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# The Philosopher's Stone

Philosophical Discussion Group, Armstrong State University

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# THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

## **The Freedom Dialectic: A Dialogue**

By Jon Hatcher (jhatch1123@gmail.com) and  
Duong Vo (dv3326@stu.armstrong.edu)

Duong: Growing up, I felt that my happiness was determined by how prestigious my college education was.

Jon: That's natural, I'm sure you heard that from your parents.

D: Not just my parents, but almost everybody.

J: Right, and societal influences like that can make you feel like you're not in control.

D: It feels like some kind of psychological determinism.

J: I would call it societal determinism because it's the society which is influencing your decisions.

D: Yea but the psychological part of it is what troubles me. You think you're free because it's your mind, but in reality you're not.

J: Ok, so you're worried that our sense of freedom could be false.

D: Yes, and that's my problem with the compatibilist idea of freedom. You can't be free and determined.

J: The compatibilist idea is that if you feel free then you are free. You or I would call this a false freedom because we are not compatibilist.

D: It seems that by being a compatibilist you ascent to the causal chain, which to me sounds like determinism.

J: I agree, but the compatibilist belief is often a way to both consider yourself to be free and have beliefs in God. If God is all-knowing then he knows the future which means the future is determined, yet we feel free. This is a simplified example, but compatibilism is how people cope with two seemingly contrary beliefs. Of course we look at this and say, "You're not free."

D: I do appreciate the argument, but for me it seems like a cop-out. To me freedom is a state of being. It is what we are.

J: So you're saying that we are perpetually free? Human consciousness is so free that it is crippled by the multitude of possibilities.

D: It could be crippling, but it could also be illuminating right?

J: Right, so to me this sounds like Jean-Paul Sartre. However, if I am perpetually free then why do I need to blink?

D: You, in a material sense, have to blink but your consciousness does not have to ascent to that necessity. I believe there is a freedom in that even though it might not seem so at first.

J: So you're saying that consciousness is completely separate from the material body.

D: It would have to be, which brings up questions of the afterlife. Do you see any way for consciousness to be both free and attached to the material body?

J: Let's shy away from the topic of the material world. Can consciousness, not human consciousness, pure consciousness be free? Consciousness is always a consciousness-of-something; by this definition the phenomenon of consciousness necessitates three things: the conscious being, the being that the consciousness is conscious of, and the relationship between those two things.

D: So you're saying consciousness must pursue, right? The free pure consciousness is in pursuit of itself.

J: Now you sound like Hegel, wherein all of existence throughout history is just God coming to terms with himself.

D: Right, all of existence is self-contained.

J: My problem with that is that it sounds like determinism. If a thing must pursue and the only thing it can pursue is itself then that thing is determined to pursue itself. It's also cyclical; if pure consciousness pursues itself then it perpetuates its own existence. When a thing perpetuates its own existence then it lacks the freedom to not exist.

D: It may sound cyclical, but that may be a result of thinking of freedom of consciousness and its relationship to the material life.

J: So you will have to define freedom in such a way that your theory doesn't sound deterministic to me, but before you do let me just give you something to think about. Before the existence of consciousness, there existed this endless, perfect expanse of infinite spontaneity. Consciousness came about due the natureless nature of this infinite spontaneity. Sorry if this is a little abstract.

D: Oh it's very abstract, but I follow you. This infinite spontaneity, is that not freedom?

J: I would say no, because a part of freedom is the ability to choose between infinite spontaneity and order. The ability for freedom comes from the fact that consciousness is separate from infinite spontaneity.

D: Ok, but you have turned consciousness into an effect, and that makes it subject to a causal chain.

J: Yes, but if what you say is true then what of ethics? What of rationality? The only value in your hypothetical existence is freedom.

D: It has to be this way. If there was any other real objective value beside freedom it would mean that consciousness is not free. It would have to submit to this value, and therefore cannot have the property of freedom. It would seem consciousness can only pursue freedom.

J: Damn it, well if anything you've proven that I'm a compatibilist. Not in the sense of my beliefs regarding God, but for the sake of rationality and ethics. My beliefs on those subjects require me to reject this notion of a self-contained consciousness.

D: If anything Jon, I screwed myself over because I specifically stated that the ideas of compatibilism are

contradictory and therefore invalid. My conclusion from this conversation states that consciousness and "consciousness of" both have the contradictory value of being free and deterministic, and it seems I have to accept it logically. Such hypocrisy!

## What's Your Freedom?

<i>Categories of Freedom</i>	<i>Based on...</i>
<b>Metaphysical freedom</b>	Rational understanding.
<b>Democratic freedom</b>	Which country and constitution you have sworn allegiance to.
<b>Consumer freedom</b>	How much money you have and buying whatever you want.
<b>Sexual freedom</b>	Gender identity - Having sex with whomever one wants.
<b>Physical freedom</b>	Technology – To move about freely, like drive from one state to another without hindrance.
<b>Psychological freedom</b>	Your understanding of your own consciousness in which you choose your own motivations.
<b>Religious freedom</b>	Faith – to worship publicly without fear of reprisal. Associated closely with "democratic freedom"

### OUR NEXT PDG MEETING WILL BE A FREEDOM PICNIC

**Nov. 14 @ 3pm outside at the  
Coffee Bluff Marina**  
(at the southern most end of Coffee Bluff Road  
which is a continuation of White Bluff Road)

**We hope you have enough  
FREEDOM  
to join us!**

The food will be free though we do not believe the food has freedom. The drinks are determined by your freedom if you are free. If you are determined to sit at this meeting, then freely bringing a chair is a necessity.