3. Soft Determinism

**Tutorial Plan**

* Last Tutorial Review: Libertarianism inc. written answer 10 min.
* Soft Determinism (strengths, weaknesses) 10 min.
* Essay Practice: Soft Determinism paragraph 15 min.
* End of Topic Review: Free Will 5 min.
* *Optional: Essay Practice: Conclusion 5 min.*
* *Optional: Conscience 15 min.*

**1. Last Tutorial Review: Libertarianism**

* 1. Review questions 5 min.
* What is libertarianism? **Ans**. Free-will + moral responsibility
* What is another name for libertarianism? **Ans**. Incompatibilism
* Why is it called that? Ans. Claims determinism and free will incompatible
* Give an example of a libertarian philosopher. **Ans**. Can include Sartre.
* What did he think? Ans. “Man is condemned to be free”. Existences precedes essence, unlike an object we exist first and then must determine our own human nature/purpose. That means we are responsible for every choice we make.
* What is an example of an indeterminate event in science? **Ans**. Quantum jumps in atoms.
* What is the problem if moral decisions are indeterminate? Critics claim if moral decisions happen by chance and not under the control of anything and that a person could not have predicted or influenced, then it would be like thoughts suddenly occurring. Could mention Schopenhaur’s man whose legs start to move by chance.

1.2 Review exercise 5 min.

Review written response on libertarianism. Compare to model essay.

**2. Soft Determinism**

* 1. Exc. Dominic 10 min.

**Some aspects of people are determined. But we have free will so we are morally responsible for our actions.**

Compatibilists say that the belief in the incompatibility of free will and determinism rests on confusions of two kinds—confusions about the nature of freedom and confusions about the nature of determinism. Once these confusions have been cleared up, they insist, we should see there is no necessary conflict between freedom and determinism.

1. Don’t confuse determinism with constraint. Constraints prevent us from choosing what we want, but determinism, in the form of the laws of nature, do not necessarily constrain us.

2. Don’t confuse causation with constraint. Constraints are causes, but of a special kind e.g. being tied up or paralyzed. Bu not all causes are impediments to freedom. Some causes e.g. muscular strength or inner strength of will actually enable us to do more of what we want.

3. Yes our actions are caused by our character and motives, but that’s a good thing, because that’s what makes it **our** action, otherwise we could not be held responsible for the action.

4. Don’t confuse determinism with fatalism. Fatalism is the view whatever is going to happen is going to happen, no matter what we do. What we decide and what we do make a big difference in how thing out even if determinism is true.

5. Don’t confuse determinism with mechanism. Even if determinism is true we would not all be like machines running mechanically like watches. Unlike machines we have moods and feelings and consciousness and we react to the world accordingly. We reason and deliberate our actions, question our motives, reflect on values, reform our characters etc. These are the capacities that make us free and responsible.

Strength (from OCR)

* Soft determinism agrees that moral responsibility is important in our society, but that it is not reasonable to hold a person responsible for actions caused by his emotions, beliefs, desires and decisions if he has no choice about having them.
* Soft determinism also allows for creativity in our choices – so not all our choices are the result of existing desires and habits.

Weakness (from OCR)

* The problem for soft determinists to determine to what extent do we have free will. The complex nature of people and the roles of physics, genetics and psychology complicates determining what exactly is, or is not, a determining factor.
* If determinism is true, there is only one possible future, and that fact alone seems to rule out free will and responsibility.

Defence/Conclusion: The onus is on incompatibilists to prove the incompatibility of free-will and determinism!

* 1. An example of a soft determinist 10 min.

Immanuel Kant suggested in OCR textbook

Further Reading: Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=bTymsjJfKqAC&pg=PA186&dq=kant+soft+determinism&hl=en&sa=X&ei=aG06VMm7G4aV7Aawh4HYBA&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false>

What do you remember about Kant from your first year?

* Kant is a soft determinist, he believes that freedom when properly understood is compatible with determinism when properly understood. An event may be both determined by nature and grounded in freedom.
* For Kant, human will is “sensuous but free”. What do we mean? By sensuous he means the human will is affected by passion (i.e. influenced by emotions) but it not necessitated by passion (i.e. not fully determined).
* “There is in man a power of self-determination, independently of any coercion through sensuous impulses”.
* This self-determination has two aspects 1) sensible (perceptible in experience) and 2) intelligible (graspable only by the intellect).
* Free agency, our ability to make free decisions, is the intelligible (RATIONAL) cause of sensible (EMPIRICAL) effects and these sensible effects are part of an unbroken series of sensible events in accordance with unchangebale laws.
* Kant was a psychological determinist. He says “if we could investigate all the phenomena of human volition to their lowest foundation in the mind, there would be no action which we could not anticipate with certainty and recognise to be absolutely necessary from its preceding conditions”.
  1. Writing task 10 min.

Write written response on soft determinism. Compare to model essay.

* 1. Review Questions
* What is soft determinism?
* Who is an example of a soft determinist?
* Why do soft determinists think free will and determinism are compatible?
* What is a weakness of soft determinism?

**3. Overview task** 5 min.

Overview Table (exc. Dominic)

Define, example of philosopher, strength, weakness

**Extra: Write the Conclusion**

Write a conclusion to a free will essay. Write one sentence on each theory of determinism (hard, soft, libertarian) summarising whether successful.

**4. Conscience Intro** 10 min.

There are two main approaches to conscience:

* Religious views, including biblical teaching, Divine Command theory, Augustine, Aquinas, Butler, Newman, Bonhoeffer etc.
* Secular views, including psychological, sociological, humanitarian and authoritarian.

Today we’ll briefly cover some of the background to the religious views, looking at Biblical Background, Divine Command Theory and Augustine.

* 1. Divine Command Theory
* A divine command theory holds that an action is right or wrong because it is commanded or forbidden by God.
* So according to the divine command theory, it is not the case that God commands a particular action because it is right, or prohibits it because it is wrong; but instead an action is right or wrong because God commands or prohibits it.
* The idea of such an ethical theory is traced back to Plato’s Euthyphro (see handout), which asks the question of whether something is holy because the gods approve it or whether they approve it because it is holy.
  1. Biblical Background
* It has been argued that Divine Command Theory is biblically based. There are incidents recorded in the Bible in which an apparently immoral act was made the right thing to do by a divine command, thereby indicating that God is the source of moral obligation. For example…
  + Abraham’s intended sacrifice ce of Isaac, an instance of murder;
  + the Israelites plundering the Egyptians on their way out of Egypt, a case of theft;
  + the prophet Hosea taking a wife of fornication;
  + Jacob lying to deceive his father;
  + the patriarchs engaging in polygamy;
  + the Israelites divorcing foreign wives;
  + and Samson committing suicide
* Divine Command Theory also has a spiritual basis. Spiritual writers have argued that “human beings are at their best when they are surrendering to the will of God in all things”
* Objection: Since divine commands create morality, this means that if God prohibited honesty and commanded murder, then honesty would be wrong and murder would be right.
* Response: A response to this criticism is that the commands God issues are consonant with God’s nature as loving and benevolent, so that the aforementioned types of commands will not occur.
* Objection 2: If the divine command theory was true it would be difficult, if not impossible, to know what our obligations are. Think of the disagreements among theists on issues like capital punishment, birth control, abortion, and homosexuality.
* Response: This problem not unique to DCT. Some DCTheorists turn to the Bible, others prayer, others through reasoning.

So DCT tells us what is good and evil, but the question it begs is how do we distinguish good and evil.

4.3 Augustine

* Augustine accepted Divine Command Theory. He claimed conscience is the God-given ability to determine God’s law.
* PROBLEM It is descriptive and not prescriptive. This idea points to an idea of a loving God, but it still doesn’t tell us humans beings what to do. Aquinas will come up with a solution…