the circumstances, internal and external, motives, perceptions, passions, inclinations taken together, I am still in a contingent state, or whether I am necessitated to make the choice, for example, to go out; that is to say, whether this proposition true and determined in fact, in all those circumstances taken together I shall choose to go out, is contingent or necessary. Leibniz's answer might be put as follows: in one sense of the terms 'necessary' and 'contingent', the proposition 'In all those circumstances taken together I shall choose to go out', may be said to be contingent and not necessary, and in another sense of these terms, it may be said to be necessary and not contingent. But the sense in which the proposition may be said to be contingent, according to Leibniz, is only this: there is no logical contradiction involved in denying the proposition. And the sense in which it may be said to be necessary is this: since 'nothing ever occurs without cause or determining reason', the proposition is causally necessary. Whenever all the circumstances taken together are such that the balance of deliberation is heavier on one side than on the other, it is certain and infallible that that is the side that is going to win out. But if what we have been saying is true, the proposition 'In all those circumstances taken together I shall choose to go out', may be causally as well as logically contingent. Hence we must find another interpretation for Leibniz's statement that our motives and desires may incline us, or influence us, to choose without thereby necessitating us to choose.

Let us consider a public official who has some moral scruples but who also, as one says, could be had. Because of the scruples that he does have, he would never take any positive steps to receive a bribe—yet he would not actively solicit one. But his morality has to live with him in such a case. If we were to confront him with a fait accompli or to let him see what is about to happen ($10,000 in cash being deposited behind the garage), then he would succumb and be unable to resist. The general situation is a familiar one and this is one reason that people pray to be delivered from temptation. (It also justifies Kant's remark: 'And how many there are who may have led a long blameless life, who are only fortunate in having escaped so far from passions'.) Our capacity to be misled that we contemplate may not be a matter simply of being able to bring it about or not to bring it about. As St. Anselm noted, there are at least four possibilities. We may illustrate them by reference to our public official and the event which is his receiving the bribe, in the following way: (i) he may be able to refrain from bringing it about himself (non facere se), in which case he would actually cause himself to receive the bribe; (ii) he may be able to refrain from bringing it about himself (non facere se), in which case he would not only himself to do anything to prevent the bribe; (iii) he may be able to do something to prevent the event from occurring (facere non esset), in which case he would have to make sure that the $10,000 was not left behind the garage or (iv) he may be able to do anything to prevent the event from occurring (non facere non esset), in which case, though he may not solicit the bribe, he would allow himself to keep it. We have envisaged our official as a man who can resist the temptation to (i) but cannot resist the temptation to (iv): he can refrain from bringing the event about himself, but he cannot bring himself to do anything to prevent it. Let us think of 'inclination without necessitation', then, in such terms as these. First we may contrast the two propositions:

(i) He can resist the temptation to do something in order to make A happen;
(ii) He can resist the temptation to allow A to happen (i.e. to do nothing to prevent A from happening).

We may suppose that the man has some desire to have A happen and thus has a motive for making A happen. His motive for making A happen, I suggest, is one that necessitates provided that, because of the motive, (1) to do; (i) to do (false); (ii) he cannot resist the temptation to do something in order to make A happen. His motive for making A happen is one that necessitates provided that, because of the motive, (2) (false); (ii) our public official, he cannot bring himself to do anything to prevent A from happening. And therefore we can say that this motive for making A happen is one that necessitates but does not necessitate provided that, because of the motive, (1) is true and (2) is false; he can resist the temptation to make it happen but he cannot resist the temptation to allow it to happen.

**Robert Kane: Ancient Dispute, New Themes**

Robert Kane teaches philosophy at the University of Texas.

*"There is a disputation that will continue until mankind are raised from the dead, between the necessitarians and the freewillers of our will." These are the words of twelfth-century Persian poet, Jalaluddin Rumi. The problem of free will and necessity (or determinism), of which Rumi speaks, has puzzled the greatest minds for centuries—including famous philosophers, literary figures, theologians, scientists, legal theorists, and psychol*

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**Notes**


**Free Will: Ancient Dispute, New Themes**

Robert Kane teaches philosophy at the University of Texas.
suggestions—as well as many ordinary people. It has affected and been affected by both, religion and science.

In his classic poem, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton describes the angels debating how some of them could have sinned of their own free wills given that God had made them intelligent and happy. Why would they have done it? And why were they responsible for it rather than God, since God had made them the way they were and had complete foreknowledge of what they would do? While juggling over such questions, even the angels, Milton tells us, were “in Endless Mazes lost” (not a comforting thought for us humans). On the scientific front, issues about free will will lead us to ask about the nature of the physical universe and our place in it (are we determined by physical law and movements of the atoms?), about human psychology and the springs of action (can our actions be predicted by those who know our psychology?), about social conditioning, moral responsibility, crime and punishment, right and wrong, good and evil, and much more.

To delve into these questions, the best way to begin is with the idea of freedom itself. Nothing could be more important than freedom to the modern world. All over the globe, the trend (often against resistance) is toward societies that are more free. But why do we want freedom? The simple, and not totally adequate, answer is that to be free is to have the capacity and opportunity to satisfy more of our desires. In a free society we can walk into a store and buy almost anything we want. We can choose what movies to see, what music to listen to, whom to vote for.

But these are what you might call superficial freedoms. What is meant by free will runs deeper than these everyday freedoms. To see how, suppose we had maximal freedom to make such choices to satisfy our desires and yet the choices we actually made were manipulated by others, by the powers that be. In such a world we would have a great deal of everyday freedom to do whatever we wanted, yet our free will would be severely limited. We would be free to act or choose as we will, but would not have the ultimate say about what it is that we will. Someone else would be pulling the strings, not by coercing us against our wishes, but by manipulating us into having the wishes they wanted us to have.

This is thinking that, to some extent, we do live in such a world, where we are free to make numerous choices, but are manipulated into making many of our choices by advertising, television, public relations, spin doctors, salespersons, marketers, and sometimes even by friends, parents, relatives, peers—or enemies. One indication of how important free will is to us is that people generally feel revulsion at such manipulation. When people find out that what they thought were their own wishes were actually manipulated by others who wanted them to choose in just the way they did, they feel demeaned. Such situations are demeaning because we realize we were not our own persons; and having free will is about being your own person.

The problem is brought out in a striking way by twentieth-century utopian novels, such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and B. F. Skinner’s *Walden Two.* In the fictional societies described in these famous works, people can have and do what they will or choose, but only to the extent that they have been conditioned by behavioral engineers or neurochemists to will or choose what they can have and do. In *Brave New World*, the lower-echelon workers are under the influence of powerful drugs so that they do not dream of things they cannot have. They are quite content to play miniature golf all weekend. They can do what they want, though their wants are meager and controlled by drugs.

The citizens of Skinner’s *Walden Two* have a richer existence than the workers of Huxley’s *Brave New World*. Yet their desires and purposes are also covertly controlled, in this case by behavioral engineers, Walden Two-ers live collectively in a kind of rural commune, and because they share duties of farming and raising children, they have plenty of leisure. They pursue arts, sciences, crafts, engage in musical performances, and enjoy what appears to be a pleasant existence. The fictional founder of Walden Two, a fellow named Frazier, forthrightly says that their pleasant existence is brought about by the fact that, in his community, persons can do whatever they want or choose because they have been behaviorally conditioned since childhood to want and choose only what they can have and do. In other words, they have maximal surface freedom of action and choice (they can choose or do anything they want), but they lack a deeper freedom of the will because their desires and purposes are created by their behavioral conditioners or controllers. Their wills are not of their own making. Indeed, what happens in Walden Two is that their surface freedom to act and choose as they will is maximized by minimizing the deeper freedom to have the ultimate say about what they will.

Thus Frazier can say that Walden Two “is the finest place on earth” (p. 297), because he has surface freedom in mind. For there is no exorcism in Walden Two and no punishment because no one has to be forced to do anything against his or her will. The citizens can have anything they want because they have been conditioned not to want anything they cannot have. As for the deeper freedom, or free will, it does not exist in Walden Two, as Frazier himself admits (p. 257). But this is no loss, according to Frazier. Echoing Walden Two’s author, B. F. Skinner (a foremost defender of behaviorism in psychology), Frazier thinks the deeper freedom of the will is an illusion in the first place. We do not have it anyway, inside or outside Walden Two. In our ordinary lives, he argues, we are just as much the products of upbringing and social conditioning as the citizens of Walden Two, though we may ourselves think of being free otherwise. The difference is that, unlike Walden Two, our everyday conditioning is often haphazard, incompetent, and harmful.

Why then, Skinner asks, reject the maximal surface freedom and happiness of Walden Two for a deeper freedom of the will that is something we do not and cannot have anyway? Along with many other scientists, he thinks the idea that we could be ultimate determiners of our own ends or purposes (which is what the deeper freedom of the will would require) is an impossible ideal that cannot fit into the modern scientific picture of the world. To have such freedom, we would have to have been the original creators of our own wishes, causes of ourselves. But if we trace the psychological springs of action back further and further to childhood, we find that we were less free back then, more and more subject to conditioning. We thus incline ourselves to thinking that we have sacrificed some real (deeper) freedom for the happiness of Walden Two. Rather we have gained a maximum amount of the only kind of freedom we really can have (surface freedom), while giving up an illusion (free will).

Seductive as these arguments may be, there are many people (myself included) who continue to believe that something important is missing in Walden Two and that the deeper freedom is not a mere illusion. Such persons want to be the ultimate designers of their own lives as Frazier was for the lives of Walden Two. They want to be the creators, as he was, not the pawns—at least for their own lives. What they long for is what was traditionally meant by free will.

Here is yet another way of looking at it. Free will in this deeper sense is also intimately related to notions of moral responsibility, blameworthiness, and praiseworthiness. Suppose a young man is on trial for an assault and robbery in which his victim was beaten to death. Let us say we attend his trial on a daily basis. At first, our thoughts of the young man are filled with anger and resentment. But as we listen daily to how he came to have such a mean character and perverse motives—a sordid story of parental neglect, child abuse, sexual abuse, bad role models—some of our resentment against the young man is shifted over to the parents and others who abused and influenced him. We begin to feel angry with them as well. Yet we aren’t quite ready to shift all of the blame away from the young man himself. We wonder whether some residual responsibility may not belong to him. Our questions become: To what extent is he responsible for becoming the sort of person he now is? Was it all a question of bad parenting, societal neglect, social conditioning, and the like, or did he have any role to play in it? These are crucial questions about free will, and about what may be called ultimate responsibility. We know that parenting and society, genetic makeup and upbringing, have an influence on what we cause of ourselves.
Robert Kant: Free Will, Ancient Dispute, New Thoms

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Yet such thoughts only lead to a further problem that has haunted free will debates for centuries: If this deeper freedom of the will is not compatible with determinism, it does not seem to be compatible with indeterminism either. An event that is undetermined might occur or might not occur, given the entire past. (A determined event must occur, given the entire past.) Thus, whether or not an undetermined event actually occurs, given its past, is a matter of chance. Free choice events occur spontaneously and are not under the control of anything, hence not under the control of agents. How then could they be free and responsible actions? If, for example, a choice occurred by virtue of a quantum jump or other undetermined event in your brain, it would seem a fluke or accident rather than a responsible choice. Undetermined events in the brain or body, it seems, would inhibit or interfere with freedom, occurring spontaneously and not under our control. They would turn out to be a nuisance—or perhaps a curse, like epilepsy—rather than an enhancement of our freedom.

Or look at the problem in another way that goes a little deeper. If my choice is really undetermined, that means I could have made a different choice given exactly the same past right up to the moment when I did choose. This is what indeterminism and the denial of determinism mean: exactly the same past, different outcomes. Imagine, for example, that I had been deliberating about where to spend my vacation, in Hawaii or Colorado, and after much thought and deliberation had decided I preferred Hawaii, and chose it. If the choice was undetermined, then exactly the same deliberation, the same thought processes, the same beliefs, desires, and other motives—not a sliver of difference—that led to my favoring and choosing Hawaii over Colorado, might by chance have resulted in my choosing Colorado instead. That is very strange. If such a thing happened it would seem a fluke or accident, like that quantum jump in the brain just mentioned, not a rational choice. Because I had come to favor Hawaii and was about to choose it, when by chance I chose Colorado, I would wonder what went wrong in my brain and perhaps consult a neurologist.

For reasons such as these, people have argued that undetermined free choices would be "arbitrary," "capricious," "random," "irrational," "uncontrollable," "inexplicable," or merely "matters of luck or chance," not really free and responsible choices at all. If free will is not compatible with determinism, it does not seem to be compatible with indeterminism either.

These charges are powerful ones and defenders of free will over the centuries have made extraordinary claims attempting to respond to them. Free will does require indeterminism, these defenders have said. But it cannot merely be indeterminism or chance. Some "extra factors" must be involved in free will that go beyond ordinary scientific or causal understanding.

Immanuel Kant, for example, insisted that we can't explain free will in scientific or psychological terms. To account for it we have to appeal to the agency of what he called a "noumenal self" outside space and time that could not be studied in scientific terms. Others have appealed to what Nobel physiologist John Eccles calls a "transcendental power center," which would intervene in the brain, filling the causal gaps left by indeterminism or chance. Still others have appealed to a special kind of agent-causation—or, as Roderick Chisholm has called it, "immanent causation"—that cannot be explained in terms of the ordinary scientific modes of causation in terms of events or occurrences. Where all prior events, both physical and mental, leave a choice or action undetermined, the agent or immanent cause determines it, but cannot be determined in turn because it is not an event. The agent's cause is, in Chisholm's words, "a primum movere unmoved."

Such unusual strategies are common among defenders of an indeterminist free will (who often nowadays we called "incompatibilists" because they believe that free will is not compatible with determinism and "libertarians" because they believe in addition that free will is not an illusion). But these unusual strategies, such as noumenal selves, transcendent power centers, and agent or immanent causes, have unfortunately reinforced the view, now widespread among philosophers and scientists, that traditional notions of free will requiring indeterminism are mysterious and have no place in the modern scientific picture of the world. Such libertarianstagisms, to their critics, are reminiscent of the old debates about vital forces in the biology of the nineteenth century, whose obscure forces were postulated to explain what otherwise could not be explained about living things. They remind us of the Arkansas farmer when he first saw an automobile. He listened intently to the explanation of how the internal combustion engine worked, and nodded in agreement, but insisted on looking under the hood anyway because, as he said, "there must be a horse in there somewhere."

Thus, defenders of a nondeterminist free will are faced with a dilemma that was expressed by philosopher Thomas Hobbes at the beginning of the modern era. When trying to explain free will, these incompatibilists or libertarian defenders tend to fall either into "confusion" or "emptiness"—the confusion of identifying free will with indeterminism or the emptiness of mysterious accounts of agency in terms of noumenal selves, transcendental power centers, non-occurrence or agent-causes, or other strategies whose operations remain obscure and unexplained. What is needed to escape this dilemma is some new thinking about how free will can be reconciled with indeterminism and how it might fit into the modern scientific picture of the world, without appealing to extra factors that have made it seem so mysterious. In the remainder of this essay, I want to suggest some new ways of thinking about this problem and about free will generally, which may stir you to do likewise.

III

The first thing to note is that indeterminism does not have to be a factor in all acts done "of our own free will." Not all of them have to be undetermined. Frequently in everyday life we act from existing motives without having to think or deliberate about what to do. At such times, we may very well be determined by our existing characters and motives. Yet we may also at such times be acting "of our own free will" to the extent that we formed our present characters and motives (our own wills) by earlier choices or actions that were not themselves determined. Recall again Aristotle's claim that if a man is responsible for the wicked acts that flow from his character, he must at one time in the past have been responsible for forming the character from which these acts flow. Not all choices or acts done "of our own free will" have to be undetermined, but only those choices or acts in our lifetimes by which we made ourselves...
PART FOUR: DETERMINISM, FREE WILL, AND RESPONSIBILITY

into the kinds of persons we are. Let us call these "self-forming choices or actions" or SFAs.

I believe that such undetermined self-forming choices and actions (SFAs) occur at those difficult times of life when we are torn between competing visions of what we should do or become, and that they are more frequent than we think. Plans we are torn between the moral tugs or acting from ambition, or between powerful present desires and long-term goals, or we are faced with difficult tasks for which we have aversions. In all such cases, we are faced with competing motivations and have to make an effort to overcome temptation to do something else we also strongly want. At such times, there is tension and uncertainty in our minds about what to do. I suggest that this is reflected in appropriate regions of our brains by movement away from thermodynamic equilibrium—in short, a kind of stirring up of chaos in the brain that makes it sensitive to micro-uncertainties at the neuronal level. The uncertainty and inner tension we feel at such soul-searching moments of self-formation would thus be reflected in the indeterminacy of our neural processes themselves.

When the indeterminacy personally as uncertainty corresponds physically to the opening of a window of opportunity that temporarily screens off complete determination by influences of the past. (By contrast, when we act from predominate motives or settled dispositions, the uncertainty or indeterminacy is greater. If it did play a role in such cases, it would be a more mundane or flaccid sensation, as critics suggest, like the choice of Colorado when we voted Hawaii.)

When we do decide under such conditions of uncertainty, the outcome is not determined because of the preceding indeterminancy—and yet it can be willed (and hence rational and voluntary) either way owing to the fact that, in such self-formation, the agent's prior wills are divided by conflicting motives. Consider a businessman-who faced a conflict of this kind. She is on the way to a business meeting important to her career when she observes an assault taking place in an alley. A inner struggle ensues between her moral conscience telling her to stop and call for help, and her career ambitions telling her she cannot miss this meeting. She has to make an effort of will to overcome the temptation to go on her meeting. If she overcomes this temptation, it will be the result of her effort, but if she fails, it will be because she did not make her effort to succeed. And this is because she is torn between her desire to attack the tempter, she also wanted to fail, for quite different and incommensurable reasons. When we, like the businessman, decide in such circumstances, and the indeterminate efforts we are making become determined choices, we make one set of competing reasons and motives prevail over the other then and there by deciding.

Now let us add another piece to the puzzle. Just as indeterminacy does not necessarily undermine rationality and voluntariness, so indeterminacy, in and of itself, does not necessarily undermine control and responsibility. Suppose you are trying to think through a difficult problem, say a mathematical problem, and there is some indeterminacy in your neural processes complicating the task—a kind of chaotic background. It would be like trying to concentrate and solve a problem with a background of music. Whether you are going to succeed in solving the mathematical problem is uncertain and undetermined because of the distracting indeterminant neural noise. Yet, if you concentrate and solve the problem nonetheless, we have reason to say you did it and are responsible for it even though it was undetermined whether you would succeed. The distracting neural noise would have been an obstacle that you overcame by your effort.

There are numerous other examples supporting this point, where indeterminism functions as an obstacle to success without precluding responsibility. Consider a businessman who faced a conflict of this kind. She is on the way to a business meeting important to her career when she observes an assault taking place in an alley. A inner struggle ensues between her moral conscience telling her to stop and call for help, and her career ambitions telling her she cannot miss this meeting. She has to make an effort of will to overcome the temptation to go on her meeting. If she overcomes this temptation, it will be the result of her effort, but if she fails, it will be because she did not make her effort to succeed. And this is because she is torn between her desire to attack the tempter, she also wanted to fail, for quite different and incommensurable reasons. When we, like the businessman, decide in such circumstances, and the indeterminate efforts we are making become determined choices, we make one set of competing reasons and motives prevail over the other then and there by deciding.

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the obstacle in the form of indeterministic noise coming from the other pathway.

Note that, in these circumstances, the choices either way will not be "indifferent," "accidental," "capricious," or "merely random," because they will be willed by the woman either way, when she are made, and done for reasons either way (moral convictions if she were back, ambitious motives if she goes on) which she then and there endorses. And these are the conditions usually required to say something is done "on purpose," rather than incidentally, capriciously, or merely by chance. Moreover, these conditions taken together (that she wills it, and does it for reasons, and could have done other ways wisely and for reasons) rule out each of the normal motives we have for saying that agents act, but do not have control over their actions (coercion, constraint, inadvertence, mistake, and control by others). None of these obtain in the businesswoman's case. She is not coerced (no one is holding a gun to her head), nor physically constrained or disabled, not forced or controlled by others, nor does she act inadvertently or by mistake, but on purpose either way, as just noted.

Of course, with "self-forming" choices of these kinds, agents cannot control or determine which choice outcome will occur before it occurs or the outcomes would be predetermined after it. (That would be like deciding beforehand what you are going to decide.) But it does not follow that, because one does not control or determine which of a set of outcomes is going to occur before it occurs, one does not control which of them occurs, when it occurs. When the above conditions for self-forming choices are satisfied, agents exercise control over their future lives then and there by deciding, and they have what may be called "plural voluntary control" in the following sense: Agents have plural voluntary control over a set of options (stopping to help or going on to a meeting) when they are able to bring about whichever of the options they will, when they will to do so, for the reasons they will to do so, on purpose rather than by mistake or accident, without being coerced or compelled in doing so, or otherwise controlled by other agents or mechanisms. We have seen that each of these conditions can be satisfied in cases of SEAs, like the businesswoman's, despite the indeterminism involved.9 These conditions of plural voluntary control may be summed by saying, as people often do, that the agents can choose either way "as they will." ("Plural" in "plural voluntary control" means "more-than-one-way" and "voluntary" means "in accordance with one's will.")

Note also that this account of self-forming choices amounts to a kind of "doubling" of the mathematical problem. It is as if in an agent faced with such a choice is trying or making an effort to solve two cognitive problems at once, or to complete two competing (deliberative) tasks at once— in our example, to make a moral choice and to make a conflicting self-interested choice (corresponding to the two competing neural networks involved). Each task is being thwarted by the indeterminism coming from the other, so it might fail. But if it succeeds, then the agents can be held responsible because, as in the case of solving the mathematical problem, they will have succeeded in doing what they were knowingly and willingly trying to do. Recall again the cases of the assassin and the husband. Owing to indeterminism in their neural pathways, the assassin may miss his target or the husband fail to break the table. But if they succeed, despite the probability of failure, they are responsible, because they will have succeeded in doing what they were trying to do.

And so it is, I suggest, with self-forming choices, except that in the case of self-forming choices, whichever way the agents choose, they will have succeeded in doing what they were trying to do because they were simultaneously trying to make both choices, and one is going to succeed. Their failure to do one thing is not a failure, but a voluntary succeeding in doing the other. Does it make sense to talk about the agent's trying to do two competing things at once in this way, or to solve two cognitive problems at once? Well, we know that the brain is a parallel processor, it can simultaneously process different kinds of information relevant to tasks such as perception or recognition through different neural pathways. Such a capacity, I believe, is essential to the exercise of free will.

In cases of self-formation (SEAs), agents are simultaneously trying to resolve plural and competing cognitive tasks. They are, as we say, of two minds. Yet they are not two separate persons. They are not associated from either task. The businesswoman who wants to go back to help the victim is the same ambitious woman who wants to go to her meeting and make a sale. She is a complex creature, torn inside by different visions of who she is and what she wants to be, as we all are from time to time. But this is the kind of complexity needed for genuine self-formation and free will. And when she succeeds in doing one of the things she is trying to do, she will endorse that as her resolution of the conflict in her will, voluntarily and intentionally, not by accident or mistake.

Yet it is still hard to shake the intuition that if choices are undetermined, they must happen merely by chance—and so must be "random," "capricious," "uncontrolled," "irrational," "irreproducible," and all the other things charged. I do not deny the powerful hold such intuitions have upon us. They are among the reasons why free will continues to be taken as such a deep problem, even by those who want to believe in it. But the very fact that it has been such a problem for so long should also suggest that we cannot take ordinary intuitions about free will at face value without questioning them. If we are ever going to understand it, we will likely have to break old habits of thought and learn to think in new ways.

The first step in doing this is to question the intuitive connection in most people's minds between "indeterminism's being involved in something" and "its happening merely as a matter of chance or luck." "Chance" and "luck" are terms of ordinary language that carry the connotation of "it's out of my control." So using them already begs certain questions, whereas "indeterminism" is a technical term that merely precludes deterministic causation, though not causation altogether. Indeterminism is consistent with non-deterministic or probabilistic causation, where the outcome is not inevitable. It is therefore a mistake (also, one of the most common in debates about free will) to assume that "undetermined" means "uncased.

Undeter

Another source of misunderstanding is this: Because the outcome of the businesswoman's effort (the choice) is undetermined up to the last minute, we may have the image of her first making an effort to overcome temptation (to go on to her meeting) and then at the last instant "change her mind" and deciding the issue (see below). This image is misleading. On the view just described, one cannot separate the indeterminism and the effort of will, so that first the effort occurs followed by chance or luck (or vice versa). One must think of the effort and the indeterminism as fused, the effort is indeterministic and the indeterminism is a property of the effort, not something separate that occurs after or before the effort. The fact that the effort has this property of being indeterminate does not make it any less the woman's effort. The complex current neural network that realizes the effort in the brain is circulating impulses in feedback loops and there is some indeterminacy in these circulating impulses. But the whole process is her effort of will and it persists right up to the moment when the choice is made. There is no point at which the effort stops and chance takes over. She chooses as a result of the effort, even though she might have failed because of the indeterminacy. (That's why his excuse—"he was not responsible"—is so lame.) And just as expressions such as "the choice by chance" can misled as in such contexts, so too expressions like "she got lucky." Recall that in the cases of the assassin and the husband, one might say "they got lucky," that killing the prime minister and breaking the table because their actions were undetermined. Yet, as we noted, it does not follow that they were not responsible. So ask yourself this question: Why doestempo: What was his excuse—"he got lucky, so he was not responsible?" Fail when it does fail, in the cases of the husband and the assassin? The first part of an answer has to do with the point made earlier the "luck," like "chance," has question-pushing implications in ordinary language that are not necessarily implications of "undeterminism." (Which implies only the absence of deterministic causation.) The core meaning of "he got lucky" in the
Let us try another tack. Perhaps we are begging the question by assuming at the outset that the outcomes of the woman's efforts are her choices. If they are not choices to begin with, they cannot be volitionally chosen. On the other hand, the grounds that (A) "if an event is undetermined, it must be something that merely happens and cannot be somebody's choice"; or (B) "if an event is undetermined, it must be something that merely happens, it cannot be something an agent does (it cannot be an action)." But to see how question-begging these assumptions are, one has only to note that A and B imply respectively (A') "if an event is a choice, it must be determined" (all choices are determined) and (B') "if an event is an action, it must be determined" (all actions are determined). Are these claims supposed to be true necessarily or by definition? If so, the free will issue would be solved by fiat, it would follow merely from the meanings of the words that all choices and actions are determined.

But why should we believe this? Was the husband's 'breaking the table not something he did because he was not determined? Recall that 'undetermined' does not mean 'uncarved.' The breaking of the table was caused by the swing of his arm, and though the outcome was inevitable, that was good enough for saying he did it and was responsible. As for choices, a choice is the formation of an intention or a purpose to do something. It resolves uncertainty and indecision in the mind about what to do, "settling the mind" on one alternative rather than another. Nothing in such a description implies that there could not be some undeterminism in the deliberation and neural processes of an agent's preceding choice corresponding to the agent's uncertainty about what to do. Recall from preceding arguments that the presence of indeterminism does not mean the outcome happened merely by chance and not by the agent's effort.

But it is one thing to choose, in the sense of forming an intention; it is another thing to have control over one's choosing. Perhaps this is where the real problem lies. Would not the presence of indeterminism at least diminish the control persons have over their choices and other actions? Is it the case that the assassin's control over whether the prime minister is killed (his ability to realize his purposes or what he is trying to do) is lessened by the indeterministic impulses in his arm—and so also for the husband and his breaking the table? Moreover, this limitation is connected with another often noted by critics—that indeterminism, wherever it occurs, seems to be a hindrance or obstacle to our realizing our purposes and hence an obstacle to our freedom.

These concerns are close to the mark, and there is something to them. But rather than being devastating objections to an incompatibilist account of free will, I think they reveal something important about such a free will. I think we should concede that indeterminism, wherever it occurs, does diminish control over what we are trying to do and is a hindrance or obstacle to the realization of our purposes. But recall that in the case of the businesswoman (and for SFAs generally), the indeterminism that is admittedly diminishing her control over one thing she is trying to do (the moral act of helping the victim) is coming from her own will—her desire and effort to do the opposite (go to her radicals meeting). And the indeterminism that is diminishing her control over the other thing she is trying to do (act safely and go to her meeting) is coming from her desire and effort to do the opposite (to be a moral person and act on moral reasons).

So, in each case, the indeterminism is functioning as a hindrance or obstacle to her realizing one of her purposes—a hindrance or obstacle in the form of resistance within her will. As a consequence, whichever choice she makes, whichever effort was put, she will have to overcome the hindrance or obstacle provided by the indeterminism coming from the other. If there were no such hindrance—if there were no resistance in her will—she would indeed in a sense have 'complete control' over one of her choices. There would be no compelling motives that would stand in the way of her choosing. But then also she would not be free to rationally and voluntarily choose the other purpose because she would have no good competing reasons to do so. Thus, by being a hindrance to the realization of some of our purposes, indeterminism paradoxically opens up the genuine possibility of pursuing other purposes—of choosing or doing otherwise in accordance with, rather than against, our wills (voluntarily and reasons rationally).

To be genuinely self-forming agents (creators of ourselves)—to have free will—there must at times in life be obstacles and hindrances in our wills of this sort that we must overcome. We can concede then that indeterminism is a hindrance and a nuisance, but a necessary one if we are to have ultimate responsibility for our own wills. Being 'your own will' is a struggle. We can appreciate why existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre said that true freedom (free will) is a burden many people want to 'escape'—preferring instead that others tell them what to do and how to live, or perhaps preferring that their choices always be easy. In an earlier time, St. Augustine asked why God would have given us free will, since it is such a pain to us and to others; and the answer was that without it we would lack the greater good of being ultimately responsible for what we are and what we do.

Perhaps we should look in another direction that has also led to doubts about whether free will can be reconciled with indeterminism or chance. What might be going in the brain, we might ask, when free choices take place? If neuroscientists were to inspect the woman's brain when she was struggling with her moral decision, wouldn't it be the case that they would find nothing more than interconnected sets of neuron firings in which micro-indeterminacies were not negligible? These interconnected neuron firings would in turn terminate in some definite configuration of neural firings that corresponded to the 'choice' to stop and help the victim or in another set of firings corresponding to the 'choice' to go on to her meeting. But why are these outcomes occurred rather than the other would be inconceivable in terms of the preceding processes. Probabilities could be assigned for one outcome rather than the other, but that is all. And this looks like chance.

I agree that if the physical descriptions of these events were the only legitimate ones, then free will would look like nothing more than chance or
probabilities. When neuroscientists described it in 
physico-chemical terms, all the practical decisions are 
determined. But they are not determined. It is the 
idea of randomness, or more precisely, the idea of 
indeterminism, that is the key. Just because the system is 
determined, it does not mean that the outcomes are 
pre-determined. The outcomes are determined by the 
initial conditions, not by the laws of physics. This is 
what makes the universe both deterministic and 
random.

In short, the brain is a complex system of 
interconnected neurons that work together to produce 
behavior. The decisions we make are not random, but 
they are not determined either. The outcomes are the 
result of a complex interplay of factors, including our 
unique biological makeup, our environment, and our 
individual experiences. Therefore, while we cannot 
predict exactly what will happen, we can make sense 
of the patterns that emerge and use them to guide our 
actions.

In conclusion, while the brain is not a completely 
deterministic system, it is not a completely random 
one either. It is a system that is in a state of constant 
change and evolution. The decisions we make are 
not predetermined, but they are not completely 
random either. It is this balance of order and 
chaos that makes the brain such a unique and 
intriguing system.
Freedom and Moral Responsibility
The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility

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There is an argument, which I will call the Basic Argument, which appears to prove that we cannot be truly or ultimately morally responsible for our actions. According to the Basic Argument, it makes no difference whether determinism is true or false. We cannot be truly or ultimately morally responsible for our actions in either case.

The Basic Argument has various expressions in the literature of free will, and its central idea can be quickly conveyed. (1) Nothing can be caused but nothing can be the cause of itself. (2) In order to be truly morally responsible for one's actions one would have to be caused at least in certain causally necessary respects. (3) Therefore nothing can be truly morally responsible.

In this paper I want to reconstruct the Basic Argument, in the hope that anyone who objects that we can be perfectly or ultimately morally responsible for our actions will be prepared to say exactly what is wrong with it. I think that the point that it has to make is obvious, and that it has been underestimated in recent discussion of free will—perhaps because it is obvious but not clear how to make it clear. It is obvious in such a way that it is a mistake to make it seem less obvious than it is if it is given the infinite con-tragonal responsibility of human beings in general and philosophy in particular. But I am not worried about making it seem less obvious than it is as long as it gets adequate attention. As far as its validity is concerned, it can look after itself.

A more careful statement of the Basic Argument goes as follows.

(1) Interpreters of the first action, we are particularly interested in actions that are performed for a reason (as opposed to 'reflex' actions or mindlessly habitual actions).

(2) When our acts are for a reason, what does that function of one's own process of acting on one's own behalf and on one's own behalf only, as is the case with moral responsibility is in question.

(3) So if one is to be truly responsible for one's actions, one must be truly responsible for one's actions and to be ultimately morally responsible—i.e., in certain respects.

(4) But to be truly responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts, one must be responsible for how one acts.