occur between the cause  $c$  and effect  $e$ . I argue that the infinite number of events that must occur for an event to occur are the absences of all other events that would lead to the non-occurrence of effect  $e$ . Using David Lewis’s definition for causal dependence and my claim of “true” causes, every absence related to an event would be a “true” cause of that event.

In "Human Freedom and the Self", Roderick Chisholm writes about the free will and if the action's that one takes are in fact actually free. He speaks against determinism because free will cannot exist within this philosophy. The arguments of determinism are as follows **(1)** All of our actions are ultimately caused by forces outside of our control. **(2)** If an action is ultimately caused by forces outside our control, then that action is not free. **(3)** So, none of our actions are free. Chisholm, who argues for free will, denies premise one. He believes that this premise could be made false by Agent causation, which means some of our actions are ultimately caused by us. To argue this, he separates causes into two categories transeunt causation and immanent causation. A transeunt cause is an event that caused another event to happen, while an immanent cause is an agent that ultimately causes an event to happen. Immanent causation therefore would be caused by free will. The example that he uses in his paper is picking up a staff in a field of grass. He claims that picking up the staff would be an immanent cause and use free will, while transeunt causes of the picking up the staff would be moving air particles through space, or releasing the pressure felt by the grass due to the staff. These events would be transeunt and not caused by free will. But in reality, one does not simply pick up a staff, instead there are many more transeunt events at the molecular and cellular level that eventually caused arm movement and the grasping of the staff, these are cerebral events. My argument is that every event related to "free will" is a cerebral event and effectively a transeunt event. One objection to this argument would be that cerebral events are immanent events and I do not disagree. The issue with this statement is this; You are in control of your mental processes that control your actions, your desires and your thoughts, but you are not in control of the events that influenced you to control those thoughts. Although you are in control of the motion of eating through immanent causation you are not in control of the sensation of hunger. Although you are in control of the picking up the staff because you are in the middle of a lacrosse game you are not in control of the fact that you come from an underserved community and the only way to bring your family out of the horrible streets of a third world country is through a lacrosse scholarship. Using the arguments of determinism all of our actions are ultimately caused by forces outside of our control. So, none of our actions are free.

Lastly, in Harry Frankfurt paper “Alternative possibilities and Moral Responsibility” he spoke about alternative possibilities, which he claims there are none. I agree with this because I in terms of one event’s occurrence, only one event can occur. My argument is that the event that occurred was the only possible event that could have occurred no matter the circumstance. The obvious objection to this argument is that we have free will and the ability to choose which event we want to occur when given two choices. I believe that this is incorrect, and this is the illusion of choice. When presented with two options, a red pill and blue pill, of course this seems like you have a decision to make. My argument is that only one of those decisions can be made and the other possibility never truly existed. Of course, you could return the pill and take the other color in reality but philosophically you can never go back and change the event that happened. Even if you returned the pill red pill and chose the blue one, it was not because of free will; if it happened, it was the only event that could have ever happen. Free will does not exist because any event that occurs in any given time and space in a space time continuum, is the only event that could have ever occurred.