

"The Libertarian Imperative" by *Undo Uus*

Responses, and:

Has the logic of the argument been understood?

U. Uus to Wim J. van der Steen [12 VIII 1995]:

The idea of the argumentation is to defend the thesis that it is reasonable to believe that free will exists, by relying not on the understanding and use of the concept of free will that is a high-category concept and hence quite difficult to comprehend, but on the understanding and use of the concept of lawful dynamics that is an easily comprehensible concept and one of basic concepts used by modern natural sciences. And here is the argument itself:

I understand that it is reasonable to try always to believe, and to base my behavior on the assumption, that I am a free-will creature, because:

- (a) if I am indeed a free-will being then I am right;
- (b) if I am actually not a free-will being, so that my brain functioning, my beliefs, and my behavior have been determined by laws of nature (be they deterministic or probabilistic), then I am wrong, *but then these beliefs and behavior could not have been avoided by any means, because the avoidance of them would have required the violation of these laws of nature.*

The crux of this argument lies in pointing to the fact that if the dynamics of the world is thoroughly non-free-will, then one's belief into, and defence of, (in this case) fallacious free-will thesis could not have been avoided by anybody or anything. Therefore this argument advocates experimental (empirical) rather than theoretical (speculative) attitude towards the free-will problem. Instead of speculating about whether I possess free will or not, I will try to behave free-volitionally and see whether I will succeed or not. And, in fact, always when I have had to express my opinion about the free-will problem, I have been able to defend the free-will thesis. Now it may, unfortunately, be so that I will try, and it will seem to me that I succeeded, but then science eventually discovers that this success was an illusion and that actually my behavior was *determined by laws of nature*. But then at least I did my best in trying to control my own behavior, and the failure is not my fault: nobody can violate *the laws of nature* if they hold necessarily.

Amsterdam, 17 August 1995

Wim J. van der Steen

.....

The "simple" argumentation at the end of your letter does not convince me. The inference from point (b) (p. 6) is problematic. Consider the following counterargument. "You believe you have free will. A determinist believes he has no free will. Hence, if determinism holds, then you can't avoid believing in free will, and the determinist can't avoid not believing in free will. So your conclusion (the fallacious free will thesis could not have been avoided by *anybody*) does not follow from (b), as you suggest." For the rest, I would avoid this style of reasoning also because the key terms are not sufficiently clear.

The line of reasoning after that is also problematic. You describe a situation in which you try to behave free-volitionally, with apparent success. Some would argue that you are describing a deterministic process: your decision to behave in this way (together with other factors) cause the behaviour. Now you could reply that the decision itself represents a free act at odds with determinism, but in this way you are caught in an infinite regress. On this ground many philosophers have argued that freedom not determined by causal processes is an incoherent notion.

[U. U.: Please check, whether I have indeed claimed what Steen ascribes to me.]

From ejua23@hollyrood.ed.ac.uk Thu May 1 16:46:41 1997
From: John Beloff <John.Beloff@ed.ac.uk>

Dear Undo Uus,

I much enjoyed reading your article on 'The Libertarian Imperative' and I very much hope that the Journal of Consciousness Studies will have the good sense to publish it.

As I understand it, you are not claiming to prove that we ARE free. You are just arguing that we have a **moral obligation to act as if we are free agents** [U.U.: my emphasis]. And you point out that nothing that science can tell us contradicts this assumption.

I have no objections to raise with regard to anything you say in your article but I would like to point out that you could strengthen your case if you were to invoke the evidence for PK [U.U.: PK=psychokinesis].

.....
Please let me know what response you get from the editors of the JCS.

Again, many thanks and all good wishes.

Yours.....John Beloff

From piet@sns.ias.edu Fri May 30 20:14:08 1997

From: Piet Hut <piet@IAS.EDU

Subject: manuscript

Dear Undo:

I am sorry that it took me more than a month to find the time to read your paper on "The Libertarian Imperative".

I very much like your overall direction and intention. I completely agree that the problem of free will is fully overlooked in most discussions of the ability of science to 'cover' the physical world. You have presented your arguments clearly.

Best regards,
Piet

Piet Hut

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From keith@imprint.co.uk Thu Sep 11 14:12:35 1997

From: Keith Sutherland <keith@imprint.co.uk>

Subject: Re: JCS Referee report

Dear Undo

I sent your last draft out to a sympathetic referee and enclose his report. I think you should take his thoughtful and well-intended criticisms very seriously.

Keith

I've read "The libertarian imperative and its implications for consciousness studies," and am of two minds -- but in balance feel I have to recommend re-submission.

On the one hand, I think it is certainly an interesting piece of work, occasionally obscure, but usually straightforward, well written and to the point. I am in great sympathy with many of the ideas it touches on. They are, I think, crucial but rarely discussed, and are right up JCS's alley. I especially like the early sections running from Dennett's Dictum through The unjustified denial of the phenomenological evidence for free will. For me, the most important point here is its (much too brief) direct attack on "the 'scientific' dogma of nomism -- the view that the world is *thoroughly* law governed". The logic of the standard arguments against free will, as Uus' summary in the first part of the paper shows, hinges on the nomist assumption; once introduced, I thought that an attack on the nomist assumption would be the point Uus was going to develop. I was surprised that it was raised only to be passed over quickly, and it turns out to play a fairly minor role in the overall argument. My reaction here might be suspect: ever since reading a draft of what was to become Chalmers' book, I have been convinced that what Uus calls the nomist assumption is at the root of much confusion in consciousness studies, and needs a very careful and very critical look. I think that given the first part of the paper, the natural continuation would be to focus on the shortcomings of this assumption. At the very least, the reader should hear more about the objections raised by Eddington and Sherrington.

My problem, then, is that while I find the treatment of The Libertarian Imperative in the second half of the paper to be good in isolation, it seems to me a weak continuation of the exposition that lead up to it, and to be rather obliquely related to consciousness research **per se**. It is almost as if the second half of

the paper were written independently, and then a long introduction related to consciousness were attached later as a sort of sustained after-thought.

The treatment of the Libertarian position in the second half of the paper seems to me to be closely related to the logic of Pascal's Wager or to William James' stance toward free-will: "My first act of free will is to believe in free will." The James sort of argument justifies free will on pragmatic/psychological grounds. It would be helpful for Uus to spell out the relation of his proposal to these classical positions with which he seems, on the surface, to have much in common.

I feel there are really two papers here, with only the first half directly related to consciousness, and that this part should be fleshed out for re-submission. The second half could easily stand on its own without any specific consideration of consciousness, and the force of the second half of the paper, if *only* concerned with the questions about consciousness and free will raised in the first half, could be adequately conveyed in page or two. There is also a problematic change of "stance" (can't think of a good way to put this) between the first half of the paper (which more or less takes up a natural science perspective) and the second half (which shifts to a very different mode of argument, one that is at once pragmatic and narrowly logical). My own feeling (again, perhaps being a hostage to my own views) is that the nomist assumption is at the heart of the matter, and that if possible it is best attacked directly, and within the scope of standard methods of scientific reasoning. Uus just started to do this, but then abruptly moved to a very different "stance" in his argument for the Libertarian Imperative. From the standpoint of JCS (as distinct from a philosophy journal), it is the development of the first half of the paper that holds the promise. In the event of a decision to re-submit, I have some relatively minor stylistic and expositional points that might be of help.

[U. U.: My paper contains, indeed, unnecessary 'ballast' for the main argument itself. But without that, the length of the paper would have been a page or two, and would have not accepted for publishing as an *article*.]

From keith@imprint.co.uk Thu Feb 19 19:03:02 1998
From: Keith Sutherland <keith@imprint.co.uk>

Libet has just given the go-ahead for your revised paper (in fact he was quite enthusiastic, which is unusual, as he can't stand philosophers!)

All the best.
Keith

Date: Mon, 1 Nov 1999 19:09:55 GMT
from: Keith Sutherland <keith@imprint.co.uk>
Subject: JCS: The Volitional Brain

A number of the authors in the JCS special issue on the Volitional Brain (Aug/Sept) make reference to the political implications of the free will debate. David Hodgson is well known for his argument that our **Western system of law and ethics requires that we accept a libertarian approach to free will, and this is reinforced by Undo Uus follow-up paper** [my emphasis, U. U.], The Libertarian Imperative, in the following issue (October).

Keith Sutherland

Subject: JCS: The Volitional Brain
Date: Sat, 6 Nov 1999 09:22:42 GMT
From: Keith Sutherland <keith@imprint.co.uk>

To recap: the received conservative wisdom (Hodgson, Libet, Uus) is that, in the absence of direct evidence to disprove free will, we should give libertarianism the benefit of the doubt as our ethics and law depend on it.

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20 September, 1997

Dr. Undo Uus
Tartu Observatory
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Dear Dr. Uus,

Thank you for your letter of 21 April, and the enclosed article on free will. I agree with virtually all of it.

I liked your argument that we should seek to avoid avoidable error, and that therefore we should try to believe in free will. However, I think the mainstream response might be that the argument assumes an incompatibilist view of what it means to be able to do otherwise. There is a vast philosophical literature on whether free will is compatible with determinism. As appears from the Introduction and Section 4.4 of a book I have just written (enclosed), I think compatibilism is sophistry - but many people disagree.

With best wishes,



David Hodgson

From rkane@uts.cc.utexas.edu Sat Dec 27 23:33:26 1997

From: rkane@uts.cc.utexas.edu (Robert Kane)

Subject: paper and book

Dear Professor Us,

.....

On free will, we agree of course that free will is incompatible with causal determinism--and that is a crucial agreement--but I don't think it follows that "incompatibilist, libertarian free volition transcends natural causality."(p. 4 of your article) I think this is one of our deepest disagreements (one worthy of continuing discussion). I think free will is compatible with probabilistic causation (though not of course with deterministic causation). There are reasons of course to think that if fw is subject to probabilistic causality, fw would be random. But while this may seem so, I think is not ultimately so and I tried to show why in my book by bringing in quantum physics, non-equilibrium statistical mechanics, chaos and complexity theories and neural network theory in my account of free will. (I am engaging in a lecture series next semester on these topics with my colleague Ilya Prigogine who as you know is a pioneer in some of these sciences.) Of course you also (if I interpret you correctly) think that these new developments in science make room for free will as never before and you rightly and persuasively criticize deterministic interpretations of current physical and biological science. But like Popper, Eccles, Hodgson et al. you think they make room for the intervention of an immaterial mental element and I am not ready to go that far. (I should add that I don't oppose mind/body dualism because I incline to atheism or reductive materialism. Indeed I am a religious believer (a Christian), and my defense of libertarian free will has religious as well as purely philosophical motivations. But I am not yet convinced that mind/body dualism is necessary for religious belief or for libertarian free will.)

Your discussion of the libertarian imperative in your paper is quite original and challenging. I agree with the imperative, but I would add something to my reasons for agreeing with it -- having to do with the fact that we need to think of ourselves as having libertarian fw because we need to think of ourselves as having ultimate responsibility for our actions if life is to be fully meaningful and libertarian fw is needed for ultimate responsibility. (This pivotal role for "ultimate responsibility" should be familiar from having read my book.) (Perhaps you will not necessarily disagree with this addition?) Your example of the expedition on the alien planet (p. 9 of your paper) is ingenious and I agree with it to this extent: in the absence of conclusive empirical evidence one way or the

other on whether we have free will, it is rational to obey the imperative since without it life lacks significant meaning and acting in accord with it may lead to finding that it is true. (But I would not add that acting in accord with it is a necessary condition for finding out it is true (bottom paragraph, p. 13) This caveat is perhaps connected with the disagreement about whether we can know we have fw by introspection?)

We agree again of course on the "metaphysical possibility" of fw (p. 10) though I think we would give different reasons for it. Indeed as I step back to get an overview of your writing, my impression is that we agree on many things about fw, and further all our disagreements, such as they are, seem to go back, one way or the other, to disagreements about mind/body dualism as they impact on fw. Perhaps I am wrong about this, but it seems to be the case.

In any event, I immensely enjoyed reading your work and learned a great deal from it; and I look forward to reading anything further you have to write.

Yours sincerely,
Bob Kane

Date: Mon, 06 Dec 1999 20:10:07 -0500
From: Steve Freeman <sfreeman@udel.edu>
Subject: Blindness of Modern Science

Hi Dr. Uus,

I really enjoyed your paper 'The Libertarian Imperative' in the latest JCS. It is the first time that I have found the subject of free will to be interesting, and now I am beginning to understand why it is important.

Steve Freeman
sfreeman@udel.edu

Subject: The Libertarian Imperative.
Date: Mon, 15 Nov 99 10:16:01 +0000
From: John Beloff <John.Beloff@ed.ac.uk>

Dear Undo Uus,

I read with pleasure your article in the October issue of the Journal of Consciousness Studies and I was flattered that you saw fit to cite an article of mine in your References.

I was already familiar with your book BLINDNESS OF MODERN SCIENCE which you once very kindly sent me. Would I be right in concluding that you have somewhat softened your position since then? In your book you claimed that "Freedom of Will is an empirical fact that falsifies the modern scientific world view" whereas in the present article you base your position on pragmatic grounds, namely that: "one must always try to act in accord with the thesis that one has the libertarian free will." I think I prefer your new formulation.

You argue, plausibly, that belief in free will is justified in much the same way as Pascal's belief in God . The analogy is striking [my emphasis, U.U.] although I am not so sure that Pascal could justify his position. What sort of a God would it be, after all, who rewarded those who worshipped him for purely precautionary reasons? I am reminded here of a remark by Bertrand Russell who was asked once what he would say if, after death, he came face to face with his Maker? He replied, coolly: "I would say: Lord you did not give me sufficient evidence"! Russell's position strikes me as more dignified than Pascal's.

With all good wishes.

Yours.....John Beloff

[U.U.: In my article (p. 59) I state :

"My defence of the Libertarian Imperative is not, however, of Pascal's Wager type. My logic of reasoning may seem to be closely related to the logic of Pascal's Wager because I stress a truism that the Free Will issue is not an un-

important minor problem that doesn't deserve serious attention. But here the resemblance ends.

There are two essential differences between my argumentation and Pascal's Wager type of reasoning.

(1) Pascal's Wager type of reasoning consists in weighing gains and losses of alternative decisions, and its conclusions depend on how large or small are those gains and losses, and how reliable is our assessment of them. Such reasoning is of game-theoretical type. My argumentation is not of game-theoretical type. Its conclusion doesn't depend at all on how large or small are gains and losses of alternative decisions, or whether there are any gains and losses at all.

(2) Pascal's Wager type of reasoning can be applied for making decisions about a very wide class of alternatives: we use this kind of reasoning quite often in our everyday life. My scheme of argumentation can be applied extremely restrictedly: only in the case of one very particular kind of problems. The problem about one's own Free Will is one of them due to its unique logical structure. One is not asked to choose whether he believes or not that God exists, or that people have immaterial souls, or that there is afterlife, etc., but one is asked to *choose* whether he believes or not that he is *able to choose*. Just owing to this self-referentiality present in the task it is possible to solve it by purely logical means."

It appears that those differences should be explicated more forcefully and clearly than I did in my article.]

Timothy L. S. Sprigge

Uus [7 IV 1995]:

Suppose I have to answer a question whether I am a freewill agent or not. I may respond in three different ways. I can answer either that:

- (a) I am not a freewill agent, or that
- (b) I am a freewill agent, or that
- (c) I do not know whether I am a freewill agent.

If I claim that *I am not* a freewill agent, then:

- (a1) if I *am not* a freewill agent, I am right;
- (a2) if I *am* a freewill agent, I am wrong and can be blamed for my erroneous answer, because:
 - (a2.1) if it is rather easy for me to learn that I possess free will (e.g. by introspective analysis of my volitional efforts), then I have been intellectually inadequate to reach this knowledge, and as a freewill creature am myself greatly responsible for this my intellectual inferiority;
 - (a2.2) if it is very difficult or even in principle impossible for me to learn that I possess free will, then the best answer to the posed question would have been that I do not know whether I am a freewill agent, rather than asserting unjustifiably (and erroneously) that I do not have free will, and as a freewill agent I could have withheld from such unreasonable answer.

If I claim that *I am* a freewill agent, then:

- (b1) if I *am* a freewill agent, I am right;
- (b2) if I *am not* a freewill agent, I am wrong but nobody can accuse me or my erroneous answer, because then all my activity is determined by (deterministic or probabilistic) laws of dynamics of reality and by my construction, which itself is determined by these dynamical laws on the basis of the initial state of the universe, and therefore *solely* the laws of nature and the initial state of the universe (or the Creator of these laws and state) are responsible for what happens, while *I* cannot not obey these laws and have not had shaped the initial state of the universe.

If I claim that I *do not know* whether I am a freewill agent, then:

- (c1) if I *am not* a freewill agent, my answer is fatalistically determined, and hence nobody can blame me for such an answer (in fact, this argument is the same as (b2));
- (c2) if I *am* a freewill agent, then, because I cannot rule out the possibility (the possibility (a2.1)) that I can rather easily learn that I possess free will, I cannot rule out also the possibility that I have been intellectually inadequate to reach this knowledge, and as a freewill agent am then myself at least partly responsible for my intellectual inferiority.

Hence, when asserting either that I am not a freewill agent, or that I do not know whether I am a freewill agent, there is a risk of exposing my intellectual inferiority, for which *I myself* can at least partly be blamed. But when claiming that I am a freewill agent, I am either right, or I am wrong but then my wrong claim has been determined by the laws of nature (be they physical or mental) and by the initial state of reality (be it physical or mental), and thus could not have been avoided by any means -- *I had no possibility to do otherwise* -- and therefore only the laws of nature and the initial state of the universe can be blamed for this my wrong answer. Consequently, if my tongue will ever bend to produce an utterance (or my hand an inscription) 'I am a freewill agent', it is reasonable to respond just this way to the question posed: in this case I am either right or I am wrong but then could not have answered otherwise.

I should like to emphasise that the reasoning behind such decision is based not upon one's understanding what free will is, but upon understanding what fatalistic dynamics (functioning) is. Therefore the presented argumentation should be understandable also to those persons who suspect that the dynamics of the world may be thoroughly fatalistic (non-free-volitional), and thus I think that if they are able to utter 'Yes' when asked whether they possess free will, they should find it reasonable to answer just this way. Of course, there can be persons who will assert that their tongue will not bend, try as they can, to utter 'Yes' in response to the question if they have free will (I do not believe such claims, however, like I do not believe the claims by materialists that their experiences are devoid of phenomenal qualia), and these persons will not follow the recommendations I proposed. But for me it is an empirical fact that I have hitherto been always able to give an affirmative answer to the question about the freedom of my volition, and as long as my tongue will bend to shape such answer, I will always answer just this way.

Sprigge [17 X 1997]:

p. 7 At bottom you quote from Minsky. The quotation includes these words

Whatever actions we may "choose," they cannot make the slightest change in what might otherwise have been - because those rigid, natural laws already cause the states of mind that caused us to decide that way. And if that choice was in part made by chance - it still leaves nothing for us to decide.

It seems to me that this is not at all what follows from determinism or determinism modified by the recognition of chance.

It is an absurd determinist who says that whatever actions we choose, the results would have been the same. When I talk about determinism to students I always point out that it cannot be a consequence of determinism that their chances of getting killed today are the same whether you cross the road with or without due care. Certainly if it was a consequence of determinism no one should take the doctrine seriously at all. Surely the determinist will not say that if I send this letter to you by E-mail it makes no difference whether I use the right E-mail address or not.

.....

Let me now try to explore the crucial paragraph on page 9 starting "Our volitional efforts"

"If our volitional activity is nomic, then: (i) if we maintain that our activity is nomic, we are right; and (ii) if we maintain that our activity is Free-Volitional, we are wrong, but we are wrong unavoidably"

This does not seem to me quite right. For it may be that, in case (ii) our free will belief was avoidable, in the sense that IF we had tried to give more attention shortly beforehand to certain arguments, and had not at that time been under the influence of certain desires, THEN we would not have maintained the free will view.

Think of the situation where a child carries out some mathematical operation incorrectly, because he did not listen carefully enough to the teacher's explanation. Surely the teacher can say (however deterministic the world): Your mistake was avoidable, and would have been avoided if you had listened to my instructions more carefully.

[You think that]

avoidable
wrongness is only possible in a free will world and it is pointless to try to avoid unavoidable wrongness.

p. 10 The premiss which I reject is that nomically functioning beings cannot act otherwise than they do.

Uus [11 II 1998]:

In your opinion (p. 6) I think that it is *pointless to try to avoid* unavoidable wrongness. This is not true. My position is that it is *impossible to avoid* unavoidable wrongness, and as far as I understand this position cannot be challenged because this is what 'unavoidable' means. I don't hold that acts of trying (conscious intentions) are epiphenomenal in a deterministic world; I merely maintain that if some act of trying did not actually take place in a deterministic world, then it could not have taken place.

You reject the premiss that nomically functioning beings cannot act otherwise than they do (p. 6). This claim surprises me because in my opinion the proposition 'nominally functioning beings cannot act otherwise than they do' expresses plainly one basic aspect of what nominal functioning means. I try to explain.

A behavioural act is contained in the process of one's transition from a pre-act state S_1 to a post-act state S_2 . If one is a deterministic creature, this transition is a lawful causal transition $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. Distinctive to deterministic causal transitions is that if we fix S_1 , then the entire transition $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ would also be uniquely determined, because this is what determinism means. If a deterministic creature is in a concrete state S_1 , he can undergo only one particular transition $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$, which means that if he had in fact made the transition $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$, he could not have behaved in some other way, i.e. he could not have acted otherwise than he did.

A lifelong behaviour of a nominally functioning creature can be described as a temporal series of transitions between his successive psycho-physical states, i.e. as $S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow S_4 \rightarrow S_5 \rightarrow$ and so on, and in no point on this 'trajectory of

life' --- at no moment in his life --- can he, on his own initiative, deviate from it, or move along it with a different velocity than he is bound to do according to psycho-physical laws of dynamics.

.....

If I tell mathematicians, 'If $1+1 \neq 2$ then $(1+1) \cdot 3 \neq 6$ ' they will probably reply, 'This counterfactual *conditional* is true, but as the counterfactual *antecedent* is false, your claim doesn't make much sense.'

If I tell my fellow astronomers, 'Had the comet Shoemaker-Levy changed somewhat its velocity a few months before crossing Jupiter's orbit, it would not have collided with Jupiter,' they will probably answer as follows: 'Your counterfactual conditional is perfectly correct, but the antecedent of the counterfactual is nomically impossible, for the comet could not have changed its velocity as this is prohibited by the laws of nature. Why talk about the course of events that is obviously not possible?'

And let us now think of the situation where a child, in a deterministic world, carries out some mathematical operation incorrectly, because he did not listen carefully enough to the teacher's explanation. Suppose that we both are a kind of Laplace's Demons able to observe and theoretically predict in every detail the psycho-physical dynamics of conscious creatures in the deterministic world, and that we were considering, some time before the lesson, the behaviour of this child. Although the child's psycho-physical dynamics are very much more complicated than the movement of a comet, it is, in the deterministic world, as determined and, in principle, as predictable as the movement of a comet. If I had then said to you, 'The child can avoid the mistake, because if he listens carefully enough to the teacher's explanation, he will not make the mistake,' you would have got probably quite surprised and contended: 'You see, we both know perfectly well that, given that the present total psycho-physical situation in the world is as it in fact is, the child could not, and would not, listen to the teacher, unless the psycho-physical laws that have been held hitherto would be broken. The child will make the mistake nomically necessarily, and therefore he cannot avoid the mistake.'

If my volitional activity is, and has always been, nomic, then, if I maintain that my activity is Free-Volitional, I am wrong, but I am wrong nomically necessarily, having been, in principle, unable to prevent my being wrong.

Sprigge [10 VII 1998]:

In your letter of 11 February 1998 you correct me for having taken you as having said that it would be pointless to try to avoid unavoidable wrongness, pointing out that what you are saying is that it is impossible to avoid unavoidable wrongness. I see that that was a mistake, but I am not quite convinced by your claim as corrected. This relates to the next paragraph of your letter.

You think that my claim that (often) a nomically functioning being could have acted otherwise than they (=he, she or it) did is odd. Clearly its a matter of the meaning attached to "cannot act otherwise than". I am making a fairly standard claim to the effect that there is a sense in which determinism can still leave it true that I could have acted otherwise than I did.

.....

You claim that if someone is a nomically functioning being, then any behavioural act of his consisting in the transition from pre-act state s_1 to post-act state s_2 , must be uniquely determined and inevitable as a lawful causal transition. And you say that one can in fact think of someone's whole life as a chain of such transitions. This makes it look as though nothing operated on him from outside, which obviously you cannot intend. But I suppose your position is that if his successive states are $s_1 \rightarrow s_2 \rightarrow s_3 \rightarrow s_4 \rightarrow s_5$ then each of these states (if he is a nomically functioning being) is the result of the previous state taken together with impinging factors from outside, and that the effect they have on the situation is not anything the agent can be said to have created; he simply does s_3 , say, as what follows deterministically from s_2 plus the external impingement.

Perhaps we can simplify by assuming that the rest of the world is deterministic as well as this individual. In that case it is certainly true in one sense that at any moment in time you like to specify, then everything which anyone will ever do thereafter is so to speak settled and is bound to happen. That is the very meaning of determinism.

So turning to your main point, that if I wrongly maintain that my activity is free-volitional, then I could not have prevented myself being wrong, my conclusion is this.

The following inference is correct:

Premiss 1: The truth is that I am nomically determined.

Premiss 2: My belief is that I am not nomically determined.

Conclusion: it was nomically determined that I would have the false belief that I was not nomically determined.

But is this following conclusion correct?:

Second conclusion: I could not have avoided the mistake of believing myself not to be nomically determined.

I am doubtful about that, for presuming that I am nomically determined, probably because determinism is true, and there is good evidence or argument for this, it may be true (of course, it may not be true) that if I had thought harder, I would not have had that belief. So it is possible that the belief was avoidable, by my thinking harder about the matter.

Uus [22 VII 1998]:

Thank you very much for your letter of July 10. You discuss in this letter the most crucial point of my argument in defense of what I call the 'Libertarian Imperative', and therefore I try to respond to your letter as soon as possible.

[However, I never responded. I was tired of repeating over and over, to no avail, the arguments of the kind: "If I don't have free will, I **could not** have had thought harder about the matter than I actually did".]

Subject: The Blindness of Modern Science
Date: Mon, 29 Jul 2002 20:58:45 +0200
From: alex.batt@magnet.at (Alexander Batthyany)
To: uus@obs.ee

Dear Dr. Uus,

a few years ago, John Beloff of Edinburgh recommended your book "The blindness of Modern Science" to me. I didn't really follow this up, but recently I came across your highly interesting article on "The libertarian imperative" in an 1999 issue of JCS.

Your article really and finally arose my interest in your book and work. I'd therefore like to ask where and how to get a copy of your book (since, according to amazon.com, it is either out of print or rather hard to find).

I am very much looking forward to hearing from you and remain,

with kind regards,

Alexander Batthyany

.....
Univ.-Lekt. Dr. Alexander Batthyany
Institut für Wissenschaftstheorie und -forschung
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.....
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Fätsin vastamata,
sest materialistlikku illusiooni
ei tohi kõigutada!