

## **I. An Unpacking of Hard Determinism.**

Free will: perhaps the most beguiling of all philosophical inquiry. Generation after generation, contemporary academics have disputed the nature of human freedom, even after the emergence of science and its expunging of libertarianism. This topic has been subject to great discord, and in realizing such, may it be known that I do not wish to fan the flames in what I relay. Rather, I seek with you to underlie seemingly stark misapprehensions in what I consider good faith.

I must begin this exposition by addressing a philosophical position in the examination of mind, as in traversing this metaphysical domain of freedom, I deem it inevitable that we trot adrift in contending the nature of thought; that is, the mistaken extrapolation that if we do not control our thoughts, and everything relevant to ourselves be fundamentally a concomitant by way of thought, then we can logically conclude that everything is out of our control as even our “own” thoughts are not ours, proving that we cannot have any form of free will. Hard determinism, the belief that all things conceivable are mere results of prior causes and that these causes be incongruous with any notion of free will, has emerged as the prevailing guild of the scientific community of which I take part. Physicists alike concur that considering the granularity with which we observe the subatomic universe, there seems to be a mechanistic clockwork of quarks, leptons, and bosons that compound everything that we are and all that we can do. Considering such, how is it possible that we author anything? If everything be determined by things which we ourselves do not determine, doesn't that entail we be aimless machines awaiting input which is only to be transcribed into output? I am impelled to demur with these

deterministic dicta, and in doing so, I find it compulsory that we operationalize our term “free will” before moving forward as to avoid any divergence. Free will is to be considered as the notion that individual agents are free to choose, in particular instances as afforded by knowledge, between different possible courses of action. Hitherto, I have come to notice a dire misalignment that many philosophers and scientists currently remain adhered to; something I would denote as a misconstrued conflation of limitation and determination, where what limits  $A$  does not determine  $A$ , and only when what determines  $A$  does it parochially<sup>1</sup> limit  $A$ , where parochiality addresses the ontological irreducibility, as indicated by the multiply realizable supervenience<sup>2</sup> - of mental properties to physical properties - and *substructure singularity*, of  $A_o$ . Even if this point of supervenience be unsatisfactory in dispelling our concern with reduction, we must also consider that the idea of choice supervening particles is not to say that particles determine choice; it is only to say that the possibility of choice exists because of particles as aforementioned. Nested here, we see that determinism is actually essential for free will as the choice in considering offered possibilities, which only be offered by determinism(particles), is made. This is to be further elaborated in  $\text{II}$ . A distinction must necessarily be drawn here which

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<sup>1</sup> Note that deliberation itself limits the agent as the narrowing down of options to attain the most preferred eliminates and limits other unfavorable options. This is to say deliberation narrowly limits.

<sup>2</sup> As mental properties are supervenient to physical properties. Despite our thoughts being products of brain states from atomism, we still maintain irreducible thoughts by way of multiple realizability as follows:

1. All mental kinds are multiply realizable by distinct physical kinds.
2. If a given mental kind is multiply realizable by distinct physical kinds, then it cannot be identical to any specific physical kind.
3. Therefore, no mental kind is identical to any specific physical kind.

elucidates the limitation of possibilities, which are to be further explicated in II, compared to the employment of those possibilities themselves, which are imparted by way of deliberation when an agent be faced with a choice. With regard to possibilities, those quarks, leptons, and bosons that we already made mention of construct the *Space of Possible Outcomes* from which everything can exist, including thoughts as argued by determinists. But even so, everything being determined by things we do not determine does not necessarily entail that agents cannot choose from the pool as provided by those determinants. A hard determinist oft-retort be, “ But that very thought of you choosing was determined by your neurons firing as determined by those subatomic units.” Many issues lie therein such a recant, and principally, quanta are extraneous when we consider choice in its emergent macroscopy as we will see.

We shall first examine a thought experiment which lay bare many discernible intricacies when considering the ballast of existing free will. When faced with a choice that necessitates a desired or preferred attainment of a practical objective, the agent making that choice experiences what is known to us conceptually as free will. If there be no objective, if there be no preference, then the choice being made is fundamentally frivolous as it will not affect, or manifest into, action which be all that we are solicitous of when choosing. This is why many deterministic exemplars fall flat; they are just imaginings constructed and curated dearth of purpose, but this purpose is what makes free will so important to us and worth examining. Please notice this: for an analogy to be satisfactory in illuminating the relationship between free will and determinism, it must immutably fulfill two inextricable requirements:

1. There must be a choice by an apperceiving agent, as choice be the locus of concern with free will.
2. The making of that choice must have a purpose that is independent of the analogical apparatus, as there be no point of choosing if there be no purpose.

With these in mind, we can now observe examples shorn of any ill-will or sophistry that would deter us in our pursuits. But we must first address the confusion of determinism and limitation as well as the nature of thought/choice in relation to subatomic determinism to more clearly entrain our analogies.

## **II. The Delimiting of Determinism and The Nature of Irreducibility**

Let me for a second replicate the tenets of this hard determinism creed. Imagine I take a position where I assert that everything is determined by stardust. Let's call this school of thought *Stardustry*. I advertise this school of philosophy because everything is made up of stardust, and further, stardust determines everything and everyone conceivable.

Now let's imagine that we are to choose a random country for the sake of a vacation. Any country. According to *Stardustry*, your choosing of a country is exclusively "determined" by the stardust which makes you, the decision maker, and that country itself. Thus, free will must necessarily be untenable as the decision maker and decision(country) were "determined" by entities independent of the decision maker. Notice the intellectual sleight of hand here: the way we refer to subatomic particles and their relation to choice/thought is no different from the

logical grounds of *Stardustry* when choosing a country. An unrelenting *reductio ad absurdum* takes center stage in such a syllogism. It must be noted that the choosing of the country is not determined by stardust; only that the relevant possibilities that enable choice are limited and parameterized by the stardust, akin to neurons and subatomic particles. We happen upon the status of supervenience in this unearthing: that everything be supervenient to stardust, and everything that is conceivable is made up of this stardust. But we cannot devolve all stratifications and label everything to be just rudimentary stardust, or claim everything is determined by stardust, because there are empirical disparities in the artifacts of stardust that are not accounted for by stardust itself. Arguing in such a physicalist fashion is to obtrude *substructure singularity*, which is to equate all things in the *Space of Possible Outcomes* as invariably identical and devoid of any unique necessary and sufficient conditions, where emergentism entails such varying conditions. Stardust, most ironically, is neither here nor there when considering choice itself, as choice is concluded to be ontologically discrete<sup>3</sup>. Let us appraise another example of this logic, albeit simplified but not straw-manned, for compendium:

1. Water is what allows for life as one cannot live without water.
2. Life is what allows for thought as one cannot think if one is not alive.

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<sup>3</sup> The current literature of philosophy of mind is well-established at this point, so I will not spend much time on the subject as I have nothing new on offer. Although the ontological uniqueness of choice helps my case, all that needs to be granted for further investigation is emergentism as mental faculties emerge from physical faculties. All we need is the fact that mental faculties exist. Hereafter, the phrase “ontological irreducibility” will be used as reference to the fundamental difference between thoughts and *concreta* as engendered by emergentism and observed in the multiple realizability thesis.

Therefore, water “determines” our thoughts.

This is a sterling example of the fallacious coherence that upholds modern hard determinism.

What is said here can be echoed for stardust, the sun, oxygen, carbon, leptons, bosons, atoms, cells and multitudinous phenomena that stand as compounding rudiments in the *Space of Possible Outcomes*.

As seen in the prior examples, a hard determinist can be said to have necessity, but the position undertaken demands sufficiency to account for what we call choice.

This is what suggests a principle of irreducibility when considering thought and choice. These compounding rudiments do not determine choice; they only limit the relevant possibilities in the *Space of Possible Outcomes*, which are to be deliberated and chosen by accord of free will,

retaining impunity to such reduction by its intrinsic ontology. These rudiments can only be

argued to cause choice and would be valid considering its hypothetical syllogism form, but the

claim for free will is not bounded in causation but in determination, where these two phenomena

not be the same when accounting for our understanding of emergentism. When an entity’s

causation be mistaken with its determination, when considering ontological distinction of

properties from *substructure singularity*, we shall call this mistake a *causal miscarriage*. If *A*

determines *B*, *A* must be the solely enacting causal antecedent of *B* while being on the same

plane of emergentism, and *B* must not be subject to any *C* or any other emergently manifested

variant of *A*. Let us say that a tree is struck by a lightning bolt and consequently burns down. The

lightning bolt did not determine that the tree caught fire and was burned down as the moisture of

the bark is another variable in the calculus of what is obtained. We can only say that the

lightning bolt caused the fire and burning of the tree. We could only say that the lightning bolt

determined the tree's fate if it was the solely enacting causal antecedent of its action. The fact that we can say so many things cause thoughts/choice thus refutes the idea that choice is "determined" by these rudiments as they do not have a solely enacting casual antecedent when upholding the complexity of stratified emergentism<sup>4</sup>. But this does not justify free will to be viable as multiple exterior causal antecedents independent of the agent still obtains hard determinism. The aggregate of oxygen, the lightning bolt, and other rudiments is still considered as determining the fire after all. This indicates that in order for free will to be viable, there must be a single cause within the system of causes at the most emergently complex level that is enacted by an agent, where this cause be how we obtain and seek knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, the problem lies in how we confuse determinism and limitation, where what limits  $A$  does not determine  $A$ , and only when what determines  $A$  does it parochially limit  $A$ , where parochiality addresses the irreducibility and supervenience of  $A_o$ .

Touching the base of our country analogy, here, what limits choice of country, existing countries/knowledge of existing countries, does not determine choice of a country, and only when what determines choice of country(deliberation) does that determinant parochially limit the choice of country, where parochiality addresses the ontological irreducibility, as indicated by the multiply realizable supervenience and *substructure singularity*, of choosing a country.

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<sup>4</sup> Emergentism is inevitable considering something exists rather than nothing. This is not a radical view as liquid water emerges from gaseous hydrogen and oxygen, reaching a new complexity. To determine something, a cause must be on the same plane of emergentism. Although the tree could never catch fire without rudimentary oxygen, oxygen does not determine that the tree catches fire as it is emergently simplistic.

### **III. The Allowance For Free Will Considering the Limitations of Determinism And the Role of Knowledge.**

There are a determined number of roads that you can take home from work, indeed. Your knowledge of roads affords you the freedom to deliberate and choose which to take. Perhaps there be heavy traffic, so you choose to take a road less travelled as a shortcut. Your knowledge of the relevant possibilities, or the roads that can lead you home, serviced a more expedient and much preferred result and in this deliberation. We rightfully experience the subjectively mysterious tenor known to us as free will in such an instantiation. An anticipated rebuttal situates itself here where it ought to expose the determining factor of traffic: you are only trekking another path because the other road is inundated with traffic, which is not controlled by you. Here, what limits choice of road, existing roads/knowledge of existing roads/traffic, does not determine choice of road, and only when what determines choice of road (deliberation) does that determinant parochially limit the choice of road, where parochiality addresses the irreducibility of choosing a road. What seems immutable from where I stand is the omnipresence of knowledge when an agent is faced with a choice that necessitates a desired or preferred attainment of a practical objective. For all things relevant and pragmatic, if knowledge, or the increase, pursuit, and employment of the phenomenon thereof, exists then so does free will. And you and I know this to be the case. We experience and apperceive this to be the case. But in order for this free will to exist, it must be proven that knowledge itself is not deterministic.

Once again, the same antiquated application will be applied here, but it again fails to disenfranchise the compatibilist core. One ought to say, "But your knowledge is all but determined by the environment you grew up in and the genetic leverage offered unto you," where a careful thinker ought to say, "Yes, what you say is invariably true, but setting limitations on your knowledgeable possibilities is doing just that; not determining them." It is perfectly grantable that an individual in the Congo cannot go to the library nor can the impaired autistic child learn arithmetic; it is determined that they not do these things, indeed, but what is not determined is what they do, not what they not do. The Congolese child can learn to hunt and comport his selfless existence. And the autistic child can learn to feed himself and tidy up the house. Everyone is limited in a way, certainly with the caveated understanding of some more than others, where this "some more than others" indeed be deterministic, but to parametrize the situation is not to absolutely determine it. It merely reduces it which we need not do. The child of the Congo, the autistic boy, you reading this exposition, and everyone with a mind to think and will to be, ought to increase the knowledge of ourselves and the world wherein, thereby giving us more possibilities and lending us license to say that we are indeed pragmatically "free" to choose.

From this investigation, it is concluded that determinism determines the possibilities, but free will determines what is obtained. This ideation of this compatibilism acknowledges what is determined, but also retains consistency with the immediately experienced sensation of gaining and applying knowledge. *Deliberative capacity*, or the knowledge of the world as limited by the physical and conditional parameters of determinism, is the lynchpin of free will. There is and

must be a difference between having and not having knowledge, and this difference can only be manifested by what we know as free will. This logic is provided below:

1. *Having knowledge<sup>5</sup> and not having knowledge are not equivalent statements.*
2. *That is to say, there is a difference between having knowledge and not having knowledge.*
3. *A difference in knowledge can occur in an agent from moment to moment.*
4. *A difference in knowledge for an agent can only be manifested if and only if such an agent has the capacity to acquire or lose such knowledge; to move from not having to having or vice versa.*
5. *We have the capacity to acquire knowledge.*
6. *Knowledge allows things to occur to you.*
7. *That which does occur to you to choose, you can be free to choose.*
8. *You can be free to choose.*

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*Therefore, you can have free will.*

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<sup>5</sup> Knowledge - experience/understanding the objects of a practical goal or objective. Better known in psychology as procedural knowledge.

It is absolute that you are not free to choose that which does not occur to you to choose( $\sim Q \rightarrow \sim P$ )(7) through contraposition, again indicating the primacy of knowledge in consideration of free choice. In regard to (7), there are examples of things that occur to us which cannot be chosen from, but knowledge providing unactionable options in no way sullies the argument, for any choice entertained, in action or in thought, must come by way of knowledge. This bolsters our case as not only does knowledge give you possibilities of choice, but also illuminates the impossibilities of choice in certain instances. Proposition 7 still maintains that, more times than not, things which occur to you, you *can* be free to choose, considering a practical goal or objective. Given (5), (6), and (7), proposition (8) and the conclusion are logically inescapable by hypothetical syllogism. The increase of knowledge, which can be immediately experienced, and its relevance when considering choice is indicative of the only typology of free will “worth wanting” as Dennett would put it, and from what’s been examined, the only typology of free will that can exist.

#### **IV. The Remaining Tenuousness of Compatibilism Considering II & III.**

##### **I . Presuppositional Dualism**

Many readers may be led astray by the tacit claim of dualism underlied throughout the paper. Although I am a property dualist, one need not be a dualist to subscribe to this compatibilism. Materialists, Leibnizians, Spinozians, mysterianists, and general monist and dualist schools of

thought can all be consistent with this brand of compatibilism. All that must be granted are the previously enumerated premises.

## II . Protestable Emergentism

Likewise, many readers may also be discouraged by the use of emergentism. For sake of clarity, no claim was made that something comes from nothing. It was only claimed that rudimentary things can aggregate which allow more complex things to emerge. This be allayed with the fact that gaseous hydrogen and oxygen produce a liquid when put together. Although, once again, all that needs to be granted are the premises, I am not willing to give ground as I did in IV( I ) as emergentism only entails that certain causes give rise to certain effects.

## III . Aberrations

“What about the case of Charles Whitman and the tumor in his brain? Was he free to choose to kill or not to kill?” I cannot give a definitive answer as I do not have access to all the variables. Regardless, even if Charles Whitman was not free to choose, this does not oppose our brand of compatibilism. A hard determinist would be inclined to say that all causes which give rise to choice are fundamentally identical to the tumor: they all preclude the possibility of free choice as the tumor did for Whitman<sup>6</sup>. In response, I say that Whitman could have been determined to kill just as bodily functions determine twitching, dementia determines memory loss, and leukemia determines bodily deterioration, but these are cases that elucidate sole determinism, not free will,

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<sup>6</sup> Harris, Sam

where we have already examined that these two are not mutually exclusive. We happen upon the nature of hard determinism here; similar to libertarianism, it is an absolutist position, and it states that free will can never exist. But since we endeavor to examine this absolutism, we intend to find out if free will can ever singularly exist, for one must think of a single contravening instance to prescind any form absolutism. For us, this single contravening instance is the existence of free will in any manifestation. Since this be the case, we will not examine instances like Whitman's as free will is explicitly implausible and treated as a bodily function. These instances where action is yielded by bodily or physical processes, when choice is not offered, shall be considered as examples of *somatic supersedence*. I ask that you consider a doctor conducting a reflex test by hitting your knee with with a reflex hammer. No matter your conviction to not respond to the test, your body will respond to the test. No choice is available despite your most earnest of wills as it is determined that you respond. These examples, which Whitman should be categorized with, have no choice at all, and since free choice presupposes choice, of course free will is non-existent in such instances. Instead, to assess the practicality and existence of free will, we ought to examine instances that contain choice and apperception as previously suggested by our analogical criteria.

In regard to knowledge, I would argue that if Whitman had knowledge of his tumor, he could have done differently. If Whitman knew of the tumor, he very well would have sought the professional help he needed and "could have done otherwise."

#### IV. Knowledge Is Determined

Although the idea of knowledge being determined by causes we do not control has already been addressed in III, agent-effective knowledge is essential for this compatibilism, so it be imperative that this point be crystallized. Consider your reading of this paper at this exact moment. The moment you read a paper or book, watch the news, attend a school, or look up a tutorial video on YouTube, you are acceding the fact that there is knowledge that you wish to have of which you did not previously have. This is where your capacity to acquire knowledge becomes relevant in metaphysical freedom. A hard determinist will wish to say that you were not free to acquire knowledge, and although I would stick to my guns and retort that we are free to read, watch, attend and look up, all we need to maintain is the fact that a person *can* gain or lose knowledge for us to have freedom in certain instances. All that matters is that we *can* read, watch, attend and look up for this free will. I would recall from III that what is not determined is what one does while what is determined is what one cannot do, presupposing knowledge, apperception, and a practical objective.

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