

In the debate over whether or not humans have free will philosophers fall into two categories, compatibilists and incompatibilists. The first term needed to understand these groups is determinism, which is the view that every event or action is determined to be by some prior cause or causes. Compatibilists are those who believe that humans can be free even if determinism is true, people who fall under this category are those who believe humans are actually free. Incompatibilists, on the other hand, believe that determinism and freedom can not both be true of humans and philosophers that fall under this category can either believe humans are free or not. Inside the incompatibilist category there are hard determinists and libertarians. Hard determinists believe that determinism is true and that humans are not free, whereas libertarians believe that determinism is not true of humans and that we are truly free. Libertarians believe that determinism is false and humans are free, for the sake of this paper we will pretend they do not exist. In this paper we will focus on Hume and Frankfurt who are both compatibilists but with different views on what it means for humans to be free.

The definition for determinism and the argument for why we are not free is best explained by d'Holbach. D'Holbach stated that: we are born without our consent, we do not get to pick our own bodies, our habits are not willing choices, and that we are always being modified by external events. His statement that our habits are not our choice may seem incorrect to some, but he is shown to be correct because many people have habits that they dislike and wish to get rid of but simply can not. D'Holbach argument for why humans are not free goes thusly. Humans do not get to pick our desires, everything we want has been affected by our previous experiences (and to a certain degree our genetics) and we have no control over what happens to us over the course of our lives. A person's will will always choose to act upon whatever desire is strongest,

this makes sense because if someone has a desire that is stronger than all of the rest they will act on it and if they act on some other desire then it that means that the other desire was stronger than the first, so either way the person acted on their strongest desire. Due to the fact that we always act on our strongest desires and that we do not get to choose what our strongest desire is, or even what our desires are, it is clear that we do not get to choose our actions and this means that we are not free. It is important to understand the argument for determinism and incompatibilism because both Hume and Frankfurt agree with d'Holbach that we do not get to pick our strongest desires and that we always act on said strongest desires, but they still believe we can be free.

Let us look at the example of one man about to shoot a second one, according to determinism there are various influences acting on the man with the gun to shoot or not. It is obvious that there are many reasons for why someone would want to shoot someone else, but for the sake of simplicity let us say that the only two reasons for shooting are that the man had an abusive childhood and therefore can not deal with emotions properly and that he just caught the second man sleeping with his wife and is filled with rage. As for the reasons holding him back from shooting we can say he does not wish to go to jail and he does not want to hurt another person. D'Holbach, Hume, and Frankfurt would all agree that the first man had no choice over the desires acting upon him, but d'Holbach would claim that this man is not free to choose whether or not to shoot and whatever happens was always going to happen. Hume would claim that, assuming there was no one forcing him to shoot, the man is free to shoot or not shoot the second man. Finally, Frankfurt would say that the man is free to shoot as long as he wanted to want to shoot the other man.

Hume's style of philosophy is very unique because he dislikes speaking about abstract topics due to his belief that the more abstract the idea the bigger the difference in ideas that people have. To counteract this Hume defines all of his terms so as to not leave any room for discussion on the meaning of those terms. Freedom is not being able to choose your desires according to Hume, it is instead the ability to act or not act according to what your strongest desires are. The reason Hume uses this definition of freedom is because he understands that this is the best we have. Trying to imagine a world where everyone chose their own desires is nearly impossible, how would we go about choosing what desires we want if we do not start off with any desires? One could say that you begin with a few desires then you go on to pick the rest, but this does not work because all of your desires will stem from the original ones which you did not have a choice in picking. In addition, a world where no one had desires forced upon them would not be able to continue because no one would desire to accomplish anything or gain new desires that would lead them to being productive. In our example of a shooter about to kill another man, Hume would say that the shooter had no control over the desires in his head telling him to shoot or not, and in the end the shooter would not be able to pick whether or not to shoot but would instead wait for his desires to fight it out and for the strongest one to become victorious. To Hume this does not mean that the man is not free, the shooter is free in this scenario because he is able to act on his strongest desire no matter what it turns out to be. If the shooter was being forced to kill the other man by a third party holding his family hostage then he would not be free because no matter what his strongest desire is, he must shoot the other man. Alternatively, if the shooter's strongest desire turned out to be to shoot and kill the other man but a police officer

tackled him and cuffed him, the shooter would not be free because he would not be physically capable to act on his strongest desire.

Even though Frankfurt and Hume are both compatibilists who agree that d'Holbach's argument for determinism is correct, Frankfurt believes that Hume has an incorrect definition of freedom. According to Frankfurt, Hume's definition of freedom is too weak. All Hume has done is define freedom of action, which means that you are free to act or not act, this is not good enough for Frankfurt because he believes that 1) this definition would mean that animals are just as free as humans and 2) he has found a way to show humans not only have freedom of action but also true freedom of will. Frankfurt classifies desires as either first or second order; first order desires are very simple ones and can be summed up with the structure "I want/do not want \_\_\_\_\_", second order desires are desires about our desires and they use the structure "I want/do not want to want \_\_\_\_\_". Frankfurt also uses what he calls second order volitions to help him show what freedom of will is, a second order volition is when you want your second order desire to become your will or strongest desire. The difference between freedom of action and freedom of will according to Frankfurt is that in order to have freedom of will you must not only have second order volitions, but you must also be able to change your strongest desire according to your second order volitions. He believes in his idea of second order volitions being necessary to free will so much that he claims anyone without any second order volitions is incapable of having free will. Frankfurt's definition of free will requires that the person understand what their desires are, then to decide whether or not these are desires that they want, and once they choose whether or not they want these desires they need to work on changing their strongest desire. Frankfurt's definition is a nice one and convinces many people because it seems logical that if all

of your desires are the ones that you wish to have, you are the person you chose to be and this makes you free. In our shooter example, the only way the shooter would be free was if he thought about his desires and decided that what he really wanted was to want to shoot the man. In any other circumstance where the shooter did not consider what his desires were and simply acted on them Frankfurt would say that he did not have any freedom of choice.

Frankfurt's definition seems to make sense, if we have second order volitions and pick what desires we wish to have then our actions are caused by the desires that we wanted and we only act in ways that we want to. Even though Frankfurt believes he has found how humans can have free will he has actually proved nothing more than what Hume previously stated. Let us remember that according to Hume we always wish to act on our strongest desires and we never get to pick these, but our ability to act on these desires is what makes us free. Frankfurt's second order desires and volitions are nothing more than a desire, all he really accomplished was to add another layer of complexity to the argument. A second order desire is when you have a desire about your first order desires, all this really is is a more complicated desire. If our shooter desires to not desire to shoot the man, all that is happening is that his desires to not shoot are fighting his desires to shoot. Let us imagine that the shooter is standing with his gun loaded and he desires to pull the trigger and kill the man who slept with his wife, both Hume and Frankfurt would agree that he did not choose this desire and that it is a cause of events out of his control. Now let us imagine that the shooter desires that he did not want to shoot the man and because of this realizes that his desire to shoot is wrong and places down the gun. Frankfurt would claim that this was an exercise of free will because the shooter's second order desire became his will, however the man is no more free than when he was desiring to shoot the gun. Even though our shooter seemingly

decided through his own free will to not want to shoot the man, this choice came from the desire to not want to shoot the man. If we look closer we see that the desire to not want to shoot came from his desire not to go to jail and not to harm others, and as we discussed earlier these desires were forced on him without his choice. Since second order desires stem from first order desires, and both of these philosophers agree that first order desires are not chosen, it follows then that second order desires are also not chosen. This goes to show that Frankfurt has not managed to find a meaning better than Hume's for freedom of will. This is not to say that Frankfurt did not discover anything useful, even though second order desires and volitions are not useful for the free will argument they do help distinguish between humans and other animals. Humans are the only animals, that we know of, that understand what our desires are and strive to change them based on what we believe will be best.

It is not through any fault that Frankfurt was not able to find a satisfactory definition of free will, the truth is that there is no such thing as free will. Most philosophers agree that true free will would mean to move oneself without any cause, it was mentioned early how this could never be true due to there having to be some starting point for our desires. Hume knew this so he never attempted to prove free will, instead he worked to show that humans were free. For Hume, and myself, freedom of action is a good enough definition of freedom because it is impossible to ever actually have freedom of will. What is important is not that all of our desires are ours and are not controlled by an outside force but that we are able to do what we desire when we desire it. This does not mean that we should feel enslaved, it is the complexity of our thoughts that allows us to not realize what desires are causing our every action, and this allows us to believe all of our choices are ours and that is the best we can do.