

**ПИСМЕНА ДУПЛИКА НА „СВОБОДНАТА ВОЛЯ, ДЕТЕРМИНИЗМА,
ЛИБЕРТАРИАНСТВОТО И АВСТРИЙСКАТА ИКОНОМИКА“**

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Резюме: Блок (2015г.) твърди, че позицията за Свободната воля е правилна, а тази на детерминизма е неправилна, и че либертарианството и австрийски икономика са съвместими с първо споменатата, но не и с последната. Еделщайн, Венцел и Салсидо (2016 г.) разкритикуват Блок (2015 г.) на това основание. Настоящата статия е дуплика до Еделщайн, Венцел и Салсидо. В статията се твърди, че позицията на детерминизма е неправилна; и че позицията на свободната воля е правилната, и че свободата на волята е важна както за австрийската икономика, така и за либертарианството.

Ключови думи: Свободна воля, Детерминизъм, Либертарианство

JEL: B, Z

**REJOINDER ON FREE WILL,
DETERMINISM, LIBERTARIANISM AND AUSTRIAN ECONOMICS¹**

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Abstract: Block (2015) claimed that the free will position is correct, that of determinism incorrect, and that libertarianism and Austrian economics are compatible with the former but not the latter. Edelstein, Wenzel and Salcido (2016) criticized Block (2015) on the grounds that. The present paper is a rejoinder to EWS. It argues that determinism is incorrect; that free will is correct, and that freedom of will is important for both Austrian economics and libertarianism.

Key words: Free Will; Determinism; Libertarianism; Austrian Economics

JEL: B, Z

¹ The authors thank David Gordon for helpful suggestions. The usual caveats of course apply; we are the only one responsible for all errors of omission and commission.

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I. Introduction

Block (2015) presented a defense of free will and a criticism of those who use scientific arguments from biology and neurophysiology to deny it. Most of that paper is a “deconstruction” of the reasoning that determinists use to deny individual freedom of choice. In their response to Block (2015), EWS (2016) construct a *positive* theory that Block allegedly professes, and then refute it. Yet, they mischaracterize Block’s view and a number of their criticisms are misguided. -In what follows, we will clarify the nature and the implications of Block’s position in Block (2015) in order to dispel the misunderstanding, and we will respond to some of EWS’s specific criticisms.

In section II we respond to the specific arguments offered by EWS. Section III is given over to other considerations which incline us in the direction of free will and away from determinism, both on the basis of these doctrines themselves, and on their compatibility with Austrian economics and the libertarian political philosophy. We conclude in section IV.

II. Block’s Non-Spooky Ontology

We wish to start by noting how EWS have mischaracterized Block’s³ understanding of freedom, particularly as it relates to physical causation. Consider this claim from EWS:

“Contrary to Block’s assertion, individuals can and do make choices in a deterministic world. If given a choice, for example, they could choose whether to drink scotch or soda. These are not ‘free’ choices, meaning free will is not the proximate cause of the choice. They are choices in that there is no external constraint on their drink selection... According to free will advocates, our will

² The authors thank David Gordon for helpful suggestions. The usual caveats of course apply; we are the only one responsible for all errors of omission and commission.

³ All references to “Block” such as this, unless otherwise specified, refer to the one article, Block (2015).

floats in space somewhere outside the brain. It emanates from our brain” (EWS, 2016).

EWS are here presenting free will as something outside of the physical causal order, floating in space somewhere. Block, however, does not hold that freedom is separate in this way. This can be clarified by considering the fact that, though Block does deny determinism, he also is a compatibilist. That is, Block believes that even if determinism were true, we may still have a relevantly free will; determinism and freedom are compatible. Freedom, then, does not require anything “floating” outside of the physical causal order that determinists believe in.

According to Block, although “there are causal connections in life, in chemistry, in physics, and some of what occurs to us is completely causal and apart from our will... there are at least some actions over which we have complete control.” This does not imply any anti-physicalist theory of action or mental states, or any “ghost in the machine” ontology; on the contrary – Block rejects such ontology outright. It simply means that there are free and unfree decisions and that the difference is fundamental. But this is not expressed in terms of the mind-body duality or any other variation on the old Cartesian theme. The position is perfectly compatible with physicalism and materialism.

An example of a free will doctrine rejecting the Cartesian dualism is the one offered by German biologist Martin Heisenberg (not to be confused with his physicist father, Werner). He argues (Heisenberg, 2005) that freedom of action for an individual is not predicated upon the existence of the consciousness exempted from neurophysiological causality. On the contrary, “we can act differently” because our biological make up is such as to allow for the formation of the “self-initiating, adaptive behaviour”. This means that, purely biologically speaking, human individuals, as well as virtually all animals, behave both as objects of external causation and as autonomous initiators of behaviour. For example, Heisenberg demonstrated in the laboratory setting that flies display changes in behaviour that are completely self-initiated, i.e. not caused by any previous experience or evolutionary pattern. They developed completely new mechanisms of dealing with external stimuli in real time (or multiple different responses none of which was developed before), in the same way humans can modify their behaviour in real time. Even at the level of unicellular organisms a pattern is observed of changing behaviour “ex nihilo”, without any external causation.⁴ Human freedom of choice is just one highly sophisticated form of this general biological capability of life to initiate behavioural changes independently of any external stimuli. So, free will and freedom of choice do not require a “ghost in the machine” ontology, and are perfectly compatible with modern biological science.

More generally, many philosophic doctrines understand freedom of will in terms of discerning whether an agent’s action has the right sort of source, such as coming from the agent’s own desires without being coerced, or from the agent’s own capacity to act according to reason. As long as an agent’s choice comes from the relevant process or has the relevant source within the agent, then we can say that the agent chooses it freely. When a behaviour results independent of that source, then we would say that it was unfree in some way, perhaps being a nervous tick or seizure rather

⁴ See Heisenberg (2005:165)

than a choice at all, or perhaps being a coerced choice, or some other variety of unfreedom. There are a significant variety of contenders for the relevant agential source compatible with ordinary physicalism, requiring nothing floating outside of the agent's brain or otherwise spooky, and many would be adequate for Block's purpose.

We will note here that Block (2015) is committed to compatibilism, so holds that we can be free even if determinism is true, though he thinks that determinism is in fact false. The importance of this compatibilism is two-fold. First, it makes clear that the sort of freedom Block believes in does not require anything supernatural or beyond what would exist in a deterministic physical universe. Second, it highlights that there are yet further arguments to be given beyond those from Block (2015) for why determinist theories do not undermine freedom; such theories are false, but even if they were true we could still be free.

III. The Relevance of Non-deterministic Physics

The next issue we wish to take up regards Block's (2015) appeal to cosmology and quantum mechanics. EWS seem to reject the significance of cosmological considerations altogether when they object that "a determinist can certainly hold a perspective on how the brain is structured and why choices result without in either case delving into the beginnings of the universe."

Block uses these scientific theories to demonstrate that the notion of deterministic causality is not a necessary feature of all theoretical explanations of natural phenomena within the current leading scientific theories. This is relevant because some people believe that human behaviour *must be* deterministic because they hold that the physical world as a whole is deterministic. Block's point, however, is that our best scientific understanding shows that at least some things in the world are not deterministic. This shifts the burden of proof to those who believe that human behaviour is deterministic. Such determinists must justify thinking that humans are like clockwork, rather than resembling atoms moving in a cloud chamber or the universe emerging in the Big Bang.

IV. The Uncertainty Principle

A further point of contention between EWS and Block regards the of quantum mechanics. Block (2015) maintains that within contemporary quantum mechanics, the uncertainty principle holds that the behaviour of certain subatomic particles is non-deterministic. EWS object, claiming that the principle is not about cause and effect, it concerns simultaneous measurement. Spthe uncertainty principle avers that precise, simultaneous measurement of some complementary variables ---- such as the position and momentum of a subatomic particle ---- is impossible" (EWS). To evidence this claim, EWS write that many scientists, including Albert Einstein, hold that "the Heisenberg uncertainty principle simply illustrates that human knowledge about the absolute nature of the universe is limited." That is, the principle is not about the actual nature of the physical objects, but merely about the limits of our ability to measure those objects. We wish to point out here that the interpretation from EWS conflicts with the dominant interpretation among physicists.⁵ On the dominant

⁵ See, Heisenberg, [1930] 1949; Bohr, 1949.

interpretation, the uncertainty principle does not merely claim that the measurement of complementary variables is impossible (although it includes that). It also directly and unequivocally denies the standard-for a particle with fully specified initial conditions it is not possible to predict through which of two slits it will pass in the famous double-slit experiment.⁶ It is possible only to calculate the probability of arrival of a photon at the detector behind the double slit plate. The “uncertainty” in the “uncertainty principle” refers to this probabilistic behaviour. In classical physics, once you know the initial conditions of an object, such as position and momentum, you can predict its trajectory; in quantum physics you can predict only the *probability* of a trajectory. The ordinary Newtonian causation does not apply at this level.

Moreover, quantum mechanics is much more than a theoretical scandal for determinism. It really *proves* strictly that determinism is false. In the absence of deterministic causality of the Newtonian-Einsteinian kind, the actions of humans, as well as events in nature, are characterized by a tremendous amount of indeterminacy. Our writing of this rejoinder was not predetermined at the moment the Newtonian clock was put in motion at the beginning of the Universe; it is rather a product of trillions of tiny, uncontrollable quantum fluctuations. No one can predict our future behaviour based on our past history, for the future is in fact not fully determined by the past. Contrary to determinism, things *could have been different*.

Regarding EWS’s appeal to the authority of Einstein, it seems that the latter was simply mistaken and could not bring himself to accept the unavoidable consequence of quantum mechanics – that the old Newtonian deterministic worldview cannot survive in modern physics. He famously said in a bitter exchange with one of the master-theoreticians of quantum mechanics, Niels Bohr: “God does not play dice”, alluding to the alleged impossibility of probabilistic laws of nature. Bohr responded to Einstein this way: “don’t tell God what to do” (Snow, 1981, p. 84). Indeed, as it would become obvious later, Bohr, Heisenberg, Pauli, Dirac and others were right and Einstein was wrong. Quantum mechanical laws are probably the most rigorously tested laws in the history of science and nobody has ever been able to demonstrate a single problem with them. Einstein, who by 1930 became an outsider in modern physics, was joined by other lesser figures in concocting all kinds of metaphysical speculations of why and how quantum mechanics may not be the “full story”. The often cited paper by Einstein and two coauthors from the 1930s (Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen, 1935) claimed that the phenomenon of quantum entanglement, a feature that a pair of entangled particles seems to “communicate” instantaneously, prompted Einstein to claim that this would contradict the relativity theory (the information would travel faster than light) and represented it as a “spooky action at a distance.”⁷ During 1960s and 1970s, a theoretical model and an experimental design were developed that allowed physicists to test rigorously the entanglement prediction. The results, repeated many thousand times since the 1970s, confirmed that entanglement was real: Bohr was right and Einstein was wrong.

All Einstein’s efforts to discredit relativistic, non-deterministic consequences of quantum mechanics were just a nostalgic attempt to resurrect the old Newtonian

⁶ For further elaboration see Feynman, Leighton and Sands (1965, pp. 1.1 – 1.8).

⁷ https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=spooky+action+at+a+distance+einstein; accessed on 5/21/16

worldview, without any scientific justification whatsoever. It was driven by philosophical aversion towards scientific indeterminism, rather than by any solid argument. As Martin Heisenberg said of Einstein and his fellow quantum mechanics sceptics: “It would be in their view desirable to return to the reality concept of classical physics... They would prefer to come back to the idea of an objective real world whose smallest parts behave objectively in the same sense the trees and rocks do, irrespective of whether or not we observe them... It cannot be our task to formulate the wishes as to how the atomic phenomena should be; our task could only be to understand them” (Heisenberg, 2000: 129).

We see, then, that Einstein’s comments and reservations about quantum mechanics were not an alternative scientific theory calling it into question, but irrelevant and baseless private opinions properly ignored by modern science. And therefore Block’s (2015) invocation of quantum mechanics as an example of breaking down of the Newtonian cause and effect determinism is fully justified.

V. Freedom and Punishment

We will now move on from the matters of physics to consider EWS’s objection to Block’s (2015) considerations of punishment. Block argued that punishment of violent criminals who will not repeat their offenses depends upon a belief in free will. EWS respond that this overlooks restitution and deterrence. Deterrence in particular has long been accepted by theorists sceptical of free will as sufficient justification for punishment.

One thing that is important to note, however, is that punishment is expected to deter crime because it changes the incentives, particularly increasing the costs of crime, for potential criminals. Such deterrence presupposes a conscious subject who rationally responds to incentives, and thus can be deterred. Such rational choice in response to incentives, however, constitutes precisely the sort of free will that Block endorses. The deterrence-based arguments for punishment, then, presuppose freedom rather than providing a justification for punishment independent of freedom.

Matters are no better with regard to EWS’s treatment of restitution. Drawing on Rothbard’s understanding of criminal sanctions as properly aimed as restitution rather than retribution, EWS argue that restitution “... is not about the reason a criminal does something” including whether the criminal act was determined or free. EWS thus hold, contrary to Block (2015) that punishment in a libertarian society, because it is based on restitution, does not depend upon free will.

The first problem with EWS’s suggestion is that restitution does not seem to justify sanctions in an important set of crimes, particularly murder. To whom is the murderer is going to make restitution?⁸ Rothbard, of course, did not overlook the need to deal with murder and he explicitly sees restitution as the basis for only some of the sanctions necessary in a libertarian society. Restitution is a principal concern for crimes short of murder, and Rothbard emphasizes it as a part of his critique of then fashionable concepts of criminal punishment as “paying debt to society.” He wants to rehabilitate older individualistic notions of restitution to the victims. However, for the case of

⁸ Apart of course, from the heirs of the victim.

murder, Rothbard, according to the proportionality criterion, advocated the death penalty: “under libertarian law, capital punishment would have to be confined strictly to the crime of murder. For a criminal would only lose his right to life if he had first deprived some victim of that same right” (Rothbard, 1998: 85). So we see that Rothbard’s own account of punishment, though primarily grounded in restitution, includes elements of retribution.

There is a more pressing problem for EWS’s appeal to restitution, for restitution too presupposes that people have free will. In particular, an agent’s free will is what determines who exactly owes restitution. To see this, suppose that there is no free will, and the present authors steal a car. EWS and other free will deniers do not seem to have an adequate way of determining who should pay restitution. Perhaps we, the thieves, should pay, but it could just as well be our friends, families, “society,” or non-human parts of nature that played a role in causing the theft of the car. If we are all unfree, it is not clear why some person in the causal chain rather than another should be made to pay. To be clear, it will do no good to say that the people actually physically taking the car are the ones who must pay restitution, for we may simply add that we use a drone or robot to steal the car. Assuming one does not wish to say that the drone must pay restitution, one must explain why the demand goes back to us (the senders of the drone) but not back further to those that caused us to send the drone. We are poor little marionettes subservient to the biological causation in our brains and of outside forces. It’s not clear how one can establish the legal concept of individual responsibility for restitution (EWS seem to advocate that) without accepting the notion that a criminal has free will, and is thereby *responsible*- for committing a crime.

VI. Austrian Economics and Free Will

As a final reply to specific criticisms from EWS, we will take up the relation of Austrian economics and free will. EWS describe Mises, Hayek and Spencer as Austrian economists and “determinists.” We are not sure why they include Spencer, who is not in any clear sense an Austrian economist, but assume EWS are thinking of Spencer as something of a “fellow traveler” with the Austrians. We will focus our concern on Mises, the exemplar of Austrian economists. EWS appear inconsistent in their treatment of Mises, first describing him as a “determinist,” later as merely “not ruling out determinism,” and then finally evidencing their interpretation of Mises with a quotation from *Human Action* (Mises, 1998) in which Mises argues that for the purposes of the science of economics one does not have to bother at all with issues of determinism and free will. He simply points out that the problem of free will belongs to psychology or ethics and not the economics which is the subject matter of *Human Action*. Therefore, citing the passage from *Human Action* which expresses this view is irrelevant for the debate about free will, and does not prove that Mises held any particular view in this regard, even less that he was a “determinist” or rejected free will.⁹

In other areas, however, Mises takes a stance supporting a sort a view of freedom more or less like that defended by Block. For instance, Mises (1962) writes: “Man is not, like the animals, an obsequious puppet of instincts and sensual impulses. Man has the power to suppress instinctive desires, he has a will of his own, he chooses

⁹ Gordon (2016) mentions “Mises’s account of free will as a methodological postulate, as well as Mises’s criticism of economic determinism in *Theory and History*.”

between incompatible ends. In this sense he is a moral person; in this sense he is free.”¹⁰ This brings out an important way in which all Austrian economists must endorse free will, for perhaps the most basic building block of this school of thought is that “man acts.” Let us elaborate on this notion by considering an extended quote from the outset of Mises’s (1998, p.11) magnificent and monumental volume:

“Human action is purposeful behavior. Or we may say: Action is will put into operation and transformed into an agency, is aiming at ends and goals, is the ego’s meaningful response to stimuli and to the conditions of its environment, is a person’s conscious adjustment to the state of the universe that determines his life. Such paraphrases may clarify the definition given and prevent possible misinterpretations. But the definition itself is adequate and does not need complement or commentary.

“Conscious or purposeful behavior is in sharp contrast to unconscious behavior, i.e., the reflexes and the involuntary responses of the body’s cells and nerves to stimuli. People are sometimes prepared to believe that the boundaries between conscious behavior and the involuntary reaction of the forces operating within man’s body are more or less indefinite. This is correct only as far as it is sometimes not easy to establish whether concrete behavior is to be considered voluntary or involuntary. But the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness is nonetheless sharp and can be clearly determined.

“The unconscious behavior of the bodily organs and cells is for the acting ego no less a datum than any other fact of the external world. Acting man must take into account all that goes on within his own body as well as other data, e.g., the weather or the attitudes of his neighbors. There is, of course, a margin within which purposeful behavior has the power to neutralize the working of bodily factors. It is feasible within certain limits to get the body under control. Man can sometimes succeed through the power of his will in overcoming sickness, in compensating for the innate or acquired insufficiency of his physical constitution, or in suppressing reflexes. As far as this is possible, the field of purposeful action is extended. If a man abstains from controlling the involuntary reaction of cells and nerve centers, although he would be in a position to do so, his behavior is from our point of view purposeful.” This contribution of Mises’ implies that people have a will of their own through which they make purposeful choices. This will is distinct from mere *behavior* or “reflexes.”

We see a similar emphasis on distinguishing action from mere behaviour in the work of Austrian economist Murray Rothbard. For instance, Rothbard (1981) writes in this regard:

“Suppose, for a moment, that we define a virtuous act as bowing in the direction of Mecca every day at sunset. We attempt to persuade everyone to perform this act. But suppose that instead of relying on voluntary conviction we employ a vast number of police to break into everyone’s home and see to it that every day they are pushed down to the floor in the direction of Mecca. No doubt by taking such measures we will increase the number of people bowing toward Mecca. But by forcing them to do so, we are taking them out of the realm of action and into mere motion, and we are depriving

¹⁰ However, we must acknowledge that the remainder of this passage reveals Mises not to be as clearly in support of free will as might be imagined.

all these coerced persons of the very possibility of acting morally. By attempting to compel virtue, we eliminate its possibility. For by compelling everyone to bow to Mecca, we are preventing people from doing so out of freely adopted conviction. To be moral, an act must be free.”

When people are compelled to bow in the direction of Mecca, they are engaging in “mere motion.” It seems that Rothbard would say much the same if the people were not pushed, but instead went to the floor because they slipped on unexpected banana peels or had seizures. It is only when they bow of their own accord that they can be said to be engaging in human action. This concern for human action in contrast to mere motion just is a concern for when people express a free will. Such freedom, then, is part of the core building blocks of the Austrian project.

It is also important to note that Rothbard vehemently rejected at least a the sort of determinism that holds that the actual causes of human behaviour can ever be sufficiently known to allow prediction while dispensing with talk of purposeful choice. Rothbard worried that many economic historians had overly “mechanical” economic views (Gordon, 2010) and that many social scientists may dismiss consciousness as positivists and behaviourists had, or endorse a crude social determinism, like that endorsed by some Marxists, according to which the ideas people hold are mere by-products of the institutions or conditions under which they live (Rothbard 2006). While some aspects of nature are indeed mechanical, predictable, and can be understood without appeal to consciousness, Rothbard (2006) argues that “it is an essential attribute of man's nature that he has consciousness, and therefore that his actions are self-determined by the choices his mind makes.” Again, this foundational concern for individual choice is central to the project of Austrian economics.

We get a clear picture of what Rothbard (2006) rejects when he writes: “At very best, the application of determinism to man is just an agenda for the future. After several centuries of arrogant proclamations, no determinist has come up with anything like a theory determining all of men's actions.” It is determinism, not as a general philosophic doctrine, but as a view according to which we will “be able, some day, to determine what man's choices and actions will be.” Rothbard (2006) particularly names “behaviorists, positivists, Marxists” in this regard. Historically, many of the behaviorists hoped to not only predict human behaviour, but also to engineer it (much as some self-styled “choice architects” aspire to today). People, however, are not simple and mechanical in this way, and attempts to understand, and manipulate, them in this deterministic fashion are unlikely to succeed. Beyond Rothbard's arguments to this effect, we would also highlight Hayek's important work on complex systems, which include economic and social systems, as well as human minds (see Hayek 1967, Gaus 2006, 2007). Complex systems, even when composed of parts that are determinate and simple, can be practically impossible to predict because they have sensitivity to initial conditions, feedback mechanisms that can amplify or reverse a pattern, and similar characteristics that prevent precise prediction of the behaviour of particular elements. Of course, general patterns of the aggregate system can often be understood, as that the weather will include more rain in Seattle than Tucson over the next year or that increases in minimum wage will tend to increase unemployment, without being capable of predicting the details for individuals, such as what specific days will get rain or which specific person will become unemployed.

We see from these considerations not only that the Austrian economists did endorse free will, but also why such an endorsement is central to their project. The Austrian tradition, in contrast to theories in the grip of scientism and adopting an overly mechanistic view of human behaviour, sees humans as purposeful choice makers, responding not merely in instructive ways to external stimuli, but through their own desires and preferences in ways that are largely unpredictable.

VII. Additional Considerations for Libertarians

Outside of the specifically economic considerations, and in the broader moral and political domain, Rothbard brings out additional reasons for his commitment to free will. For instance, Rothbard (1998/1982, p. 80) writes against “incitement” laws. “Since every man is free to adopt or not adopt any course of action he wishes, we cannot say that in some way [an inciter] *determined* the members of the mob to their criminal activities; we cannot make him, because of his exhortation, at all responsible for *their* crimes.”¹¹ The point is, the members of the “crowd” are able to make up their own minds concerning the question of whether it is wise, ethical, to riot. They are *free* to choose their own reaction to the inciter. This view makes sense, for if anyone is to be held responsible at all, it must be the members of the crowd who are freely choosing to riot. To hold the inciter responsible seems to deny that the rioters themselves actually had a free choice in the matter, but if the rioters are not free and responsible, it is not clear how the inciter can be thought to be so for his own riot-encouraging behaviour.

In a related vein, libertarian philosopher Tibor Machan (2004) argues that many of our normative judgments, moral and otherwise, presuppose free will. Claims about what actions are right or wrong, laws are just or unjust, arguments are sound or unsound, rights deserve respect, and so on, all imply claims about what we ought to do, implement, believe, or show respect for. According to the principle that ‘ought implies can,’ Machan argues, “... only if it is possible to choose to do something can it be the case that it ought to be done. So the very meaningfulness of the advocacy of political ideals implies that free will exists.” That is, we must think that people are free to choose whatever it is we say that ought to do, for “something they have no choice about cannot be something they morally ought to and can fail to do.” The behaviorist who spurns consciousness for “objective” laboratory data must rely on the consciousness of his laboratory associates to report the data to him” (Machan).

Nor can we ignore this additional point made by Machan (2004): “Those who deny that we have free will simply cannot make sense of our distinction between cases in which one controls one's behavior and those in which one is being moved by forces over which he or she has no control. When we face the latter sort of case, we still admit that the behavior could be good or bad but we deny that it is morally and legally significant - it is more along lines of acts of nature or God by being out of the agent's control. This is also why philosophers who discuss ethics but deny free will have trouble distinguishing between morality and value theory - e.g., utilitarians, Marxists.”

¹¹ Here, to be clear, we are not claiming free will is correct because Rothbard and Mises says so, but instead aim here merely to demonstrate their views on this issue.

IV. Conclusion

We have saved one of the best arguments in this entire genre for last. Caplan (1991) offers a “*reductio ab absurdum*.” I shall begin with the assumption of determinism, and show that it leads to the self-contradictory position of abject skepticism.

“Now it is a fact that people disagree on many questions; this leads us to wonder if on any given issue we are correct. How is the determinist to come to grips with this? If the content of my mind is determined entirely on the level of micro-particles, how would I ever double-check my views? I would be determined to believe them; and if arguments convinced me, then they would be determined to convince me. The crucial point is that my views -- correct and incorrect alike -- would be the result of inexorable causal forces. And these forces determine people to error just as inexorably as they determine them to truth. Of course, I might be correct by coincidence. But knowledge is *justified* true belief; and when we are pre-determined to believe whatever we happen to believe no matter what, it is hard to see what the justification of our beliefs is.

“Put succinctly, if we have knowledge we must accept beliefs only because we understand them to be true; but if determinism is correct, then we automatically accept whatever beliefs that our constituent micro-particles impose on us, since as Searle says, scientific explanation works from the bottom up. It might be the case that those micro-particles coincidentally make me believe true things, but the truth would not be the ultimate causal agent acting upon me.

“Determinism, then, leads to skepticism, the denial of the possibility of justified true belief. This is a controversial issue, but I hold that skepticism is necessarily false. For suppose we affirm skepticism. Then we may wonder if we know that skepticism is true. If we do know it, then at least one item of objective knowledge exists, which contradicts the premise. But if we don't know that skepticism is true either, why should we accept it? To recap: Determinism implies skepticism; skepticism is necessarily false; Hence determinism is false.”

It is difficult to see how the deterministic position can withstand this knock-out blow. The *reductio ad absurdum* is one of the most powerful tools in the entire armament of the philosopher. Caplan starts out with the basic postulates of determinism. He rigorously and logically deduces from those premises, and arrives at conclusions impossible to defend. We must thus look askance at the basic building blocks of determinism, and embrace the free will position.¹²

Rothbard (2006) put the point this way: “If we are determined in the ideas we accept, then X, the determinist, is determined to believe in determinism, while Y, the believer in free will, is also determined to believe in his own doctrine. Since man's mind is, according to determinism, not free to think and come to conclusions about reality, it is absurd for X to try to convince Y or anyone else of the truth of determinism. In short, the determinist must rely, for the spread of his ideas, on the non-determined, free-

¹² For other refutations of determinism, see Lucretius, 2005; Searle, 2008;

will choices of others, on their free will to adopt or reject ideas. In the same way, the various brands of determinists-behaviorists, positivists, Marxists, and so on-implicitly claim special exemption for themselves from their own determined systems. But if a man cannot affirm a proposition without employing its negation, he is not only caught in an inextricable self-contradiction; he is conceding to the negation the status of an axiom.

“A corollary self-contradiction: the determinists profess to be able, some day, to determine what man's choices and actions will be. But, on their own grounds, their own knowledge of this determining theory is itself determined. How then can they aspire to know all, if the extent of their own knowledge is itself determined, and therefore arbitrarily delimited? In fact, if our ideas are determined, then we have no way of freely revising our judgments and of learning truth-whether the truth of determinism or of anything else.

“Thus, the determinist, to advocate his doctrine, must place himself and his theory outside the allegedly universally determined realm, that is, he must employ free will. This reliance of determinism on its negation is an instance of a wider truth: that it is self-contradictory to use reason in any attempt to deny the validity of reason as a means of attaining knowledge. Such self-contradiction is implicit in such currently fashionable sentiments as "reason shows us that reason is weak," or "the more we know, the more we know how little we know."

In the view of Machan (2004): “The determinist wants us to believe in determinism. In fact, he believes we ought to be determinists rather than believe in this myth called ‘free will.’ But, as the saying goes in philosophy, ‘ought’ implies ‘can.’ That is, if one ought to believe in or do something, this implies that one has a choice in the matter; it implies that we can make a choice as to whether determinism or the free will is a better doctrine. That, then, it assumes that we are free. In other words, even arguing for determinism assumes that we are not determined to believe in free will or determined but that it is a matter of our making certain choices about arguments, evidence, and thinking itself.”

Why is it so? It is because Machan is in effect saying that supporters of the determinist position necessarily commit a performative contradiction.¹³ Statements of its adherents, e.g., “We should all accept the determinist position since it is correct”, their “performance,” logically contradict the position they are trying to foist upon us, since if determinism were correct, we could not choose between the two positions. Rather, we would be compelled, not by a gunman but by the make-up of our brains and all we have experienced, to accept one side or the other. The “debate” between the two, in this regard, would be akin to a fraud. It is already (pre) determined, by history and our physical beings, mainly our brains.

¹³ For an elaboration of this concept, see Hoppe 2006

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