



THE COLLEGE OF
WOOSTER

Agency: The Art of Human Choice

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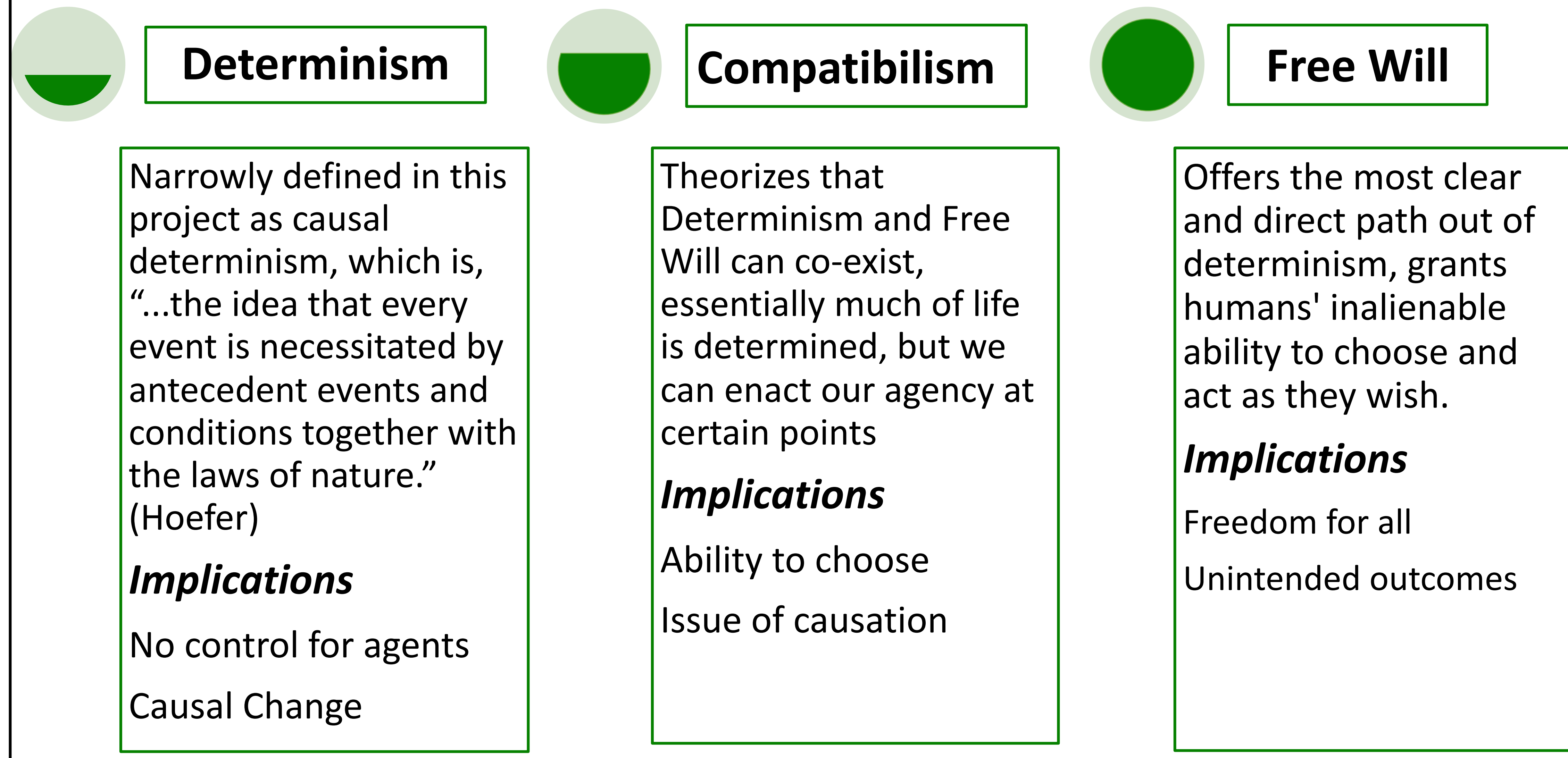
Finding Space Between Free Will and Determinism

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Impetus

The quarrel between Free Will and Determinism has been on-going in the field of Philosophy for centuries. The concept of Free Will supports every individual's ability to make their own choices. Determinism on the other hand insist that humans are not free to choose, but rather fated to do the whatever it is that they end up doing. This has long interested me, so I sought to evaluate compatibilism as a way to work around this dichotomy. Traditionally, Free Will and Determinism are taken to be incompatible, however Compatibilism theorizes that they can co-exist.

Philosophical Theories



Agency

The Free Will and Determinism question is too broad to truly help us decide anything definitive about our own lives. Agency grants individuals the ability to act, without tying them to a larger system.

Thinkers

- Charles Taylor
- Harry Frankfurt

Implications

- Removes intent
- Identity formation
- Responsibility of crafting the will



Literary Conceptions of Agency

"Waiting for Godot"

- Play written by Samuel Beckett
- Situates Estragon and Vladimir in a nondescript plane
- Emphasizes the inherent duality in agency that restricts it from being an indubitable good
- Dramatizes the paradoxical conception of agency, both characters are capable of free thought and action, but they restrict themselves from meaningful action

"Oedipus Rex"

- Play written by Sophocles
- Dramatizes the question of agency by juxtaposing the supernatural necessity of prophecy with the actions willingly taken by Oedipus
- Oedipus is influenced by the prophecy, but it is incapable of making him take actions
- Although Oedipus commits all the atrocities that he does unknowingly, the simple fact is that he did it

So What?

Much like Descartes and the *Cogito*, our individual sense of agency must be individually conceived and so long as we can cling to some semblance of agency then we can convince ourselves that we are acting out of our volition without subscribing to one of the three prevailing systems.

