

HARD INCOMPATIBILISM AND LIFE AFFIRMATION

I do not at all believe in human freedom in the philosophical sense. Everybody acts not only under external compulsion but also in accordance with inner necessity. Schopenhauer's saying, "A man can do what he wants, but not want what he wants," has been a very real inspiration to me since my youth; it has been a continual consolation in the face of life's hardships, my own and others', and an unfailing well-spring of tolerance. This realization mercifully mitigates the easily paralyzing sense of responsibility and prevents us from taking ourselves and other people all too seriously; it is conducive to a view of life, which in particular, gives humor its due.

Albert Einstein¹

INTRODUCTION

In this essay I illustrate the theory of hard incompatibilism and its implications within the metaphysical debate about free will and the nature of our humanity. I also attempt to illustrate the consequences a view of hard incompatibilism may have on our ideas of freedom and moral responsibility. Some of these ideas originated with the pre-Socratic philosophers, and the ongoing debate is not at all exhaustively dull, or for that matter, all conclusively solved.

¹ Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions*, p. 9

The viewpoint of this essay assumes, and with limited conclusiveness, that hard incompatibilism is true, and indicates that casual determinism and our traditional conceptions of free will are incompatible. The primary target of my argument—and this is my thesis—is to argue that hard incompatibilism is a viable perspective for living a good life; that we are not ultimately responsible for our actions, and, despite this, we can still retain a sense of individual freedom and accountability. We can still have authentic and meaningful lives.

With the hard incompatibilism viewpoint in mind, and to be clear, this essay is not a favorable argument for free will, at least not in the comfortable sense of what we traditionally think free will is and may cause the reader some intellectual apprehension on first read. But before moving on to the heart of hard incompatibilism, I think it's appropriate to briefly explain free will and the four major abstractions within the free will debate: hard determinism (i.e. causal determinism), libertarianism², compatibilism, and hard incompatibilism.

Free will is the agent's cognitive volition to act without external force or persuasion.³ A broad sense of this abstraction suggests that at time t_1 , the agent processed and analyzed her possible actions of A , B , C , or D , and decided to do action A . At time t_2 , the agent acted and caused event A . This is also referred to as 'agent-caused events.'

Hard Determinism and Libertarianism both argue that free will and casual determinism are incompatible. It's one or the other, not both. Either the universe is determined, and we don't have free will, or we do have free will and this proves that the universe is not determined. Libertarianism, on the other hand, argues that we have free will, and therefore the universe is not determined.

² Not to be confused with the libertarian political party.

³ Within the reasonable bounds of pre-existing limitations, such as physical environment, society, state, genetics, etc.

Hard, or causal, determinism is a theory that the universe is physically determined. It logically follows that all decisions, events, and outcomes are determined because past causal events cause the next events to occur. This abstraction indicates that we do not have free will because everything is determined in one giant causal chain of events. At time t_1 , the agent processed and analyzed her possible actions of A , B , C , or D . However, and because of past events, there is only the *illusion* that the agent can choose between A , B , C , or D . She doesn't freely choose to act because A is determined, it the only possible action at time t_2 .

Today, most philosophers gravitate towards compatibilism, an argument that attempts to reconcile the disagreements between libertarianism and hard determinism by arguing that the opposing camps are both right and wrong. The dualistic perspective of compatibilism argues that it appears certain physical qualities about the universe are causally determined, yet at the same time, we still have a sense of free will, moral responsibility, and the cognitive ability to choose between different choices. Compatibilism, at its best, is an attempt to merge what the other opposing groups offer as explanation for how the universe works.

There is another new and emerging camp—hard incompatibilism.⁴ I will explain what this is and how this new perspective contends with compatibilism and the traditional incompatible debate. Before that, however, and to hone in on the heart of casual determinism, some further illustrate is necessary.

THE ROLLBACK WORLD, CRAPS, & LAPLACE'S DEMON

I'll use the Rollback World example to help illustrate what I mean by hard determinism. Consider the consequences if our World was mysteriously rolled-back to 1912 and replayed. If causal determinism is true—and permitting a hardline assumption that all events are universally

⁴ There is a subtle difference between 'hard determinism' and 'hard incompatibilism,' and I will attempt to make this clear below.

dictated—then all the events that happened prior to the Rollback will happen again and exactly as they had before.⁵

Historical events, such as the holocaust or the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, would replay without change events in the Rollback World. There are no other possible outcomes. This suggests that every event—human, physical, astronomical, or otherwise—in a causally determined universe are locked in place and unchangeable.

Consider for analogy the game of Craps. For the sake of simplicity, our imaginary Craps table has the following features: The Pass line, the Don't Come Bar, six place numbers called "points" (4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10), one puck, two six-sided dice, and a hundred dollars in chips per player. The object of the game is to win a bet. Let's play.

The shooter bets \$10 on the pass line and throws two dice. Five and three on the dice, "easy eight," and the puck is moved to point eight. With the pass line strategy, the shooter lays max odds on her original pass line for \$50 and her goal is to hit eight before rolling a seven. If she can hit eight, then she wins back her original pass bet, doubled, plus the odds bet that pays 6-to-5 odds. With \$60 at stake, her total payout could be \$130 if she wins.

The opposite strategy is playing on the 'dark side.' I place \$10 on the Don't Pass Bar. I'm betting the shooter will "Seven Out" before rolling the Eight and lay max odds on my original Don't Pass line for \$60. The odds on the Don't Pass Side pay less at 5-to-6 odds on the eight and I have \$70 at stake on the table, but my total payout could also be \$130. Why play on the dark side? The chances of the shooter rolling a seven are 5-to-1; given the natural distribution of the numbers, a Seven Out occurs between 50 to 70 percent during the game. I have higher odds of

⁵ Nietzsche's thought experiment of the "Eternal Return" could also apply as an illustration for causal determinism. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 273

winning by playing on the dark side. The shooter throws the dice four more times; *ten, five, nine, ten*—the fifth throw and “Seven out! No Eight!” She loses her bets to the house and I win my payout.⁶

Dice roles are random. Yet according to causal determinism, every rolled event is *really* determined. If the Rollback was applied as an existential quantifier on the game we just played on our imaginary craps table, then the dice would role in the exact sequence—*eight, ten, five, nine, ten, seven*—in every repeated Rollback scenario.

Determinism is a very old idea, but it was an 18th century mathematician and his book, *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, that really persuaded many of the best minds of the following century, to believe in determinism. Simon de Laplace argued that if classical mechanics are true, then a super intelligent being could predict all future outcomes with incredible accuracy.⁷ Laplace based part of his determinism on the idea that “we ought then to regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its anterior state and as the cause of the one which is to follow” (Laplace 4). In other words, one event causes the next.

With the discovery of quantum mechanics one can argue that the universe is not determined. The randomness of subatomic particles—such as radioactive decay—undermines the certainty of classical mechanics. As consequence, the super being of Laplace’s prediction model would not be able to predict long term events, resulting in atrophy of the model. One may wish to imply that casual determinism is rendered false only if subatomic randomness affects the outcome of large scale events, such as drinking a cup a coffee.⁸ However, that assuming such an argument

⁶ The first rule of gambling: the house *always* has the advantage.

⁷ Often referred as *Laplace’s Demon* (or *Superman*), this being at any given moment would know the exact location of every atom in the universe!

⁸ Compared to a quantum level event, drinking a cup of coffee is a large-scale event, which in itself is infinitesimal, compared to the galactic events of our milky-way galaxy.

would be committing a fallacy of composition; without solid justification, we don't know if what is true for random events at the quantum levels, are also true for events at the larger molecular and biological levels.

Likely, quantum randomness would have little to no direct influence on human nature, as suggested by Robert Bishop: "Quantum effects would be too insignificant in comparison to the effects of thousands of molecules to play any possible role in deliberation" (Bishop, in Kane 91). *Quantum mechanics does not vindicate free will.*

Another consideration for causal determinism is chaos theory, which generally implies that events are extremely sensitive to external factors, but this would not imply randomness. For illustration, consider that events in the rolled back world could be different, provided that in the second rollback some other external factor changed the outcome of events. Due to this unknown event, the Nazi party never gained power, a Russian cosmonaut landed on the moon, and the shooter hit eight on the next roll instead of seven.

Chaos theory gives us epistemological uncertainty, but ontologically, chaos theory does not trump arguments in favor of causal determinism, and like quantum mechanics, *chaos theory does not vindicate free will.*

CAUSAL HISTORY PRINCIPLE AND HARD INCOMPATIBILISM

Everything that has been discussed so far does not prove that we don't have free will, but there is enough reason to justify an assumption that we don't have the kind of properties required to have free will as defined above, unless one is willing to adopt compatibilism. To consider this perspective we'll need to examine the broader implications of agent causation and moral

responsibility. Consider the following requirement for a free act and moral responsibility as formulated by Derk Pereboom:

[1] An action is free in the sense required for moral responsibility only if it is not an alien-deterministic event, nor a truly random event, nor a partially random event. (Pereboom 126)

This is the “Causal History Principle,” and is the fundamental principle crucial for the argument of this essay. To be morally responsible requires that the agent is in control of her actions:

[2] If an agent is morally responsible for her deciding to perform an action, then the production of this decision must be something over which the agent has control, and an agent is not morally responsible for the decision if it is produced by a source over which she has no control. (126)

If we are agent causing beings, then we should live in an exclusive world free of the natural laws of the universe, but we live in this universe, and in this universe, we have reason enough to assume that events are causally determined.

Unlike the libertarian perspective outlined above, at time t_1 , agent x only *believes* she can or cannot choose to do acts A , B , C , D , or *Not*, at time t_2 , but in reality, it was not her free willing agency that caused the event to occur, rather, the event was a *consequence* of external or internal factors *beyond* her immediate control; the action was ‘alien-determined’ because she was not the original cause of her action. Our actions are a matter of alien-determined processes; *the conscious actor is merely aware of these processes as they occur*.

Now we have arrived at the skeptical view pigeonholed as ‘hard incompatibilism,’ which is a term used by Pereboom and I will primarily use this term for the remainder of this essay instead

of ‘hard determinism,’ but I will use ‘determinism’ when appropriate. Pereboom defines two theses for hard incompatibilism:

1. All of our actions and choices are either alien-deterministic events—events such that there are causal factors beyond our control by virtue of which they are causally determined, or truly random events—those that are not produced by anything at all, or partially random events—those for which factors beyond the agent’s control contribute to their production but do not determine them, while there is nothing that supplements the contribution of these factors to produce the events.
 2. Incompatibilism as defined by the Causal History Principle is true.
- (Pereboom 127)

This expanded scope implies “that freedom of [the kind necessary for moral responsibility] is incompatible with our actions and choices being events that lie on the continuum from alien-deterministic through partially random to truly random events” (127). It follows that we naturally lack the necessary properties for free will that are also required to be morally responsible.

If hard incompatibilism is true, the argument should focus on what is the best appropriate response in a causally determined (or random) universe, and in such a condition, that we are not moral responsibility. If we assume that hard incompatibilism is probably true, then what can we rationally do next, if anything?

Pereboom thinks we are simply not morally responsible in an alien-deterministic world, and I have reason to agree with hard incompatibilism:

For an agent to be morally responsible for an action is for this action to belong to the agent in such a way that she would deserve blame if the action

were morally wrong, and she would deserve credit or perhaps praise if it were morally exemplary. (Pereboom xx)

This skeptical view rejects the idea we have the kind of free will necessary for moral responsibility. Hard incompatibilism denies that we are the originating actors of our actions because all actions are alien-determined in nature, we cannot be morally responsible for our actions if those actions are caused by external forces. On this view, “a pervasive conception of ourselves as agents is lost” (135). Again, I think that if hard incompatibilism is true, then arguments in favor of moral responsibility and free will are—at best—*wishful thinking*.

Fortunately, we can retain a great deal of our framework of justice. Hard incompatibilism doesn’t imply that we can’t act, it only implies that our acts are not agent-causal. Although we lose our sense of moral responsibility and free willing acts, a hard-incompatible perspective does little to discredit or reduce any systems of justice like John Rawls’s first and second principles:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system for all.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:
 - a. To the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
 - b. Attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (Rawls 266)

Justice is what is best for the individual within the limits of what is acceptable for society, and by the same virtue, injustice is harm caused to either the individual or society or both. In addition,

and unlike libertarianism, a hard-incompatible perspective reinforces the idea of equality by leveling the playing field for all. Even Saul Smilansky gives this a slight nod:

There is a possible benefit for self-respect in the realization of the absence of libertarian free will, which follows from its ‘leveling’ effect. Normally it is thought that there are dramatic differences in worth among persons. The world functions in a way that reflects this belief, hence some people are not respected. (Smilansky 130)

Society remains capable of maximizing the overall well-being of its members, and at the same time, pursue every effort to combat harmful acts against the individual members of society. This is perfectly compatible with hard incompatibilism—although our actions are alien-determined—because we are rationally aware of our conscious processes as they occur. We have the capacity to recognize a wrongful act, which in turn causes us to find ways of mitigating similar wrongful acts that may reoccur. Again, a harmful act remains an injustice even if hard incompatibilism is true. However, the harmful actor is not a victim, because his actions are a consequence of past and determined events; consequently, the actor is not (alone) morally responsible for the acts that caused harm. The individual harmed is also not a victim, but because of circumstance, became the agent caused to suffer by the harmful act. What I mean, is that there is no reason to victimize people for determined acts of harm, yet for convenience, I suppose we could still call them ‘victims.’ They can still receive compensation for harmful act, and society is justified in preventing the criminal from causing future acts of harm.

The implications for blame and punishment cannot be underestimated with hard incompatibilism: “Some of our most prominent justifications for punishing criminals will be undermined by hard incompatibilism, and thus in some respects it may appear to permit fewer

policies of opposing crime than the alternative positions” (Pereboom 158). Since free agency is ruled out under hard incompatible conditions, criminals are not morally responsible for their harmful actions.

Even in extreme situations where a person knows that his actions will probably cause harm, that person is not morally responsible. For example, take a mass murderer harboring the intention to kill innocent people. He knows that if his method for killing mechanically works, i.e., an assault rifle, then he should be able to kill anyone he points the loaded weapon at, correctly aims, and fires. Short of a malfunction a well-aimed shot will kill.

To protect the interest of all members of society, it would be essential to quarantine people who cause harmful acts. However, criminal punishment based on ‘just desert’—that society should inflict pain and suffering on criminals, who have caused pain and suffering—because they deserve it, is entirely unjustifiable. On this argument an agent is not blameworthy for bad behavior, nor deserving of punishment for wrong acts: “Hard incompatibilism is incompatible with retributive justice for the reason that it rejects this notion of desert” (Pereboom 160). Any system of justice based on retribution is wrong, as there is no moral grounding for a retributive justice system that attempts to bring closure for victims.

Society can still deter crime with preventive measures if those measures are not retributive, or grossly unjust. Pereboom writes:

A much more resilient theory for justifying policies for protecting society from criminals, and one that is not threatened by hard incompatibilism, proceeds precisely by an analogy with the right to quarantine. [...] Suppose a person poses a danger to society by a sufficiently strong tendency to commit murder. Even if he is not in general a morally responsible agent,

society would nevertheless seem to have as much right to detain him as it does to quarantine a carrier of a deadly communicable disease who is not responsible for being a carrier. [...] We have a right to “quarantine” criminals; we have the right to tell people in advance that they will be isolated from society if they commit crimes. (Pereboom 174)

It is not the criminal who is blameworthy of condemnation, but the harmful act in-itself. Unfortunately, the agent is the possible embodiment and tool of dangerous and harmful ideas. It is necessary, and still perfectly acceptable within hard incompatibilism, for society to protect itself and individuals from dangerous and harmful acts caused by dangerous and harmful ideas.

If it was possible to accurately predict when a criminal will commit a crime, society could justify preemptively quarantining criminals before they can commit the crime. Yet this would entail serious implications for criminal rights, and to what extent preemptive quarantine presents for our rights of ‘due process’ remains unclear. Possessing such methods and future technology—even if remotely possible—may alone serve as the psychological edge that would prevent nearly everyone within society from even considering committing a crime.

Saul Smilansky presents two radical proposals of a rather novel approach to defend our sentiments of moral responsibility. He argues against the features of hard incompatibilism outlined above; namely the loss of individual freedom, moral responsibility, and respect. Yet take notice, he does not reject casual determinism. On the contrary, he unquestionably agrees that on the ultimate level, hard determinism is likely true and that, “robust libertarian free will is impossible [...]. One cannot transcend oneself in the robust, libertarian sense” (Smilansky, in Kane 426). Smilansky is primarily concerned with how detrimental and emotional negative a loss of

responsibility—and the loss of ‘up to us’—would be for most people, and therefore it is necessary to maintain the illusion we have morally responsible, and that we have free will, even though—ultimately—such beliefs are largely false. He thinks that by itself, hard incompatibilism misses some of the key features of our common sense understanding of ourselves and how we interact. Our everyday interactions appear to be compatible.

It appears to me that he is not arguing for ‘compatibilism’—as he also thinks that by itself, this perspective ignores certain features of ultimate reality—as an attempt to overcome monistic beliefs, and at the same time, have the best of both worlds. He refers to this as ‘control compatibilism,’ and I hope this illustrates why he thinks we need two dualistic perspectives:

Since the compatibilist perspective is the one we normally inhabit [...], and since it allows us moreover to face life, it is in a sense ‘deeper.’ From the perspective of our personal and social needs, and considering what we can be expected to take account of in ordinary life, the control compatibilist perspective is deep indeed. It is where we live, where we find our ‘up to usness’-based identity and meaning in life. To put it differently, the ultimate hard determinist perspective is alien to the ordinary evaluative and emotional depth we access in our lives. The ultimate and compatibilist perspectives are so contrastive that inhabiting both would be like living in two different worlds. But in practice we are so much within the compatibilist ‘world’ that the ultimate ‘world’ is largely unreal, or ‘merely theoretical,’ even for those aware of it. (Smilansky, pp. 194-5)

In modeling control compatibilism, he attempts to take the best features of determinism and compatibilism—that we can believe we are morally responsible—and argues for a

fundamental dualism and joint perspective that incorporates key features of both causal determinism and compatibilism. One intrinsic and central feature crucial for his argument is the core conception. According to Smilansky, the core conception is the high amount of respect and moral value we place on our conception of ‘up to us-ness’ that is crucial for our moral worth and self-respect.

To really get at the heart of our deep-seated desires for moral responsibility, consider the following scenarios:

1. Suppose I was driving a tractor-trailer on the interstate and obeying the speed limit. I was paying attention and noticed a small car passing me on my left. However—and suddenly—the car veers hard right into my trailer and is destroyed. I’m later told that the driver suffered a narcoleptic attack that caused him to veer into my semi-trailer, instantly killing him and his younger passenger.
2. Suppose I was driving a tractor-trailer on the interstate and obeying the speed limit, only this time I accidentally fell asleep at the wheel. As the car attempts to pass on the left, the truck veers left, crushing the car between the trailer and a concrete barricade. I awoke but only after it was too late to act; thereby instantly killing the driver and his younger passenger.

In the first scenario, I’m free of guilt because I was being responsible; the deaths were the fault of the other driver. In the second scenario, I’m guilty of negligence, and grossly responsible for the resulting deaths. If we have moral responsibility, and as we typically feel, (excluding psychopathy) I would feel enormous guilt for killing two people, because it was a preventable accident. However, if hard incompatibilism is true, I would not be responsible for their deaths. In a world lacking moral responsibility, I would not be blameworthy for my negligent behavior. Even

if it was proven that hard incompatibilism is true, I would still feel guilty for my actions. (Though, perhaps not quite as bad.) My point is that, given a hard-incompatible perspective, both scenarios are equal – they would have no moral weight. This is the problem that I believe Smilansky finds so disturbing with believing in a non-morally responsible perspective.

For the reasons illustrated, Smilansky argues that we must believe in free will, even if free will is false. What is at stake for Smilansky is our level of control—our up to us-ness—that generally implies the sense of our capacities to choose as rational, ‘up to’ agents. For the majority of what he considers our normative life, belief in our own personal control is central for our moral concerns. However, accepting hard incompatibilism forces us to give up our sense of self control and we lose our ‘up to us-ness.’

Smilansky further argues that the open denial of free will and moral responsibility will cause detrimental harm to our emotional senses of moral goodness and self-respect, people are reduced to a level of worthlessness and life becomes meaningless, and the denial of free will fails to respect persons. Moral attitudes erode without individual agency and responsibility: “The idea of giving up blame is merely fanciful, but to give up on deep blame-worthiness is momentous and destructive of deep moral feelings, appreciation, and justification” (Smilansky 163).

Smilansky’s primary attack against hard determinism—and consequently hard incompatibilism—is that, at the ultimate level, nearly all our morals, our feelings of justice, and our personal reactive lives—all the things that depend on the belief in free will—disappear and the core conception becomes shallow. I think Smilansky suggests that normative ethics must continue, and so it is necessary to persuasively allow for the continuation of free will beliefs—illusionism—even if ontologically they are not true.

This brings us to his second and radical proposal of illusionism, which is for Smilansky, “the vital but neglected key to the free-will problem [...]. I maintain that illusory beliefs are in place, and that the role they play is largely positive” (Smilansky, in Kane 433). Without such beliefs, our social constructs and how we respect ourselves and each other would drastically change for the worse. He insists that,

People, as a rule, ought not to be fully aware of the ultimate inevitability of what they have done, for this will affect the way in which they hold themselves responsible. [...] We often want a person to blame himself, feel guilty, and even see that he deserves to be punished. Such a person is not likely to do all this if he internalizes the hard determinist perspective, according to which in the actual world nothing else could in fact have occurred – he could not strictly have done anything else except what he did do. (In Kane, 434)

Smilansky’s argument for illusionism, given a very hard deterministic position, suggests that Pereboom’s account of moral self-worth is “shallow” and insufficient. A strictly determined view is shallow because the agent’s ownership of moral accomplishments isn’t really hers. She has no basis to claim that she deserves praise for her actions.

Even though he admits the truth of the ultimate level being determined, Smilansky fears that such a shallow arrangement of moral accomplishment undermines our ‘up to us’ capacity, and therefore, we lose our sense of self-worth, and he argues that: “The eradication of free will related distinctions does not make the hard determinist more humane and compassionate, but rather morally blind and a danger to the conditions for a civilized, sensitive moral environment” (Smilansky, in Kane 432).

Although Smilansky develops a novel solution to the free will problem, I'm not convinced that he is—overall—right. I think Smilansky is neglecting a very important aspect of our progressive humanism, and with it the desire to overcome the need to blame and punish ourselves and others. We have the capacity, though determined, to rationally recognize injustices and to adopt principles that do not cause harm to others. Interestingly, it's worth pointing out that Smilansky changed his position on hard determinism in *Free Will and Illusion*, contrasted against his earlier works. Pereboom writes, "Smilansky argues that hard determinism actually has an ethical advantage over the competing positions. In his conception, hard determinism allows for the possibility of an ethical life of greater purity than is possible if one believes that one is morally responsible" (Pereboom 152). I don't know why Smilansky changed his original position, but I surmise that it resulted from considering the loss of moral responsibility.

To counter, I think Pereboom would argue that we are perfectly capable of having a sense of moral worth by consistently doing the right thing:

Even in situations in which there are strong countervailing pressures, by regulating her behavior by moral reasons, by having dispositions to examine her past behavior from the moral point of view, and by possessing a willingness to change her behavior when tendencies to immorality are recognized. These features of moral worthiness would not be illegitimate or impossible if hard incompatibilism were true. (Pereboom 153)

I further argue that living an illusion, and at the same time, ultimately accepting determinism, is misguided. The issues for hard incompatibilism can be mitigated and we can fair better without the use of illusionism.

First, and by using a more offensive strategy for the hard-incompatible argument, it is not logically compatible for determinism and free will to both be true. To use a cliché, we can't have our cake and eat it too. Maintaining an illusion is living a philosophical lie, which undermines the metaphysical driving force behind our goals of seeking truth and expanding our knowledge. I think this point is also evident following the alien-deterministic qualities of our existence as described above. On a metaphysical level, hard incompatibilism simply makes more logical sense; but common sensibly, it is not so clear, and for this reason I'm sympathetic towards many people who need to believe in free will and moral responsibility.

Second, and a more defensive strategy for hard incompatibilism, is that an agent is not worse off in a hard-incompatible universe. Openly accepting the consequences and lack of moral responsibility is not as bad as Smilansky suggests. Pereboom argues "that our commonplace initial response of apprehensiveness toward hard determinism—more broadly toward hard incompatibilism—is an overreaction" (Pereboom 188). He admits that we lose some of the genuine feelings of achievement if we are not the originators of our actions and so not worthy of credit or blame. Nonetheless, we can still have a sense of fulfillment with our life projects; we can still have a sense of worth, accomplishment, and responsibility within the determined roles we play. If causally determined events cause a less than desirable outcome, then, and assuming we have the rational capacity to recognize our unfortunate circumstance, we can still recognize the conditional feelings of insufficiency that ultimately motivate us to seek out better life projects.

I'll admit that even with assuming the validity of hard incompatibilism, it would be terribly difficult not feeling remorse and guilt for negligent and harmful actions, as illustrated in the tractor-trailer accident scenarios above. This is an issue that needs further development in order to reconcile our deep-seated feelings of guilt and remorse.

On a lighter note, a minor problem I find with Smilansky's illusionism is that it strikes me as elitism, not that this is necessarily a bad quality, but out of the sense that Smilansky is largely supporting an 'intellectual coverup' of what could potentially be the reality of hard incompatibilism. In many respects, arguing for illusionism is like arguing that parents should continue perpetuating the false belief in Santa Clause to young children. It's a fun activity that also serves a purpose of encouraging children 'to be good,' and although the kids receive real presents, *Santa Clause is not real*. It helps to remember that if hard incompatibilism is true, we can't blame people for misguided arguments and beliefs, but that doesn't imply that our progressive rationality is at a static stalemate.

Setting our deep-seated beliefs aside, the objections to hard incompatibilism being a pessimistic force undermining our moral worth, indeed – our very sense of purpose – is misguided.

Illusionism is not ontologically rational if at the same time hard incompatibilism is ontologically true. Respect of persons is not violated or diminished without free will, nor is it necessary to believe in an illusion to maintain this respect. A no harm principle is sufficient enough, that is, I will not do to others what I wouldn't want done to me. This is a formulation that, with proper education, can persuasively guide people to behave reasonably and rationally, and with great care to avoid acts of negligence and harm.

For those who can't or refuse and who also inflict harm or break the laws determined best for society, then systems of justice will quarantine and rehabilitate.

Given this context, it is not necessary to maintain the belief in free will, as far too often 'free will' is used within the context of punishment and desert. We can retain a strong sense of accountability by relying on rationality and knowledge. Our unique intelligence and methods of developing new and better knowledge is perfectly compatible with hard incompatibilism; so are

our life experiences of human processes of trial and error. When ‘wronged’ we can overcome the strong impulses of anger and mitigate issues of resentment and revenge that result. Individuals who inflict harm are ultimately not morally responsible.

For those who inflict harm a more humane and efficient system can be set in place to both quarantine the actors of harmful acts, and at the same time, rehabilitate those actors to adopt new operators and beliefs. Society can have a healthy and vibrant morality that is overall, consistently just. Good members of society have privileges, live together, and continue to respect the rights of others.

Perhaps living with the challenges of hard incompatibilism is a noble task unto-itself. It is not the person that has the pride, but the task itself, and a process acted out through the person. Sartre wrote; “We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty and from the moment that he is thrown in to this world he is responsible for everything he does” (Sartre, in Kaufman 295). Ironically, he was right in that we do not create ourselves, but we are not responsible for everything we do within the framework of hard incompatibilism.

People are not self-originators and we cannot ultimately self-create ourselves. What ultimately happens to us and the choices we make are beyond our ultimate control.

I also contend that by affirming hard incompatibilism, life will become more authentic. In a sense, we accept our ‘fate’ and recognize that we are actors and not the self-originators of our actions. We can realize that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves; we can recognize that we can have a wonderful life and can continue to be unique individuals who are part of the human family. Our freedom, then, is the sense of becoming free of the blame, guilt, and repressive consequences associated with the false moral responsibility pushed on us by misguided beliefs in

free will. Our lives become more authentic and we can have greater compassion for each other, not less.

We have social freedom when society has good and just laws and makes every effort to maximize the human potential, and at the same time, protect the members from harmful acts. The latter effort works to reduce harmful acts. As individuals our acts are limited by external factors, but, humanity has a dynamic freedom of causally determined possibilities, but only if we consider freedom as the quantity of collective possibilities.

Paradoxically, this is the result of hard incompatibilism. It is not necessary for me to be free to do everything, yet when we consider the combined social arrangement of the entire human family, ergo we can conclude that we have substantial room for near-limitless possibilities; the larger our mass, the larger our human potential, which increases the quantity of causal event processes brought to our conscious awareness. This kind of quantitative freedom is a viable perspective within the framework of hard incompatibilism. Even without moral responsibility, we can still have a majestic sense of human freedom even if hard incompatibilism is true.

Perhaps someday, common knowledge will consider a belief in free will as the metaphysical equivalent to a belief in the geocentric model. Was humanity worse off with overcoming the false belief of a geocentric Earth? Not at all. On the contrary, formulating new models about celestial bodies and cosmology enhanced our knowledge about the universe that laid the ground work for space exploration; so too, will the belief in hard incompatibilism enhance our knowledge about ourselves and further our progress into the unknown universe.

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