

# PHI 202 | Precept on lectures 13 and 14

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## READINGS:

Taylor, R. (1992). Freedom and Determinism. In his *Metaphysics*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Prentice Hall.

Frankfurt, H. (1971). Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person. *The Journal of Philosophy*.

## DETERMINISM AND COMPATIBILISM

(1) Both *determinists* and *compatibilism* accept that metaphysical determinism is true, but disagree whether this means that we have no free will. Why do determinists think that we have no free will?  
(Whole group)

(2) How does Frankfurt respond (in an earlier paper) to the argument for determinism? What is his counter-example?  
(Whole group)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE WILL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

(3) Suppose *we* discovered that *you* don't have free will. How would you react to this news? How should it affect the way *we* interact with *you*: our attitudes and practices? In other words, why does it matter that we have free will?  
(Breakout rooms → whole group)

(4) *Kevin H*: "One thing I was wondering is if we can approach the problem of moral responsibility in the case of determinism from a different perspective, like utilitarianism. If no one is morally responsible for their actions, the world would be in chaos, so could we say it would be better to assign moral responsibility to an agent, even if we are unsure about free will, for the overall benefit of the world?"  
(Whole group)

## FRANKFURT ON FREEDOM OF THE WILL

(5) As we saw above, Frankfurt rejects the idea that freedom of the will consists in the ability to do otherwise. Instead, he claims, a person has free will just in case they have second-order volitions and they can bring their first-order desires into line with them. Can you explain this view in more detail?  
(Whole group/explain)

(6) Is the harmony between second-order volitions and first-order desires *sufficient* for freedom of the will and/or moral responsibility? Liam, Griffen, Long, Logan, and Kevin C all gave interesting cases which put pressure on this idea. Here are just two of these:

(i) *Liam*: "... what if your second-order desire is really messed up, but you have never had the opportunity to correct it. In other words, what if you have morally heinous second order desires entirely because of your ignorance. Is it feasible that you can still be truly morally responsible?"

(ii) *Kevin C*: "*Kevin C*: "Mental disorders are considered when trying a person under the law, to see whether they were in the right mindset while committing the certain crime. Should they also be considered when assessing the moral responsibility of the person? The second order volition of a mentally ill person, say a psychopath, would be a violent one that causes harm to people. Would the moral responsibility still be put on the psychopath, or would we disregard it as his mental disorder is having an effect on the second-order volitions he has?"

(Whole group)