

0 So far...

The thesis of **determinism**: Given any complete state of the universe at a time and the laws of nature, the complete future of the universe is fixed.

The thesis of **free will**: Person S is free in performing act A iff S had the power to do A and the power to do not-A – that is, S could have done otherwise.

Questions:

- Do we have the right formulation of free will? And if so, what does the “power to do otherwise” amount to?
- Are these two theses compatible?
- Are either compatible with the attribution of moral responsibility to persons for their actions?

1 Metaphysical freedom

Freedom as a negative concept

- Political freedom is freedom from political constraints.
- Psychological freedom is freedom from psychological constraints.
- Economic freedom is freedom from economic constraints.
- Metaphysical freedom is ... freedom from metaphysical constraints?

Van Inwagen’s thesis: Metaphysical freedom is not a negative concept.

First argument: The concept of freedom under dispute in classic debates does not involve freedom from constraints of any sort. Therefore there is an important concept of freedom that is not negative.

- Hard determinism
 - “It is true that in a deterministic world, *whether my will happens to encounter an obstacle on a given occasion* will be a consequence of the way the world was millions of years ago and the laws of nature. But it is certainly not inevitable that my will encounter an obstacle on any given occasion in a deterministic world, and even in an indeterministic world, my will must encounter obstacles on many occasions.” (Van Inwagen, 458)
- Future contingents
- Divine foreknowledge
- Problem of evil

Second argument: “I can do X” can express metaphysical freedom in ordinary language. It is not expressing something merely negative. Therefore the concept of freedom is not negative.

- The defense of the second premise involves pointing out that absence of all constraints is not sufficient for freedom.
- "... the idea that ability could consist in the absence of obstacles does seem, on consideration, to be a very puzzling idea indeed ... *which* obstacles to the performance of an action are such that their presence renders one unable to perform that action? Why, just those obstacles that one is *unable* to overcome, of course." (Van Inwagen, 460)

Third argument: If freedom is a negative concept, then freedom and determinism are compatible. But they are incompatible. So freedom is not a negative concept.

- Defense of incompatibilism: Suppose we are free with respect to act A at time t. If determinism is true, then what happens at t is fixed given the history of the universe prior to t and the laws of nature. So we are only free to do A at time t. But that means that we couldn't have done otherwise. So we weren't free to do A at t after all.
- PVI first to defend indeterminism as a matter of chance