

## PHILOSOPHERS LAY OUT THE LOGIC OF COMPATIBILISM OR SOFT DETERMINISM - ITS NONSENSE

Free will believers say that if I stole an orange two seconds ago if I went back in time I could just as easily refrain or do something else. Determinism says its all determined meaning I'd pick the orange again. Oddly some people say the two ideas are compatible! They do that by messing around by words. They are soft determinists or compatibilists.

The soft determinists believe that you are to blame for what you do because though your reasons and thoughts and motives cause you to do things, you can change the reasons and thoughts and motives to make you do different things if you wish. But what if the wish that causes the change is itself caused or programmed? We all have experiences where we did something of character and it felt it was not really our action. The fact is the question is did you cause yourself to do the things. Saying your reasons and motives and thoughts did is not the same thing. You are not your reasons and motives and thoughts.

They say that a person is unfree if forced by external factors such as a blackmailer but free if they are internally programmed. Force is force whether it is in you or outside you. You are still unable to resist the forces that programme you and they don't let you change unless they program you to change.

The best authorities believe that the doctrine of compatibilism is sheer nonsense and the attempt to reconcile determinism and free will is hopeless (page 263, The End of Faith, Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason).

William James wrote that compatibilism was just a quagmire full of evasion for it was inconsistent (page 250, Philosophy the Pursuit of Wisdom).

A Concise Introduction to Philosophy by William H Halverson on page 362 argues that either determinism in the hard strict sense or free will without determinism is true and that compatibilism is not an option for it is really hard determinism in disguise.

He says that compatibilism or soft determinism as it is often called, arbitrarily changes the meaning of moral freedom and moral responsibility from what the free will believer means by them to identify moral freedom with doing what you want under the circumstances that exist and moral responsibility with doing what you want. The problem is it says these wants are caused and are inevitable or determined which is exactly the same as what a hard determinist says only the soft determinist says that free will depends on being determined and that despite being programmed you are responsible for what you do (page 363). That is like saying that a calculator is caused to say that  $2+2=4$  by its programming but it wants to say this so it has free will.

He concludes that soft determinism fails to prove that our believing that a person can be praised or blamed for what they do is justified or agreeable with determinism. He observed that you can reconcile the statement that all the people in a country are totally loyal to the rulers with the statement that only some are totally loyal by changing the meaning of loyal and that is what soft determinists are doing with determinism and free will. You can do the same with any contradiction.

A soft determinist called Schlick asserted that moral responsibility means acting in freedom from mental illness and other people and that moral responsibility means deserving a reward if you are good and deserving to suffer if you are bad (page 176, Basic Philosophic Analysis). He is right that moral responsibility is about reward and punishment.

We cannot change the past to change our current behaviour and we cannot change the present for it is too brief but we can only change the future. He says that free will works through a person making themselves see a good in the future which makes them do what they would not have done without it.

The mistake in this is that he does not realise that we could be programmed to do this and think we are free so this is not enough to prove free will in the sense of being able to do other than what you did, or being able to be responsible for what you do, is possible.

His philosophy is absurd for evil is mental illness and he has failed to give any evidence that changing our programming is the same as free will. If you change your programming now you must have been programmed to change.

Compatibilism or soft determinism does not affirm rewards and punishments as much as it pretends to.

Both determinism and soft determinism look into your background if you do something terrible. A C Ewing has argued that

determinism makes it unjust to punish a criminal with a bad background as much as one equally bad who had a good background (page 199, The Fundamental Questions of Philosophy). If you understand punishment as retribution then it is always unjust.

But if it is about rehabilitation it does seem that the person with the bad background needs the most help. But what about the person who still turned out evil after the good background? One that commits a crime because of being determined by a bad background is no different from one who still managed to be bad after having a good one for the latter mocked his or her own background by doing what he or she did.

But it must be remembered that it is not bad backgrounds that are to blame for a person turning out bad. One can be good despite the evil past. It is other factors that make up the personality. It is the response to the bad environment or to a good environment perceived as bad. For this reason Ewing's objection is wrong. We can punish people equally no matter about their background. The safest way to do this is to inflict the same amount of suffering on that person that he or she inflicted on others.

Determinism does abolish justice. Soft determinism as a compromise between determinism and free will makes justice possible but too hard to work out so there is no point.

And if your character is the problem not the background then nobody knows what to do about that. If you were able to resist your good background to do grave harm there is something in you that just emerged and could be still there waiting to emerge again.

If rehabilitation is the only concern and justice is not then you will have murderers going to jail for a year and shoplifters incarcerated for five.

In theory if a person has had a bad background, soft determinism implies that he might be dealt with and punished with greater severity than one from a good background for there are more corruptions and bad motives to change.

Some disagree with this for a person from a good background who turns out bad may be as bad or worse for having gone against the good upbringing. But that presupposes the person could have done otherwise. That's hardcore free will. There is no justice in any theory that denies it believes in such free will and acts like it does for then it cannot see to administer justice to dangerous people.

Soft determinism is against logic and has ridiculous consequences because it is ridiculous in the first place.

