

Determinism is an Illusion

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Perhaps the most persistent philosophical quagmire is the question of free will. There are those, particularly scientifically-minded, rational-thinking, individuals who insist that free will is an illusion. The sentiment is that there are but two possibilities of existence: that the universe is probabilistic, i.e., based on random chance, or that future events are already predetermined by consequence of the events preceding them. In both cases, it seems that free will cannot possibly exist, for if the universe is probabilistic then our choices are also the product of probability—randomness. However if future events are already predetermined, then our choices are also already determined by Fate. And if both cases are true, then the same result is to be expected.

Breaking the Lens

The problem with such thinking is that it is built upon false premises. Everything that we know to be true is filtered through the lens of humanity, and our view of reality, trickled down through the sieve of senses, is both purified and at the same time corrupted into a form that we can at least somewhat understand. Reality is purified by our senses because they eliminate all of the information that we don't need to know; we don't need to know it because there are innate limitations on how much we can know. Our senses limit

the physical world in such a way as to protect us from too much information by distilling reality into a purified form. The consequence of such protection is that what we know and don't know is one of the unknowables. It is in that regard that our senses, in purifying reality, ironically end up corrupting its true nature.

“Ah,” one might say, “but if what we don't know is unknowable, then we surely cannot know that what we perceive really *isn't* reality in its actual form.” However it is simple to dispel such a notion. If things were truly what they appear to be, if we saw things for what they really are, we would have no need for science. The understanding that solid objects are simply more tightly bonded particles than liquids, that the same objects are actually mostly *empty space* is not only not obvious but baffling. Truly profound is the realization that what we perceive as things are merely collections of invisible particles comprised mostly of nothingness and yet there are things and beings in the world. What we perceive is not what actually is, and that we need science is demonstrative of that fact.

Of course there isn't any guarantee that the conclusions we reach through science are correct, either. Scientific theories are models of our best guesses at how things work. Most of them seem pretty accurate and so we take for granted the fact that they are probably either wrong or incomplete (and depending on your

point of view, to be incomplete is also to be incorrect). We can demonstrate how this happens fairly easily. Suppose we observe that some things are bouncier than other things are and we decide to test them to figure out why that is. However, suppose we also don't know how gravity works, or at least we believe that gravity works in a different way, like that gravity affects some things more than others. If we believed that gravity was more biased towards things with certain properties then we might conclude from our tests that bouncier things are so because gravity doesn't affect them as much as the less bouncy things. Knowing what we know now about gravity, that it actually affects everything the same way and produces a constant acceleration (and even this is a simplification), it is easy to see where the misstep is. The conclusion that gravity is weaker on more bouncy objects, allowing them to propel themselves up higher, is based on something that isn't true! But we don't have the luxury of knowing which things are true and which aren't, and so we have no way of knowing if in the future we will discover that we were wrong all along about what we thought to be the truth. What we know to be "true" does not go without saying and it is not at all obvious, for it is the result of centuries of trial and error; and we are merely another step in a never-ending trial with errors around every corner.

Thus it is arrogance of the highest degree to believe we can know the truth through scientific means. To have real access to Truth would require breaking the lens of humanity. For that reason only God can possibly touch Truth and we are cursed to gaze upon its shadow. In that sense we do have some predestined fate—that of a never-ending quest for Truth. Like Sisyphus we are doomed to repeat the same arduous task endlessly, right? Or is there any way for us to access the divine?

Divinity

Divinity is often thought of as synonymous with perfection, enlightenment, and purity. However, divinity more closely resembles wholeness and completion. For instance God is divine not because He is perfect, but because He is All and at the same time He is One. Perfection, when thought of as flawlessness, is not a word that describes such a thing as God, as the concept of flawlessness is a human creation. Flaws only exist through the lens of humanity; thus, in essence, all creatures and things in the world are "perfect". To see past flaws is to be enlightened. To know that there is no flaw is to have divine intuition.

Purity is another human concept, as purity is closely tied to perfection. While our senses try to purify the world for us, in doing so the appearance of the world is corrupted. However it can be said that the world is in a constant state of corruption because corruption is the seed for change. An endlessly changing world cannot help but be corrupted, and since a corrupted part corrupts also the whole (since the whole is a sum of the parts) every part that changes also changes the whole. So goes the Hermetic principle: as above, so below.

Because purity is a human concept, so too is corruption. What we call corruption is really just a thing changing in a way we don't want it to. But things change in exactly the way they are meant to change because the world is divine (and I will clarify that by "the world" I mean not only "the universe" but literally everything, from the universe to reality to the planet we live on—it is unfortunate that there isn't really a good English word, that I know of, for such a concept).

Reconciling Divinity and Free Will

The idea that the world is as it is because it is divine is, today, not very welcome. After all, suffering and evil cannot possibly coincide with wellness and good in a perfect world. However the world is divine because it is whole and complete, and in being whole and complete it is perfect. “Imperfection” in the world is entirely human, either conjured by our minds out of desire to bring about change, or brought into existence by our human nature, while we are in fact acting exactly as intended. In other words we see the horrors that we create in our minds and through our actions and conclude that the world is flawed. If the world is not flawed then it must be us humans that are flawed, then? But remember that flaws only exist through the lens of humanity. Human beings are exactly as they are meant to be. As part of the whole, of the world, human beings are dipped in the fountain of the divine.

One might conclude that, if everything is as it is meant to be, then surely that is also just another way to prove that everything is predetermined. Intention and meaning, though, are not related to determination. Someone who intends to hit a target, and then does, did not determine from the start that the target would be hit. The target is only determined to be hit once it is actually hit. God, and by extension the Divine, must not be thought of as a literal being, but rather as the ultimate representation of the world (i.e., reality, the universe). To represent God as a literal being is a mistake; when God is thought of as a literal being one cannot reconcile divinity and free will, because if things happen according to “God’s will”, and God is an intelligent being, then that therefore must mean that God is setting forth to determine things before they

happen. But to reconcile God and free will one must discard the image of an old man in the sky and replace it with one entirely devoted to completion.

God is the world, and the world is God. We must make a distinction between our world and *the* world. In our world there is “no God”—however since our world is a subset of *the* world, and *the* world is God, then God does in fact exist in our world even if our world proposes to exclude Him—there is only humanity and humanity’s environment.

Because God is the world, and the world is God, that means that all of our actions, all of the outcomes, and all of the motivations are a part of God. Thus, when one refers to “God’s will”, what is really being referenced is God Himself. God does not exert any will on Himself, much like people do not exert will for their heart to beat—it simply does. Things happen according to “God’s will” because they are in fact God Himself, just as the heart beats according to the mind because the heart is a part of the mind itself.

Knowing that things that happen are part of God, and not *simply* His will, it is easy to infer what that means for free will. Free will, under the concept of God, is not only *reconcilable*, it is apparent.

Determinism and free will are a matter of perspective. If all information is knowable, and known, then it is understandable why someone might conclude that things are predetermined. If one knows all information, and knows how the world works, then surely they could predict with certainty what will happen and when. But that only works when one assumes that all information is *knowable*. In fact, as science has and is discovering, all information is *not* knowable. But then if all information is not knowable, then there is an element of randomness to the world, and thus even though things may not be predetermined to happen, that

still means that there is no free will. To that I would say that even if some things are random, that does not mean that the ultimate outcome isn't "meant to be", and "meant to be" should not be confused with "predetermined". Meant to be means that the outcome is the natural course of events, whereas predetermined means that the outcome was decided from the very beginning, and the difference is a subtle, yet important one. The natural course of events is such because the world is divine, whole, and elegant, whereas predetermination suggests that an outside force is acting upon

it.

At the very end neither free will can be proven nor can determinism, for no matter what scientific advances we make there will always be a level of uncertainty, and a number of things about the world that we do not know. Science is a method of progression, a process, not an end goal. And philosophy is a method of thinking, of believing, not an end goal. I choose to believe in free will because I believe that the world cannot be divine without free will. It is ultimately up to each one of us to decide if we believe or not.