

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY AND SEMIOTICS  
Department of Philosophy

Yangsen Yu

**MA Thesis: Defending Conditional Analysis of the Ability to Do Otherwise**

Supervisor:

Bruno Mölder

**Table of Contents (Each chapter, sub-chapter and other sections are followed by its starting page)**

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. COULD HAVE DONE OTHERWISE AND DETERMINISM	6
1). The Definition of Free Will Used in this Paper	6
2). Could Have Done Otherwise	7
3). Determinism's Threat	9
3. CONDITIONAL ANALYSIS	12
4. ANTECEDENT PART OF CONDITIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHDO	17
1). Antecedent Is Not Enough	17
2). Infinite Regress Problem	18
3). Attempt is Part of the Action	21
5. Difficulty Regarding Conditional Analysis of Freedom with An Antecedent of Desire	25
1). Criticism Against General Version of Conditional Analysis	25
2). Cases Where the Desired Action is not Brought About by the Agent's Desire	29
6. REPLY TO "DESIRE IS NOT ENOUGH" PROBLEM	33
1). Recap: Two Aims of Conditional Analysis	33
2). A Closer Look at the Conditional Interpretation of CHDO	35
3). My Proposal of Formulating Conditional Analysis	36
7. ONE MORE CRITICISM: CONDITIONAL ANALYSIS HAS LOWERED THE STANDARD	42
1). Incompatibilists' Insistence	42
2). Possible Worlds and Alternative Possibility	43
3). David Lewis' Divergence Miracle	47
CONCLUSION	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	53
ABSTRACT	55

## 1. Introduction

In free will discussion, "could have done otherwise" is generally seen as a necessary condition for free will (List,2014; Moore,1912; Campbell,1951; Hurley, 1999; Gert and Duggan,1979; List and Rabinowicz, 2014; Ayer, 1946; Moore, 1912; Davidson, 1973), and a classical way to make CHDO compatible with determinism is conditional analysis of CHDO. Conditional analysis is first credited to Moore who believe that CHDO actually means "I should have done otherwise if I had chosen". (Moore, 1912)

In Kadri Vihvelin's paper "Free Will Demystified: A Dispositional Account", she has mentioned that the conditional analysis of CHDO was considered a failure by many philosophers during 1970s (Vihvelin, 2004) and as far as I'm concerned, we haven't really seen that conditional analysis regained support ever since. Donald Davidson believes that conditional analysis of CHDO cannot be properly formulated (Davidson, 2001), and Berofsky also claimed that coniditional analysis of CHDO is a failure (Berofsky, 2002); most recently Christian List also argues that conditional interpretation of CHDO is not successful (List, 2011).

I find conditional analysis of CHDO appealing and promising. I believe it does capture how we normally think about CHDO and I also think that it is quite successful in making CHDO and determinism compatible with each other.

In my thesis, I'm going to defend conditional analysis of CHDO, to be specific, I'm going to defend conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire. In a broader picture of free will discussion, I'm taking a compatibilist position between free will and determinism.

My thesis is that conditional interpretation of CHDO with an antecedent of desire is a convincing analysis that makes CHDO and determinism compatible with each other. I will support this thesis by replying to some of the criticism against conditional analysis in general; discussing why the antecedent

of desire is a better candidate than the other antecedents and addressing some of problems against this special version of conditional analysis of freedom.

First, in the second chapter, I'm going to set up the background for my latter arguments in this thesis paper. The third chapter introduces conditional analysis which is a compatibilist strategy that leads us to redefine CHDO; the compatibilists believe that this strategy has successfully made CHDO and determinism compatible with each other.

In the fourth chapter, I will consider different ways of formulating conditional analysis, namely, I will talk about different kinds of antecedents the conditional analysts would posit. I will further discuss different problems to the different versions of conditional analysis. This chapter supports my thesis by discussing why "desire", as a mental state, is the best candidate for the antecedent part of the conditional proposition.

In chapter 5 and chapter 6, I will discuss some of the problems this special version of conditional analysis faces. These problems include "substitution problem"(Berofsky, 2002), "freedom-undermining situations" problem (List, 2011), "cases where the alternative action was not led to by the antecedent desire" problem and "desire is not enough" criticism. The first two problems are also faced by other versions of conditional analysis too, and I will demonstrate that these two problems are flawed and they do not really undermine conditional analysis of CHDO. The other two problems require us to examine carefully what conditional analysis of CHDO with antecedent is about, to be more precise, what the original aims of conditional analysis of CHDO are and what the link from the antecedent "desire" to the consequence "action" implies.

I believe that once we have gotten clear on what conditional analysis of freedom presupposes but omits in the formulation "I would have done otherwise if I had desired to", these two last problems will also be resolved.

The discussion in these two chapters will show that conditional analysis of CHDO is actually convincing because it is immune to those problems we initially thought which would pose a threat to conditional analysis of freedom.

In the final chapter before conclusion, I will consider one more criticism against the conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire: the conditional analysis of CHDO has lowered the standard for the compatibility between determinism and CHDO; the incompatibilists argue that we should insist that “I could have done otherwise” means just “I could have done otherwise” (Hurley, 1999; Ginet, 2002; List, 2011). I think this criticism is merely a criticism, but more like a disputation about which interpretation of CHDO to take. I shall consider two arguments in this chapter which shift the burdens of proof to the incompatibilists’s camp (Dennett, Taylor 2002; Lewis, 1981), that is to say, by the time when incompatibilist finish reading my thesis, they have to find more convincing arguments to explain to us why we should insist “I could have done otherwise” means just “I could have done otherwise”.

## 2. Could Have Done Otherwise and Determinism

In this chapter, I'm going to lay down the background for my latter arguments in this thesis paper. I'm going to state what I take to be the definition of free will and I will say that CHDO is a necessary condition to free will. I will briefly describe the incompatibilists' position, who believe that determinism has deprived one's ability to do otherwise.

### 1). The Definition of Free Will Used in this Paper

The big context of this thesis paper is in the discussion of free will, it is necessary to say something about free will, and especially what kind of definition of free will I will use in my paper.

Free will, taken the literal meaning, is freedom of willing, which is just something happens in the mind. There's no consensus on the definition of free will; some define free will as an ability to choose.

Vihvelin says that, "we believe that free will is or includes the ability to make choices on the basis of reasons." (Vihvelin, 2004: 1)

The process to choose mostly happens in our minds, so the ability to choose the agent has does not guarantee the agent is able what he wants to do or chooses to do. I think to define free will just as an ability to choose, which is sort of mental ability, is not enough to capture the sense of free will.

First of all, as I have observed in my short period of writing on free will, "free will" represents "freedom" in philosophy, and this means that if one wants to know what philosophers say about "freedom", he would get the philosophical discussion of "free will". For this reason that "free will" in philosophy actually represents a lot of notions about freedom people have, I would think that free will needs to cover something more than just the freedom of willing.

Think about a case where the agent is locked and cannot do anything, intuitively, we would not think that this person is free. This person may still have the freedom of willing, but certainly he lost his freedom of action and we would not say that this person is free. Michael Pauen believes that "freedom

of a person seems to result from the freedom of the actions she performs.” (Pauen, 2007: 2) He is asserting that freedom of action is essential for one’s freedom.

I believe that free will should not only be understood as freedom of willing, but rather as freedom of willing combining freedom of action. In other words, to say someone who has free will, this person has to have the ability to carry out his action (and this action, clearly, is something he decides to do after his own thinking) in addition to having the ability to choose.

To have freedom of action as part of the definition of free will is important for my thesis paper, because I’m mainly dealing with CHDO in my thesis; I’m analyzing the action that the agent actually did and the action the agent could have done. So this “action” element is very strong in my paper.

For clarification, I assume “free will”, “to act with free will”, “to act freely” and also “freedom” as the same thing in this particular paper. Also as a part of the framework of my thesis, I stipulate that to say an agent has free will, he has to have the ability to do choose and also the ability to act according to his own choice.

## 2). Could Have Done Otherwise

In the free will discussion, CHDO is seen as a necessary condition to free will. It is usually held that a person was able to act with his own free will only if he could have acted otherwise. (List,2014; Moore,1912; Campbell,1951; Hurley,1999; Gert and Duggan,1979; List and Rabinowicz, 2014)

For example, Ayer has claimed that “When I am said to have done something of my own free will it is implied that I could have acted otherwise; and it is only when it is believed that I could have acted otherwise that I am held to be morally responsible for what I have done.” (Ayer, 1954: 110)

Similarly, Moore has also endorsed this requirement to treat CHDO as a necessary condition to free will,

The statement that we have Free Will is certainly ordinarily understood to imply that we really sometimes have the power of acting differently from the way in which we actually do act; and hence, if anybody tells us that we have Free Will, while at the same time he means to deny that we ever have such a power, he is simply misleading us. (Moore, 1912: 1)

Donald Davidson has also put it more straightforwardly, “Freedom means the existence of alternatives.” (Davidson, 1973: 73) When we say that we could have done otherwise, we mean that there were alternative possibilities open to me at a given past time  $t$  – I could have done other things except for the thing that I did at time  $t$ .

If we could **only** do  $X^1$  at time  $t$ , or  $A$  was **bound** to do  $X$  at time  $t$ , for whatever freedom undermining reasons<sup>2</sup>, we would not think  $A$  is free. To be free, the agent has to have the ability to do otherwise.

So what is CHDO? Previously, I have said that free will is an ability to choose plus the ability to act, then as a necessary condition to free will. We should also think CHDO as an ability – an ability to bring about the alternative action<sup>3</sup>. In fact, as I have observed, many philosophers do believe that CHDO means the ability to do otherwise.

Moreover, CHDO has to be a positive ability. By this I mean that CHDO is an ability that belongs to human agents who can think for themselves and who are really in control of their actions<sup>4</sup>.

Moore has brought our attention to the cases where CHDO is applied to inanimate objects. When Moore talks about conditional analysis of CHDO<sup>5</sup>, he argues that we cannot say that the ship could have steamed twenty knots means that the ship should have steamed twenty knots if she had chosen,

---

1  $X$  does not limit just one thing. At a given time  $t$ , the agent could do one thing, or a set of things. Whenever I talk about

2 There will be a further discussion on this freedom undermining situations in the first section of Chapter 5.

3 “Could” is the past tense of “can”, so apparently, CHDO is a past ability of the agent at current time. But it is more proper to say that CHDO is an ability of the agent which we, as theorists, can analyze at any given time.

4 Here, I mean people are “in control of their actions” in a very normative and common sense – I’m washing dishes, then I’m in control of my action of washing dishes or Witold is writing, then Witold is in control of his action of writing. Some hard determinists would argue that given the truth of determinism, nobody is really in control of his action, because according to causal determinism, whatever the agent is doing is caused by previous action and his previous action was caused by its preceding action, then we can trace back to the time when the agent was born and there’s nothing that agent can do about the conditions he was given when he was born; in this sense, the agent is not really in control of his actions at current time, because ultimately he was not the creator of his own action at current time. I certainly do not mean “people in control of their actions” in this very strong sense.

5 The conditional analysis is the main thing in my paper, I did not mean to discuss it at this point. This passage I wrote here is mainly to stipulate the scope of the cases where CHDO could be applied in my thesis.

because the ship cannot move by herself, instead, the correct way to analyze “the ship could have steamed twenty knots” is “the ship would, if the men on board of her had chosen.” (Moore,1912)

What Moore argues here is absolutely correct, the ship cannot move by herself and she cannot have the positive ability to do otherwise as I just mentioned in the beginning of this paragraph. If we want to use this kind of anthropomorphic expression to describe the ship and if we want to say that the ship has the ability to move twenty knots, this ability the ship has is not a positive ability as mentioned earlier, but a passive ability, which means that the ship was moved passively by men on the board.

When I talk about CHDO or the ability to do otherwise in my thesis, I’m not going to consider inanimate objects and the anthropomorphic way of using CHDO. I’m only going to discuss human agents’ positive ability to do otherwise.

### 3). Determinism’s Threat

A group of philosophers called hard determinists, or as I refer to them simply as incompatibilists<sup>6</sup>, believe that determinism and free will are not compatible with each other – if we accept determinism, then the agents we talk about cannot have free will. According to incompatibilists, determinism implies that the agent A was bound to do X, and not anything else at time t. If A was not able to do otherwise at t, and CHDO is a necessary condition to free will, then under determinism, A did not have free will at t. But first, what is determinism? To comprehend determinism is no easy task, some suggest that there are at least ninety varieties of determinism. (Bishop, 2002) The notion of determinism I will use in my thesis is very much simplified. When talking about determinism, I will focus on physical/causal determinism, “the thesis that everything is determined to occur according to physical laws.” (Bishop, 2002: 111)

---

<sup>6</sup> Incompatibilists could also refer to a group of philosophers called libertarianism, who believe that free will exists, but determinism is to be rejected.

One thing to note here is that I take a very simple think– then -act picture of action and I’m not getting into the philosophical discussion of action theory about how people act in my thesis.

According to determinism, our actions and our thoughts<sup>7</sup> are caused by their preceding actions and thoughts, and these actions and thoughts were caused by further preceding actions and thoughts, if we follow this line of thinking, finally we will trace back to the time when we were born and find out that our current actions and thoughts ultimately are derived from the conditions we were given when we were born. Therefore, determinism is the doctrine that our current states of affairs (actions/ thoughts / combination of actions and thoughts) are determined to occur given the deterministic natural law and the fixed conditions at the time when we were born.

Now, as Ayer expresses, “if human behaviour is entirely governed by causal laws, it is not clear how any action that is done could ever have been avoided.” (Ayer,1946: 117) Incompatibilists believe that free will and determinism are incompatible with each other because CHDO and determinism cannot coexist. So next question is, how determinism has posed a threat to CHDO?

My explanation is as follows. The choice we have made at a given time  $t$  is caused by our thoughts at this time  $t$  which are caused by our previous thoughts at an earlier time  $t_0$ ; then we find that our thoughts at time  $t_0$  are also influenced by our thoughts at even earlier times. We will then track back till the time when we were born, and find that our choice at time  $t$  is actually determined by the things we were given when we were born.

Now, if we think of this causal chain of thoughts and actions, or simply, one’s life history (from the time when the agent was born to the time  $t$  when he did the action we are analyzing) as a tape, given the conditions we were given when we were born and which we cannot do anything about, then this tape would lead to the action<sup>8</sup> at  $t$  which we are analyzing, not any other action. Therefore, given the

---

7 Here “thoughts” do not refer to “random thoughts” we have, but rather the thoughts we have when we are going through some cognitive process before we make our decisions about what we do.

8 Of course, this could be thought of as a set of actions, or some thoughts the agent had at a given time  $t$ , or simply states of affairs at time  $t$ .

truth of one's life history from the time when he was born to the time  $t$  when he did the action in question and determinism, alternative possibility is not possible for the agent.

If we<sup>9</sup> could **not** have done otherwise and as CHDO is a necessary condition for free will, then under determinism, we cannot have free will. Such is the position of incompatibilists, who embraces determinism and believes that we cannot have free will when there's determinism<sup>10</sup>.

---

9 Sometimes in my paper, "we" refer to the agents we are talking about, and sometime "we" refer to the theorists who are analyzing the agents – whether the agents have free will or not. Here "we" refer to the agents in question. But generally in my thesis, "we" could refer to the ones being analyzed or to the ones who are analyzing whether some agents have free will or not.

10 Let's treat determinism in this discussion as a stipulation, rather than a theory. This means that I will ignore all the counter-argument against determinism itself. For example, some scientific findings which suggest that the universe is not deterministic, rather it is indeterministic. (Bagini,2015; Libet, 2002; Bishop, 2002; Kane,2002) I will just not consider these arguments concerning indeterminism and its implications. (Hodgson, 2002; O'Connor,2002; Dennett, 2016)

### 3. Conditional Analysis

Compatibilists believe that free will and determinism are not mutually exclusive with each other.

One of the ways to reply to the incompatibility problem that I've talked about is to reassess CHDO, and compatibilists offer us the conditional analysis of CHDO. In this chapter, I will introduce the general conditional interpretation of CHDO and explain why conditional analysis of CHDO can make CHDO and determinism compatible with each other.

Unlike incompatibilists who think that determinism posed a threat to the existence of free will, compatibilists believe that determinism and free will can be compatible with each other. Needless to say, they also believe that CHDO is compatible with determinism. So how do compatibilists reach this position – the compatibility of CHDO and determinism? The compatibilists invite us to reassess CHDO, namely, what we really mean when we say that we could have done otherwise.

Traditionally<sup>11</sup>, compatibilists contend that when we utter the sentence “I could have done otherwise”, we do not just mean I could have done otherwise, what we really mean is that I would have done otherwise **if I had desired to**<sup>12</sup>.(List, 2014; Baggin,2015)

---

11. Christian List has actually called this reading of CHDO the “traditional conditional interpretation” of the ability to do otherwise. (List, 2014)

12. Conditional analysis is not the only way for us to reassess CHDO. For example, J.J.C. Smart has differentiated CHDO in the special sense and CHDO in the normal sense. According to Smart, “there is perhaps a sense of ‘could not have done otherwise’ in which whether or not a person could or could not have done otherwise depends on whether or not the universe is deterministic...But it does not follow that if a person could not have done otherwise in this special sense then he could not have done otherwise in any ordinary sense.” (J.J.C Smart, 1963) CHDO in the special sense is the CHDO that is dependent on whether we endorse determinism or not, and it is without any conditional add-on. On the other hand, CHDO in the normal sense is not affected by determinism, although this CHDO is not necessarily the same as the conditional analysis reading of CHDO.

For example, Moore is also said to be one of the first philosophers who have offered us a conditional analysis of CHDO, according to Moore, CHDO is a convenient substitution of the whole phrase “he should have done otherwise if he had desired to.” (Moore, 1912)

Compatibilists believe that conditional analysis has captured the **normative sense** of could have done otherwise (Baggini, 2015); we are interested in alternative possibility only when we have a desire to do something else other than the thing we do at time  $t$ . If we did not have such a desire to do differently, and if the thing we did at time  $t$  is the only thing that we wanted to do, according to conditional analysts, we really do not care if we could have done otherwise or not.

To illustrate, here’s a simple example: at a given past time  $t$ , I was drinking pure water. I wanted to drink it at this given time  $t$ , because I was thirsty and I wanted the clean feeling I would get of drinking pure water. According to the hypothetical analysis of CHDO, I could have done otherwise, means “I would have drunk coffee, if I had the desire of drinking coffee”; this desire of drinking coffee may come from the fact I was really tired at time  $t$  and I needed the caffeine to make myself feel more energized or I was just really craving for a cup of coffee. But since at  $t$ , I was not tired and I did not really crave for coffee, I would not choose to drink coffee. “I could have drunk coffee”, as understood as “I would have drunk coffee if I had desired to drink coffee” does not matter to me or my freedom.

Let me continue answering this question about how this move of redefining CHDO has made CHDO compatible with determinism. Determinism entails that at time  $t$ , the agent  $A$  was bound to do certain action  $X$  given the truth of the past and deterministic natural law. Apparently,  $A$  could not have done otherwise.

Conditional analysts have modified “ $A$  could have done otherwise at time  $t$ ” into “ $A$  would have done otherwise at time  $t$  if  $A$  had desired to”. Recall, one of the premises for the conclusion that  $A$  was bound to do  $X$  at current time  $t$  is the truth of the past, or one’s life history, to be more specific, the desire that  $A$  had at an earlier time  $t_0$  led him to carry out the action  $X$  at time  $t$ . But the unrealized alternative

event was led to by a different desire at an earlier time  $t_0$ , so if we have replaced the original desire (which leads to X at current time t), as the conditional analysts have suggested, with a different desire at time  $t_0$ , then we have denied one of the premises for the unalterability of the current state of affair, then the conclusion that A could only do X at time t does not hold anymore.

Now critics may have one quick question, that is, the different desire the alternative action requires is not available to the agents given the truth of determinism, if the antecedent “desire” is not available to the agents, how could the agent be able to do the alternative action, since this alternative action was led to by a different desire, therefore, under conditional analysis, the agent could not have done otherwise. But if conditional analysts want to say that under determinism, the agent actually could have done otherwise, this seems to indicate that their strategy actually **does not** work.

I argue that whether the different “desire” is available to the agent or not, conditional analysis is successful in making CHDO and determinism compatible with each other. This does not mean that conditional analysis does not suffer other problems, which I will discuss in great detail later, but at this point, to reply to this question that the critics have, I would say conditional analysis works.

So how? Previously, I have said that a different desire at a prior time t, would require the history of one’s life history be modified.

Now suppose that the desire was not available to us, maybe the critics would argue because we cannot change the history we had, then it seems that we could not have done otherwise. But this does not affect conditional analysis, because according to conditional analysis, “I could have done otherwise” means “I would have done otherwise if I had desired to”; the alternative action I would have done was led to by a different desire, in other words, I would have done a different action  $X_a$  only if I had wanted to do  $X_a$ . If a different desire was not available to me, this means that I did not want to do  $X_a$ , and if I did not want to do the alternative action, why would I want to do it? I would not care if I could have done otherwise or not. According to the conditional analysis, an alternative action at time t was led to

by a different desire the agent did not possess in the first place and had the agent A possessed the desire to do differently, he would do it, he just did not have the desire. This interpretation of CHDO and determinism can go hand in hand.

On the other hand, I would have done otherwise if the different desire which would lead to the alternative action was actually available to me. If we think of my biography that led to my action X at time t as a tape under determinism, an alternative consequence would require us to look at a slightly different tape<sup>13</sup>, call it “tape<sub>1</sub>”. Under determinism, if we only have this one original tape to look at, which is the linear being the agent A is living, A could not have done otherwise because A did not have another desire in the first place. But if we look at tape<sub>1</sub>, we find out that A has done something different at time t which was caused by a different desire at an earlier time t<sub>0</sub> on tape<sub>1</sub>. Both tape and tape<sub>1</sub> can coexist and both were written according to deterministic law<sup>14</sup>.

Of course, the antecedent part of the proposition does not limit to “if I had desired to.” It could also be “if I had tried to”, “if I had wanted to” or “if I had intended to”. Clarke has made this strategy more clear and general to us,

One classic compatibilist line – a view on which having free will requires being able to act otherwise, and having that ability is compatible with determinism – takes abilities to act to be dispositions or causal powers, and offers a conditional analysis of the latter. To be able to perform an action of A-ing, it is said, is to have a disposition or power to A. And something has a certain disposition or power if and only if a certain simple condition is true of that thing. (Clarke, 2009: 323)

---

13 This different tape, call it tape<sub>1</sub>, contains a different desire at time t<sub>0</sub> which would lead to a different state of affair at time t. I call it slightly different from the current tape we have, because I do not want the readers to think that this tape is so massively different from our actual tape, we may only need to make a few alterations to our actual tape to get this different tape<sub>1</sub>. The matter is that we need a different desire which would lead to an alternative action at t which we would not find in our current tape under determinism, so we need to take into consideration an another tape. A similar discussion will be taken up again in Chapter 7 where I discuss the incompatibilists’ criticism that conditional interpretation of CHDO is a watered-down version of CHDO.

14 Of course, this claim is open to disputation, some may argue that we can only have this one actual tape to look at. If this is the case, then we go back to the situation where the different desire was not available to me; even under these types of circumstances, the agent could have done otherwise according to conditional analysis.

The more general picture is to posit an antecedent condition which will lead to the occurrence of an alternative action but which the agent needed to fulfill first. This condition could be a different desire or a different action.<sup>15</sup>

Conditional analysis seems to have offered us a way to make CHDO and determinism compatible with each other, but it is actually a position that has faced quite a few criticisms, we will consider some of the criticisms conditional analysis faces in the following chapters.

---

15 Ayer is one of the first philosophers to have invented conditional analysis of CHDO. His conditional analysis of CHDO is in the format of “attempt” – I would have done otherwise if I had chosen to.

#### 4. Antecedent Part of Conditional Analysis of CHDO

There are couple of different ways to and make a conditional analysis of CHDO. In this chapter, I will consider different ways of formulating conditional analysis and discuss different problems to the different versions of conditional analysis. I will conclude that “desire” as a mental state is the best candidate for the antecedent part of the conditional proposition.

##### 1). Antecedent Is Not Enough

As mentioned above, CHDO is the ability to do otherwise. The antecedent of proposition would have to guarantee the occurrence of the consequence of the proposition if the proposition is a legitimate analysis of the ability to do otherwise. So the conditional analysis of CHDO has to capture the fact that CHDO is an ability. This leads to a question regarding the conditional analysis – what we should put into the antecedent part of the conditional proposition to best capture that CHDO is a positive ability to do otherwise?

Let’s take the conditional analysis in the format of desire as an example and analyze this version of conditional analysis. In previous section, I have used phrases like “a different desire the agent had at an earlier time would lead to an alternative action”, which suggests that there’s a causal link between one’s desire and one’s action.

Some authors have challenged this link between desire to actions. They argue that desire is not enough for actions – if we would like to say that the desire leads to the action, not only the agent has the desire to do something X, the agent also has to have the corresponding ability and luck to bring X about. When compatibilists say that “I would have done otherwise if I had desired to”, they seem to ignore some other factors which lead to an action, for example, effort, skills or luck. It’s as if they think that when people have a desire to do X, and then X would automatically obtain. We know that this is not the case, and we cannot simply add the antecedent part in the format of desire and assume it will lead to a

different consequence. Moreover, the desire does not really mean that the agent has the will to make an effort to bring about the action. Even the agent desires something, he may not decide to act upon it.

Based on this worry that even though the agent has the desire to do X, he may not take action and he may not act upon it, some of the compatibilists try to improve the situation by offering an account of conditional analysis in terms of attempt – “the agent would have done otherwise if he had tried to.” (Ayer, 1954; List, 2011)

This version of conditional analysis suffers similar problems, namely, the antecedent condition does not seem to be adequate leading to the alternative action – even if the agent had tried to do X, it does not mean that he has the corresponding ability or the external conditions needed for the occurrence of the alternative event are available. For example, someone who has been eliminated during a singing competition and who does not have any singing skills may very well claim that he would have won the competition if he had tried. It is very clear that “would have done otherwise if one tried” in this case fails. When the agent does not have the ability/talent<sup>16</sup>, it is impossible for him to bring about a different outcome which relies on this ability. The guy who does not have any singing skills is bound to be kicked out of the competition no matter what. At the same time, if this guy has a cold that day and cannot sing, he cannot win the competition either, so in order to win the competition, besides the possession of the singing skills, the guy needs to have luck too, namely, some other external conditions supporting him to use his talent.

## 2). Infinite Regress Problem

---

16. This means the ability within the ability to do otherwise, not to be confused with the ability to do otherwise itself.

I will call this kind of ability “type ability”, and this concept of “type ability” is similar to the talent the agent possessed. I will discuss this concept in detail in “Chapter 6. How To Think of CHDO”.

Some compatibilists are trying to improve the situation by further modifying the conditional analysis in terms of attempt, they believe that we should understand CHDO as “the agent would have done otherwise if he had tried to do and succeeded.”

This method seems to have solved the problem of “not genuine” – the antecedent of the proposition itself is not enough to bring about the consequence. Because if the agent had tried to do something and succeed, then we would think that this different action would take place and the link from the antecedent to the consequent is unbreakable.

However, this method suffers the problem of the infinite regress problem. When we say that A would do X if he does something first, we would then ask the question whether he is free to do the antecedent part or not. If the question whether the agent is free doing the antecedent action of the proposition remains, then the conditional analysis of freedom just would not work.

According to this version of conditional analysis, the alternative action, name it  $X_A$ , comes from the agent’s attempt, and this suggests that the agent’s action is based upon the agent’s previous action, for attempt is itself an action. Then we can think that this agent’s previous action is further caused by action at even earlier time. If we keep tracing back, we will arrive at a time when the agent was just born, and he cannot control these conditions given to him when he was just born. So ultimately, he is not the creator of his action  $X_A$ .

It is obviously we can see here that, any conditional analysis with an antecedent of an action sort, is subject to the infinite regress problem, because we would have the alternative action caused by its previous action which was in turn caused by further previous action, and this causal chain is the ground for infinite regress problem.

The matter here is that if one cannot be the originator of his action, he cannot be said to be free, and conditional analysis in the first place is to make free will and determinism compatible with each other,

so conditional analysis in the format of “the agent would have done otherwise if he had tried to do and succeeded” fails.

One might reply that the ability to do otherwise and the ability to be the originator of one’s action are not the same. Generally, both the power to be the originator of one’s action and the power to do otherwise are seen as necessary conditions to free will, and they are not entirely the same (Pauen, 2007; Baggini, 2015)

Let’s think of one’s biography as a straight vertical tape from the point when he was born till the time  $t$ . According to conditional analysis with an antecedent of an action sort, one’s action at time  $t$  was caused by some previous action of the agent at time  $t_0$ , and if we think of these two actions at different times as two spots on the tape, then the power to create is about one spot moving **vertically** to another spot; then metaphorically speaking, we can think of the power to create as being vertical.

On the other hand, the power to do otherwise should be seen as horizontal. As said earlier, the different desire the agent had at a prior time  $t_0$  which would lead to the alternative action, requires us to look at a slightly different tape<sub>1</sub> and when we ask the question “could the agent do otherwise at time  $t$ ”, we are comparing the actual tape we are living and the tape<sub>1</sub> where the alternative action took place – more specifically, we are looking at two actions at time  $t$ , one actual and one hypothetical, on two different tapes. Now if we think of the two actions at time  $t$  as two spots on these two tapes and draw a line to connect them, clearly, this line is horizontal if we think of the tape as being vertical.

This illustration may be a good way to show that the power to be the originator of one’s action and the power to do otherwise are two different properties which the agent possesses and we should not conflate the two. The infinite regress problem is an argument against the power to be the originator of one’s action so it does not really affect whether the agent has the power to do otherwise or not.

I think that this reply is not convincing enough. This reply is saying that the power to create and the power to do otherwise should be separated, and the infinite regress problem has posed a threat only to the power to create; the power to do otherwise, which we care about, is actually not affected.

Clearly, this is not the case. As infinite regress problem has shown us, the power to create and the power to do otherwise are indeed connected with each other, and power to do otherwise is affected by the “vertical” infinite regress problem.

Once again, conditional analysis with an antecedent of attempt claims that alternative action would have taken place if (but not only if) the agent had done some other action before and this assumes a causal chain between actions; if we follow this causal chain, then we will trace back till the time when the agent was born and the conditions given to the agent when he was born were not within his control – the agent was not the ultimate creator of the alternative action in question.

Infinite regress problem says that the agent could not have done otherwise X under this version of conditional analysis because the alternative action X was ultimately not created by the agent. The reply fails to address the connection between the power to do otherwise and the power to create.

I claim that I do not know how to solve this infinite regress problem, and I say that conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of an action sort is not a successful analysis of freedom.

### 3). Attempt is Part of the Action

Let’s consider another problem for the conditional analysis with an antecedent of an action sort (trying, choosing). This problem is that apparently the antecedent of an action sort is part of the alternative action in question. Donald Davidson believes that the antecedent condition should be prior and separate from the action; he believes that choosing or trying is part of the action itself, and now we are trying to find a different prior cause for the alternative action that we are analyzing, if the antecedent is part of the alternative action, it cannot be said to be a proper cause for the alternative action. (Davidson, 2002)

For example, consider the proposition “Lena could have raised her arm if she had tried”; it seems strange to say that someone is trying to raise her arm, because when Lena is trying to raise her arms, isn’t she already raising her arm?

In the case of choosing, if we interpret choosing as an action – if we think of choosing as something that is not just something taking place in one’s mind, but actual action of choosing, then it seems that choosing is part of the action that one chooses to do. Think about a very simple case: Adam was thinking whether he eats an apple or orange, and there is an apple and orange in front of him. When he is choosing to eat the apple, we can think that he is already going ahead to grab the apple and then starts eating it; the action of choosing, grabbing the apple and eating it seems so closely connect and we can say that they are parts of one single action.

I think this observation here shows us that it is quite difficult to draw a line between the cause and the consequent if we think of the antecedent as an action. But the conditional analysts want to say that the satisfaction of a **preceding** condition would guarantee the occurrence of the alternative action, so the condition and consequence need to be separated. I argue that because the antecedent of an action sort can very easily be seen as part of the consequent action, the antecedent of attempting or choosing is not a very good candidate for the antecedent part of the conditional proposition.

#### 4). Antecedent of “Desire” Has Edges Over the Antecedent of “Attempt”

Desire, not as an action, but as a mental state comes into our mind again. The antecedent “desire” is immune to the problem we just talked about: “desire” clearly is not part of the action, and it can be seen as a cause to one’s action.

One immediate criticism would be that desire is not in the agent’s control, and if we say that desire is the cause of the action, then the action comes from something that the agent is not free to do, does this make the agent unfree to do the action?

My response would be as follows: the fact that the desire is not in the agent's control has nothing to do with whether he is free or not, because having desire, impulse or even belief is what constitutes an agent – it is part of being an agent so to speak; our free will works when we are thinking whether we act upon our desires or not. As Davidson puts it, “the question how he acquired them (desires and beliefs) are irrelevant to questions of how free his actions are.” (Davidson, 2002: 72) Davidson has also reiterated the important point here, “the point isn't that desires and beliefs aren't ever in an agent's control, but rather that coming to have them isn't something an agent does.” (Davidson, 2002: 72) Desire is not an action the agent does, and it is a mental state that the agent has which can be seen as a cause for an action that the agent does later.

What Davidson said here can also be used to refute the infinite regress problem regarding the conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire. Some people treat “desire” as a verb and read it as “enter a mental state”, then the conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire seems to also suffer the infinite regress problem I have discussed earlier, but as Davidson suggests, the agent does not have to do anything to have a desire and desire itself should not be seen as an action of the agent, this understanding of desire has resolved the infinite regress problem. To make it more clear, the antecedent “desire” is a mental state, not an action, so it does not depend on previous action as the infinite regress problem suggests. On the other hand, unlike the antecedent “action”, which obviously depends on previous “action”, the antecedent “desire” does not depend on previous “desire” or any other obvious conditions; according to Davidson (I agree with Davidson's insight), having desire is one aspect of being a human agent – as human agents, desires would just come to us, and there's nothing we can do about it, what we can do is use our free will to decide whether we act upon it or not.

To conclude, this chapter mainly discusses about what kind of antecedent we should take for the conditional analysis of CHDO. To do this, I have considered several problems against different versions of conditional analysis. First, I argued that the antecedent of desire or attempt does not seem to be

adequate leading to the consequence. Then, if we try to find a perfect link between the antecedent and the action and say that the agent would have done otherwise if he had attempted and succeeded, then this version of conditional analysis suffers the infinite regress problem, which actually renders the agent unfree; I also pointed out that conditional analysis with an antecedent of action sort in general suffers the infinite regress problem.

One further problem against the conditional analysis with an antecedent of an action kind is that the attempt seems to be part of the action itself, and if we want to give a conditional analysis of freedom, the antecedent needs to be the cause of the action. The antecedent of desire, which is a mental state, is immune to this problem and the infinite regress problem.

However, I haven't addressed the first problem raised in this chapter, that is, "desire" is not enough to cause the consequence, there seems to be other conditions needed too. I will discuss this problem in detail in chapter 6.

## 5. Difficulty Regarding Conditional Analysis of Freedom with An Antecedent of Desire

Now I have argued that the antecedent of desire has more edges than the other antecedents, to say that it is a convincing argument, we have to consider the problems it face and reply to them.

As the conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire, which I'm going to defend, is just one special version of conditional analysis, whatever problems the general version of conditional analysis face, the conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire faces too.

In this chapter, I will first consider criticism against conditional analysis in general. I will then consider more specific problems against this special version of conditional analysis of CHDO I'm defending.

### 1). Criticism Against General Version of Conditional Analysis

Just to be clear, the general version of conditional analysis refers to conditional analysis with an antecedent that is yet to be specified. If the general version of conditional analysis suffers the problems listed below, then the conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire has to deal with them too in order to be considered as a convincing argument.

#### – Substitution Problem

In an essay called “Ifs, Cans, and Free Will: The Issues” in Oxford Handbook of Free Will by Robert Kane, Berofsky<sup>17</sup> has restated Lehrer's argument which shows that conditional analysis of the ability to do otherwise is inadequate to capture the sense of CHDO is an ability (Berofsky, 2002). Berofsky shows us a traid,

“if C, then A X's

Not -C

If not-C, then A cannot X” (Berofsky, 2002: 191)

<sup>17</sup> Berofsky said that this argument comes from Keith Lehrer; I had a hard time tracing the original passage talking about the argument and I was unable to do so. So I quote this passage as a secondary literature here.

The crucial point is that these three propositions are compatible with each other, but if the first proposition means “A can X”, as conditional analysts would claim, then the first proposition and the last proposition contradict with each other.

This argument aims to show that conditional analysis of CHDO cannot equal to the claim “A can X”.

Before replying to this “substitution problem”, I have to clarify two points about the argument. So everyone knows what we are talking about here.

One may notice that “If not-C, then A cannot X” is not necessarily plausible; we certainly should not assume “Not-C” will guarantee that “A cannot X” and think that this third proposition is logically correct, otherwise we made the “denying the antecedent” mistake. However, when conditional analysts posit C as a sufficient condition to X, we can think of cases where the “A cannot X” **does** come from “Not -C”, so the third proposition is not entirely mistaken or implausible.

More importantly, as Berofsky points out, “Lehrer’s logical point hinges only on the compatibility of these three propositions, not the plausibility of any of them.” (Berofsky, 2002: 191) These three propositions are consistent with each other (even though the third proposition can be interpreted as being implausible in certain occasions), but if we think of the first proposition as “A can X”, then we have a contradiction between the first and the third propositions.

Another thing to note is that this argument assumes that if the agent does X, then A can X. Otherwise, the second premise would by no means imply the third one.

Now I would reply to this substitution problem. I think there’s an ambiguity in the usage of “can” in this argument. What the first proposition substitutes is “A can X” in a CHDO sense, that is, A has the ability to do otherwise, which, as we would think, lasts for some time. “Can” in this sense is similar to some kind of skill one possesses, for example, if I can build a ship, my ability to build a ship tends to last for some time. On the other hand, on one particular occasion, I am not able to build a ship due to the lack of material I need, and I cannot build a ship on this particular occasion, but this does not mean

that my ability to build a ship is lost; the third proposition talks about “can” in this sense – a case to case usage of “can”. Therefore, once we have differentiated the different usage of “can” in what the first proposition substitutes and the third proposition itself, this substitution problem does not hold against conditional analysis of the ability to do otherwise anymore.

#### – Freedom-Undermining Situations

One further problem for conditional analysis in general is that there are cases where the agent just cannot do certain things because of certain external factors, like psychological compulsion.

As Christian List points out that,

most of us will agree that if an agent is never psychologically capable of trying to take any action other than a single predestined one, perhaps due to some deep psychological obsession, then he or she cannot be said to have the ability to do otherwise. (List, 2011: 6)

The passage quoted here talks about a situation where the agent could not have done otherwise no matter what because of his psychology compulsion, and List believes that the readers will agree with his claim here.

According to List, to be counted as a successful analysis of CHDO, conditional analysis of freedom should be able to keep the agent’s ability to do otherwise even under these freedom-undermining situations, but because we would agree that the agent could not have done otherwise in these cases and it would be very counter-intuitive if we think that the agent could, conditional analysis of CHDO fails in this sense. List believes believes the conditional analysts need to deal with these cases, otherwise the compatibility between CHDO and determinism just came too easy for the conditional analysts.

I argue these cases are not real problem for the conditional analysis of CHDO.

If we look at the case of the agent who has psychological compulsion, it is quite clear that the way the agent is deprived of CHDO by his psychological compulsion and the way the agent is deprived of

CHDO by determinism are different, and I think the discussion of the case of psychological compulsion (more generally speaking, freedom-undermining situations) and the discussion of determinism should be put on different planes.

In the psychological compulsion case, whether we endorse determinism or not, the agent is bound to lose his alternative possibility due to his compulsion. On the other hand, we would agree that there are many other situations we think that the agent could have done otherwise, call these non-freedom-undermining situations. Now if we endorse determinism, the incompatibilists would argue that the agent could not have done otherwise in any kind of situations, be it freedom-undermining situations or non-freedom-undermining situations; then the debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists would be about whether human agents have the ability to do otherwise or not in this very broad sense – given the way nature operates, can human agents do otherwise? The discussion on this plane is very fundamental, and it is about whether human agents have free will or not if we have a deterministic natural law, while the discussion on the plane of freedom- undermining situations is about our common sense understanding of freedom.

Conditional analysis of freedom is on the plane about determinism, which is different from the plane this criticism happens, so the “freedom-undermining situations” criticism does not really pose a threat to conditional analysis.

Now I would like to say a little bit more about what I mean by freedom-undermining situations. The idea of freedom- undermining factors plays a role in the discussion of when it is fair to hold someone responsible.

When incompatibilists claim that determinism deprive the agents of free will, some of them also suggest that nobody would ever have to take responsibility for what they have done, because if one does not have free will, one cannot really choose to do what he has done and if what one has done does not really come from this person, then he cannot be said to be responsible for this action he has done;

since incompatibilism incapacitate the agents from really doing anything by themselves, there are no things that they should be held responsible for.

The reaction to this claim is certainly that it is highly counter-intuitive and implausible: we do not think that people do not take responsibility for what they do. So now if we switch our position to compatibilism which claims that determinism and free will can co-exist and the agents do take responsibilities for their actions, we still feel that there are situations where the agents should be exempted from taking responsibilities. These situations are the freedom-undermining situations.

To illustrate, Haji has given us a couple of situations, like “coercion, physical constraint, duress, mistake, accident and inadvertence”. (Haji, 2002) This list is certainly not exhaustive and I believe that we can detect whether the agent is in a freedom-undermining situation or not by using our common sense. Freedom-undermining factors reflect our common sense of freedom, and this type of practical thinking can coexist with determinism just fine.

As Haji points out that “determinism does not entail that people never have the power to recognize and act on moral reasons that underpin(support) obligations.” (Haji, 2002: 208) Determinism does not undermine the agents’ ability to recognize and act on moral reasons, according to Haji, if the agent loses his ability to recognize and act on moral reasons, then we know that he is in a freedom-undermining situation where we think it is appropriate to exempt the agent from moral punishment and freedom-undermining situation is a good indicator where we can exempt the agents from moral responsibilities.

I contend that it is wrong for List to use the case of psychological compulsion as a counter-argument against conditional analysis of CHDO, which is an analysis that aims to save CHDO from determinism, not from freedom-undermining situations.

2). Cases Where the Desired Action is not Brought About by the Agent’s Desire

After addressing two problems against general version of conditional analysis, now I'm going to talk about more specific problems the conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire faces.

The conditional analysis "the agent would have done otherwise if he had desired to" presupposes a causal link from the agents' desires to the agents' actions. So if we want to give a precise description of conditional analysis of CHDO, we need to say more about this link .

Davidson points out one difficulty formulating conditional analysis of CHDO is that "the attempt may bring about the desired effect in an unexpected or undesired way." and what is important is that "the action must follow the right sort of route." (Davidson, 1973)

To illustrate, Davidson shows us an example: "A man may try to kill someone by shooting at him. Suppose the killer misses his victim by a mile, but the shot stampedes a herd of wild pigs that trample the intended victim to death." (Davidson, 1973: 78)

By our common understanding, if we want to say that the alternative action was led to by the antecedent "desire", then we would think that the agent's shot caused the victim's death; this example of wayward causal chain makes the link from the desire to the action seem ambiguous – can we still say that this agent's desire of killing causes the act of killing if victim's death is not directly caused by the agent's shot?

On one hand, we could say "yes" because it is the agent's desire that causes him to shot, and it is the shot that stampedes a herd of wild pigs that trample the victim to death; the agent's desire did finally lead to the death of the victim. But on the other hand, we could say "no" because the agent intended to kill the victim by shooting him to death but failed to do so in the example we talk about and it seems that he did not carry out his plan as he intended. This kind of "twisted" causal chain makes it ambiguous for us to say whether the consequent "action" is really led to by the antecedent "desire" or not.

There are other cases where it is more obvious that the actions we would have done are not led to by our desires; for example, sometimes A would have done otherwise X not because A had desired to do X, but rather A thought he should do X out of his principles, or consider cases where A cannot decide whether he does this or that, so he flips a coin and let the result of the flipping lead him to do his actions<sup>18</sup>.

Now if the conditional analysts want to say that “I could have done otherwise” means “I would have done otherwise if I had desired to”, then they should make our account of conditional analysis cover the cases where our action is not led to by our desire; as these cases have shown us, when we say “I could have done otherwise”, we do not always mean “I would have done otherwise if I had desired to”, we could also mean that, for instance, “I would have done otherwise if I thought I should do”.

However, it seems that these cases where the action is not caused by the corresponding desire are outside the scope of conditional analysis since conditional analysis assumes the action X is caused by the agent’s desire to do the action X.

This becomes a tension for conditional analysis, and it seems difficult for conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire to include these cases where the desired action is not brought about by the agent’s desire.

The reply to this worry is that the antecedent part of the conditional proposition is not a necessary condition to the alternative action in question, but rather a sufficient condition. Accordingly, if the antecedent condition of desire is fulfilled, then the alternative action would be brought about; on the other hand, if the alternative action in question had been brought about already, it does not mean that it

---

18 To be more clear, sometimes we have difficulties making a decision whether we do A or B, so we flip a coin – if heads, I do A and if tails I do B. Some may say that this case is not so different from the case where the alternative action was led to by an antecedent of “desire” if we think it was actually my desire to follow the result of the coin- flipping that leads me to do either A or B. I would argue that in the case of coin flipping, it was not my desire to do A or B; rather, in a normal case where the action was led to by the antecedent “desire”, it was really my desire to do a certain action X that leads me to do X. So the conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire does not cover the case of coin flipping.

is caused by our desires. By looking at the antecedent desire as a sufficient condition to the alternative action, we have resolved this worry.

## 6. Reply to “Desire is Not Enough” Problem

After the discussion above, we have addressed some of the problems facing conditional analysis in general and I have also excluded the problem for this special version of conditional analysis I’m defending that there are some cases where the alternative action was not led to by the antecedent “desire”. I stress the point that the antecedent of “desire” which conditional analysts posited is a sufficient condition, not a necessary condition to the alternative action.

Now I’m reiterating the point that conditional analysis is to posit an antecedent condition that the agent needed to fulfill first so that he could bring about an alternative action, by doing so, they have made CHDO compatible with determinism. This assumes a link from the antecedent to the action, and I would like to say more about this link in this chapter.

My thesis is to defend the conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire. I said I would defend it by considering the problems it faces. I still haven’t replied to the “desire is not enough” problem talked about in Chapter 4 yet. I believe by discussing what this link from antecedent “desire” to the alternative action is about, I will be able to reply to the “desire is not enough” criticism.

### 1). Recap: Two Aims of Conditional Analysis

Earlier, I have mentioned that conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire suffers the problem of not being genuine, to be precise, “A would have done otherwise if he had desired to” assumes that the alternative action the agent did was led to by his desire, but one’s desire does not automatically or necessarily lead to one’s action, and there seem to be other conditions need to be met, besides the antecedent condition “desire”, for the action to be carried out. It seems that the conditional analysts have ignored some other conditions necessary for the consequent “action”, and this is also what Davidson and Berofsky are calling for: to specify the necessary and sufficient conditions for the alternative action.

While this may be the case, let's not forget where conditional analysis of CHDO come from in the first place.

Recall, incompatibilists believe that determinism undermines the power to do otherwise because if determinism is true, at time  $t$ , I could not do anything else other than the thing I did at time  $t$ . My biography led to my action at time  $t$ , and I could not have done otherwise. Compatibilists believe that when we say that we could have done otherwise, we do not just mean "we could have done otherwise, period", and we have some "antecedent condition" in our minds; a very common antecedent condition compatibilists give us is "if I had desired to".

For example, according to incompatibilists, under determinism, at time  $t$ , I was drinking water, then drinking water is the only thing I could do at time  $t$ . But we would think that's really implausible, because in real life I'm very confident that I could have made other alternatives happen.

Now, compatibilists come into picture saying that CHDO actually means that "the agent would have done otherwise if he had desired to". In this case of "me drinking water", while the fact is that I drank water at time  $t$ , I would have drank coffee if had desire to drink coffee; if I did not have the desire of drinking coffee, drinking coffee is just not something I would do at time  $t$ . I agree with compatibilist's observation here. If I do not have the desire to do something else, why should I care about the option available to me.

Why should I care about whether I have the ability to bring make certain thing happen if I'm not interested in making it happen? **I do think** conditional analysis has captured the **normative sense** of CHDO – we are not interested in the ability to do otherwise  $X$  if  $X$  is something we do not want to do.

At the same time, compatibilists believe that conditional analysis of CHDO is a strategy to make CHDO compatible with determinism. As mentioned before, one of the necessary conditions for the conclusion that "I could only drink water at a given time  $t$ " is the desire that I had at an earlier time  $t_0$

has led me to carry out the action of drinking water at time  $t$ . For me to drink coffee would require a different desire at an earlier time  $t_0$ , namely, my desire to drink coffee. If we have replaced the original desire (which leads to  $X$  at current time  $t$ ), as the conditional analysts have suggested, with a different desire at a previous time  $t_0$ , then we have rejected one of the necessary conditions for the unalterability of the current state of affair, then the conclusion that I can only drink water at time  $t$  does not hold anymore – I could have done otherwise. This interpretation of CHDO is compatible with determinism, because a different desire at a previous time  $t_0$  which would lead to an alternative action exists in some other tape which also runs according to determinism, but just does not exist.

So when conditional analysts have designated the conditional analysis of freedom, I believe they have two prime purposes: 1). they are leading us to see what we normally mean when we say I could have done otherwise 2). they want to make CHDO and determinism compatible with each other.

Now both of the aims do not require the conditional analysts to do more than just positing an antecedent, so it is natural for them to omit the other conditions which are necessary for the alternative actions.

## 2). A Closer Look at the Conditional Interpretation of CHDO

If one of the conditional analysis' main aim is to make us see how we use CHDO in daily life, then let's take a closer look at how we normally use CHDO.

When people utter the sentence "I could have done otherwise", or as conditional analysts insist, "I would have done otherwise if I had desired to", I believe that they have **already assumed** the agent's ability and the external conditions needed to bring about the alternative action. If people genuinely and realistically utter the sentence "I could have done otherwise", I think they are certainly **not unaware** of the other conditions which are necessary for an action besides desire. For example, if I genuinely mean that I could have drunk coffee (when I actually drink the water at time  $t$ ), I have already assumed my

ability to get and drink coffee and there's coffee available. I'm also being realistic here when I say I could have drunk coffee, because I know I can drink coffee under normal conditions; I would not say that I would have flown if I had desired to or I would have eaten a ton of yogurt if I had desired to.

Another point I would like to make is that not only people have assumed their own abilities and normal conditions when they say "I would have done otherwise if I had desired to", they also know that CHDO is not that kind of ability which will **certainly** bring about its result, but kind of, what I would call, probable ability<sup>19</sup>. For example, when I say I could have drunk the coffee other than water at time t, what I precisely mean is that, it is very likely that if I want to drink coffee, I can make it happen. I have assumed my ability (to drink the coffee, to make coffee, to buy coffee and so on) and the probability (of coffee being available, hot water being available and so on). But it is a very likely scenario that there's no more coffee at my home and it is very late already and the shops which sell coffee are closed. So there's chance that I cannot bring about the alternative consequent of me drinking coffee but I know I can do so in most cases.

### 3). My Proposal of Formulating Conditional Analysis

I propose that conditional analysis of CHDO with antecedent of desire should make it explicit that CHDO is a probable ability, not as an ability that will **certainly** bring about its result, which means

---

<sup>19</sup>This is not to be confused with the idea of Probability Causality. According to David Lewis's theory of Probability Causality, "the event E is said to causally depend upon the distinct event C just in case both occur and the probability that E would occur, at the time of C's occurrence, was much higher than it would have been at the corresponding time if C had not occurred."

Now this seems to say that even if E had not occurred, C would have happened. This is not what I want to say. I want to focus on the case where E's occurrence depends on C, which means that if we do not have C, we would not have E. This is the purpose of conditional analysis in the first place: we add an C to the proposition describes the agent's ability to make E happen in order to make this ability compatible with free will.

even if the agent has the relevant ability and opportunity (external conditions) to bring about the alternative action, he may not always be able to do so.

#### - Type Ability

Now let me say a little bit more about this ability (different from the ability to do otherwise) the agent has and the external conditions we are dealing here.

Berofsky in his paper has talked about the difference between a token ability and a type ability: type ability is like some kind of talent or skill that the agent possesses, but he may not be able to use this kind of ability in every situation, exactly because sometimes the environment does not provide enough external conditions for the agent to use his talent/skill/type ability; token ability, on the other hand, refers to the agent's ability to bring about a certain action in a certain situation. (Berofsky, 196) The ability to do otherwise should be seen as a token ability; the ability the compatibilists have assumed when they formulated conditional analysis is the **type ability** Berofsky is talking about, and this type ability to do X is certainly one condition the agent absolutely needs if we want to say that he has the ability to do otherwise X.

Now I would like to borrow this term "type ability" from Berofsky, but to expand the notion of it.

First of all, the idea of type ability is close to the idea of talent or skill one possesses. If we think type ability as one's talent or skill, one thing to say here is that it is not easy to draw a line where the agent has the talent or not. For example, it may not always be clear whether the agent has the talent to cook or not – at some certain time, at some places, some one may be considered a competent cook and in some other places, and at some other times, the same person with a same level of competency in cooking could be considered as incompetent. This really depends on the situation.

On the other hand, the idea of "type ability" should not be limited to talent/skill. Let's consider an example and see what other things the type ability can refer to: Tom wanted to master the skill of

political science, so he decided to spend his weekend in a library studying about the subject. This decision to study comes from his own free will; he could have stayed at home watching TV, he could have gone to a museum, and he could have also relaxed himself in woods.

Now let's take one of these alternative possibilities and discuss about it; let's pick "Tom could have stayed at home watching TV". I choose this possibility because staying at home watching TV barely feels like a talent or ability understood in a normal sense. But he does need something to be home to watch TV. It is hard to pinpoint and describe exactly what he needs to stay at home and watch TV; let's just say he needs the type ability to do so. So "type ability" can also refer to something like "watch TV" or "stay at home".

The point of this discussion is that "type ability" should not just be understood strictly as talent, skill, and ability; it could also be understood something that the agent possesses which he needs in order to do very simple things.

Now this "type ability" is really about what the agent can do as understood in a very common sense, for example, as we have discussed above, the agent can cook, or in more loose sense, the agent can stay home and watch TV. We are dealing with the things which the agent **can** do. So what is the scope here? Clearly, there are many things the agent cannot do. Some simple examples would be that agents cannot fly or that not everyone can become a millionaire, and of course we would not even think to give a conditional analysis to the proposition like "the agent can fly" or "the agent can become a millionaire". We should not be too generous to "include all the things we could bring about through our intentional action, whether by plan or by accident, through blind luck or masterful" (Davidson, 1973) as Davidson puts it, and we need to have some kind of scope of the cases we are dealing with which regard what the agent could have done. Talking about this scope and what a person can do, Davidson suggests that "for practical purposes we are often interested in more limited concepts of what we can do – what we do do if we want or intend or try to do it, for example, or what we can do reliably." (Davidson, 1973: 71)

“Reliably” here means the agent has the ability to do X in a **very common sense**. For example, a good singer can give a great performance or I can turn on my laptop and write papers.

Even though what Davidson said here is still a little bit vague, I believe that this is the best we can get. I argue that it is very difficult to give a precise criteria for what the agent can do or what the type ability can refer to, but at the same time, we do have a very good indicator to judge whether someone can or cannot do something, and that is our common sense.

Another thing to add is that type ability should have some temporal stability, which means it should last for a while for the agent. One may say that the type ability that the agent has does not last forever. For example, a singer who has an outstanding technique when she was young may not sing very well when she got older. I say that the type ability, although it would disappear, it tends to stay for a period of time for the agent.

- Luck

Besides the type ability the agent possesses, to bring about the action, the agent also needs some external conditions to support his talent. Even though the agent has the talent to cook good food for his guests, he may not succeed every single time; maybe he does not feel well the time he fails, or maybe the oven he needs is not working or maybe some essential ingredients he need are missing. However, this does not mean that the agent would not have cooked good food if he had desired to, because under normal conditions, he was able to do so. The normal conditions are what the agent needs besides his type ability, and we could also call this “luck” – he needs luck to use his talent properly. There will always be exceptional cases where some of the normal conditions are deprived and the agent cannot use his type ability to bring about the alternative action so as I have proposed earlier that we should think CHDO as a probable ability.

This observation that the ability to do otherwise means that the agent would very likely to carry out the alternative action can be found in other philosophers' work.

For example, Moore has said that, "It is, therefore, quite certain (1) that we often should have acted differently, if we had chosen to; (2) that similarly we often should have chosen differently, if we had chosen so to choose; and (3) that it was almost always possible that we should have chosen differently, in the sense that no man could know for certain that we should not so choose." (Moore, 1912: 2) We can notice that Moore has used words like "often" and "almost always", I take him to stress the same point as I do – CHDO is not an ability that will bring about the result in every single case.

Let's also take a look at this passage from Lehrer. "For the purpose of this paper, I shall assume that if a hypothesis is very highly probable with respect to some kind of empirical evidence, then it is possible to know that hypothesis empirically. Thus, I shall attempt to prove that the hypothesis that a person could have done otherwise is very highly probable with respect to some kind of empirical evidence." (Lehrer, 1966) Lehrer<sup>20</sup> has made an epistemic claim about CHDO, even though my claim about CHDO is a metaphysical one, there's some similarities about the "probability" nature of CHDO. Lehrer has used "highly probable" to describe the ability to do otherwise.

In addition, Ginet has said that the prefix "it was in S's power at t to make it the case that..." expresses a certain type of possibility for the whole proposition. (Ginet, 1980: 173) I take him as saying that one's ability to bring about something is only a possibility, which means that if we say that the agent has the

<sup>20</sup>Lehrer's paper has also dealt with another aspect of my interpretation of CHDO, that is, we need assume the ability and opportunity when we say that the agent would have done otherwise if he had desired to; Lehrer has mentioned the conditions of temporal propinquity, circumstantial variety, agent similarity, and simple frequency.

This point resonates with Angelika Kratzer's analysis of "can", as mentioned in List's paper "Free Will, Determinism, and the Possibility of Doing Otherwise", who believes that when we use the word "can" there's always an additional of the form "in view of X". She believes that there have to be some other conditions which need to be specified out when we say someone can do something. (Kratzer, 1977)

power to do X, we mean that it is only possible for him to do X, not that he will just do X if he wants to.

To conclude, I suggest that conditional analysts explicitly list “type ability” and “luck” as two other conditions besides the antecedent “desire” for the alternative action. Needless to say, they also need to explain what “type ability” and “luck” refer to, more importantly, they need to point out that the ability to do otherwise is a probability ability and describe the mechanism how the antecedent “desire” leads to the alternative action. I believe once conditional analysts have made this effort, they can successfully reply to the criticism that “desire is not enough”.

## 7. One More Criticism: Conditional Analysis Has Lowered the Standard

Some say that conditional analysis of CHDO is a watered-down version of CHDO itself. They insist that CHDO to be analyzed when all the conditions leading to the state of affairs at time *t* to be held constantly. The conditional analysts believe that what we mean by CHDO actually requires the history leading to **what happened** at time *t* to be changed, but some of the incompatibilists would insist that this should not be the case. I will consider two arguments in this chapter, which shift the burdens of proof to the incompatibilists's camp, that is to say, the incompatibilists have to defend themselves when they finish reading my thesis and find themselves more convincing arguments to explain why we need to insist that CHDO actually means CHDO without any antecedent condition.

### 1). Incompatibilists' Insistence

After the discussion before, I have defended the conditional analysis from various problems it faces and I have also argued that conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire is an efficient way to defend the compatibility between CHDO and determinism. In this chapter, I will defend conditional analysis with an antecedent of desire from one more problem it faces by considering some arguments which introduce us to some new terminology of describing the compatibilist's position, and I believe these arguments have shifted the burden of proof to the incompatibilist's camp.

Some say that conditional analysis of CHDO is watered-down version of the modal interpretation of CHDO<sup>21</sup>. For example, in his paper, List has stated that "it is widely held that the compatibility of determinism and the ability to do otherwise comes too cheap under a conditional or dispositional interpretation." (List, 2011: 6) This criticism against conditional analysis implies that when we used the conditional analysis interpretation of CHDO, we are lowering our standard of CHDO.

---

21 This expression comes from Christian List. According to List, modal interpretation of CHDO means "I could not have done otherwise, period". In other words, it means CHDO in the context where the agent's history leading to his action at time *t* stays unchanged.

Some believe that alternative possibility should be talked about in an absolute kind of way, which means we do not add an antecedent part to the CHDO proposition.

For example, Susan Hurley says that “the conditional analysis is incorrect. The ability to do otherwise entails the outright possibility of acting otherwise, holding all else constant. A counterfactually conditioned disposition to act otherwise is not the same thing as an outright possibility of acting otherwise.” (Hurley, 1999: 206) Similarly, Ginet insists that “possibility” means that “nothing that exists up to that moment in time stands in the way of my doing next any one of the alternatives”. (Ginet, 2002: 387)

Conditional analysts believe that we need to reassess CHDO so that we can see that CHDO and determinism are compatible with each other. According to conditional analysts, CHDO means “the agent would have done otherwise if he had desired to”. This reassessment requires the conditions leading to the action at a past given time  $t$  be modified – a different desire took place at an earlier time  $t_0$  would replace the original desire which rationalize the agent’s action at time  $t$ . Some disagree with this reassessment of “could have done otherwise”, for example, John L. Austin argues, when talking about a specific example of CHDO “I could have holed differently”, that “it is not that I should have holed it if conditions had been different: that might of course be so, but I am talking about conditions as they precisely were.” (Austin, 1961: 308)

## 2). Possible Worlds and Alternative Possibility

The conditional analysis, in the first place, is to lead the readers to see what people normally would think about and talk about CHDO, according to conditional analysis of CHDO, CHDO means “I would have done otherwise if I had desired to.” But this interpretation would require a different desire at an earlier time  $t_0$  and alteration of some other conditions of the agent’s history from time  $t_0$  to time  $t$ . The

incompatibilists who reject conditional analysis would insist that we talk about CHDO as the agent's biography remains the same.

To reply to this challenge, Taylor and Dennett have introduced a possible world argument which I find interesting and worth considering. This argument goes something like this: when we start to build our theory, the theory needs an ontology to support it, and we need to make clear what we put into this ontology. Taylor and Dennett points out that if we admit into the ontology just the world that is exactly like ours, then we will come to believe that determinism is depriving our ability to do otherwise. Because if we only have in our ontology the world that is exactly like ours, then we only have “one tape” to look at. To be more precise, “this tape” Taylor and Dennett refers to is the scenario leads to a certain event at time  $t$ . If we only have one world that is exactly like the one we are living in, then we will just replay the tape over and over again when we assess the whole situation. We will find that there's nothing that we can alter. According to the Taylor and Dennett, if we **open up our minds** a little bit, if we admit into our ontology more possible worlds, we will realize that determinism can comfortably coexist with alternative possibility. To be a little bit more formal, the other possible worlds we take into should be different from our actual world in some details at time  $t_0$ , which is a time before time  $t$ . We know that any little difference at time  $t_0$  in a new possible world similar to ours could in theory lead to a very different result at time  $t$ . Therefore, we could have different results at  $t$  at different possible worlds – we have saved CHDO (Dennett, Taylor 2002).

Now I would like to briefly introduce the concept of possible worlds to make the argument above more clearly. First of all, possible worlds is a very common way dealing with modality. But then, what is a possible world? David Lewis believes that a possible world is a “maximally connected space-time region” and anything that is spationtemporally connected to us is a part of our world. Lewis also says that “each (possible) world lies in its own space-time, and the worlds are concrete and exist in the same sense as our world.” (Lewis, 1968) Lewis also points out that our world does not have any special

existence other than being one of the possible worlds and “.. nothing that occurs in one world has any causal impact on anything that occurs in any other world ..” (Lewis,1968), which means that two possible worlds have no relation whatsoever with each other at all.

Another question would be that how we should choose possible worlds into our ontology. Taylor and Dennett believe that we should not make the range of possible worlds we choose too narrow; they did not give a precise criteria for how should we choose possible worlds. Since we are investigating the proposition that “A would have done otherwise if he had desired to”, somewhere in Taylor and Dennett’s paper, they suggest that we could include three other possible worlds, besides the actual one we are living in, the other three possible worlds would have to represent the same conditional proposition that we are dealing with but with the negation of the consequent part, one with the negation of the antecedent and one with both negations of the consequent and antecedent.

What we include in our ontology and how we choose possible worlds is very much related to how we think about alternative situations in real life because this possible worlds arguments from Taylor and Dennett in the first place is to help us to have clearer understanding of modality. As pointed out by Vihvelin, “when we evaluate counterfactuals in real life, we do so by considering imaginary situations which are very like the situation we are actually in, and we do not suppose that there are any gratuitous departures from actuality.” (Vihvelin, 2011) This corresponds with the idea that the other possible worlds we include in our ontology should characteristically be very similar to our real world; one could say that the things in a possible world is the recombination of the things which we have in our own world.

Now let’s look at an example of how this strategy works. Charlotte at time t, was about to make a decision to either become a musician in the Berliner Philharmoniker Orchestra or to become a medicine student. She chooses to become a musician. However, she could very well have become a medicine student-- she was qualified and she was also very interested in becoming a medicine student.

Incompatibilists believe that Charlotte could not have become a medicine student if we endorse a deterministic picture of universe. Clearly, that's not true. In real life, it is very intuitive for us to think that Charlotte could very well become a medicine student, because Charlotte had both the qualification and the will to become a medicine student.

So how shall we keep this intuition of ours in a world functioning with a deterministic natural law?

Taylor and Dennett suggest that we could admit into our ontology more than one possible world. In this case of Charlotte, we do not just look at the world that is exactly like ours where Charlotte chose to become a musician, but we add into our ontology a possible world which is almost exactly like ours.

This possible world at time  $t_0$  differs from our world in a few details.

Let's be a little bit experimental with these altered details. Charlotte was pondering about which decision she was going to make, either to become a musician or to become a medicine student, then she read some story of Dr Bach's flower remedies and got really inspired. She felt medicine was actually more exciting and interesting, then she made the decision to become a medicine student at time  $t$ . In this newly admitted possible world, because Charlotte had gone through some different experiences from the ones she had gone through in the world that is exactly like ours, she made the decision to become a medicine student. Notice that, this new possible world we include in our ontology also operates according to deterministic natural rule – we did not change our position about determinism; we just broaden the scope of our ontology and include some new possible worlds which differ from our real world in some details during the period of time from time  $t_0$  to  $t$ . Consequently, CHDO is not being undermined by determinism.

The incompatibilists say that there's only action<sup>22</sup> that the agent could do at time  $t$  under determinism, and there's no genuine alternative possibility in this picture. The possible world approach is going to take us to see why these incompatibilists take this position and what they have implicitly endorsed when

---

<sup>22</sup> Once again, what the agent did at time  $t$  may not necessarily be just one action, it could also be a set of actions. This is just a convenient way of describing the argument.

they say that we have only our actual world to look at, and we find out what they endorse is the narrow approach of possible worlds – we only include in our ontology of the world that we are living now. So now the burden of proof has shifted to the incompatibilist's camp, because now they have to explain to us why do we have to insist that CHDO means that the agent could have done otherwise given all conditions leading to the action at time t be held constant and why we cannot open up our minds a little bit and include several other possible worlds other than the current world we are living in.

### 3). David Lewis' Divergence Miracle

In David Lewis' "Are We Free to Break Laws", Lewis also offers us an argument that shifts the burden of proof to the incompatibilist's camp.

Lewis first claims that there are two types of understanding of breaking the law. A strong thesis and a weak thesis. A strong thesis of law is that I am able to break a law and a weak thesis of law is that I am able to do something such that, if I did it, a law would be broken.

Lewis argues that for the agent to do otherwise under determinism, a law would have to be broken and compatibilists should accept a weaker thesis of breaking the law. Lewis argues playfully, ".. I insist that I was able to raise my hand, and I acknowledge that a law would have been broken had I done so, but I deny that I am therefore able to break a law .." (Lewis, 1981: 125)

Lewis explains that it is not that I am able to break a law because I have done some alternative action, but rather that if I have done the alternative action, then my action would be a law-breaking event and law would have been broken before I have done the alternative action. Lewis further states that, "had I raised my hand, a law would have been broken beforehand. **The course of events would have diverged from the actual course of events a little while before I raised my hand**, and at the point of divergence there would have been a law-breaking event – a divergence miracle, as I have called it." (Lewis, 1981: 125)

This is the interesting part of Lewis' argument, he believes that for an alternative action to take place, a divergence miracle would have to happen before the occurrence of the alternative action. This divergence miracle would alter the course of history leading to the action that takes place at time  $t$ , which will produce a different action. Obviously, one's history cannot really be altered, so the law of nature has to be broken in order for the change in the course of one's history to happen. One important distinction for Lewis is that it is not that I am able to break a law (this is the Strong thesis), but me being able to do otherwise is a law-breaking event and the law had to be broken (a divergence miracle had to happen) before I have done otherwise.

Similar to Taylor and Dennett's argument, we have to make some changes to the conditions which lead to the current action at time  $t$ . In Taylor and Dennett's argument, these changes are made possible when we expand the scope of our ontology and includes some other possible worlds which are similar to ours, and in Lewis' argument, these changes can take place if we accept a weak thesis of breaking the law which means a divergence miracle would have to happen before the occurrence of the action, be it alternative or actual, at time  $t$ .

Similarly, Lewis's argument has shifted the burden of proof to the incompatibilists' camp. Now the incompatibilists have to explain why compatibilists have to accept a strong thesis of breaking the law.

As Vihvelin puts it, "The compatibilist is committed only to saying that if determinism is true, we have abilities which we would exercise only if the past (and/or the laws) had been different in the appropriate ways. And while this may sound odd, it is no more incredible than the claim that the successful exercise of our abilities depends, not only on us, but also on the co-operation of factors outside our control." (Vihvelin, 2011) What Vihvelin also wants to point out, especially when she says that "the successful exercise of one's ability depends on external environment", is that a different action was led to by a different desire, and a different desire would require us to look at another possible world or to allow a divergence miracle to happen. I think Vihvelin is exploring the point, as mentioned

in the previous chapter, that desire is not something that the agent does, but rather it comes to the agent itself.

To conclude, the criticism we set out to reply is that conditional analysis of CHDO is a watered-down version of modal interpretation of CHDO. I believe that we should not take this criticism seriously especially after the discussion in this section. While it is true that we have made CHDO compatible with determinism with the conditional analysis of CHDO, it doesn't mean that we have "lowered" the standard, because it is not clear that CHDO without the conditional part should be the benchmark or it is the best interpretation of CHDO.

Some incompatibilist would still insist that we hold on to the modal interpretation of CHDO, and they would insist the conditional analysis of CHDO is a watered-down version of CHDO. So now we have a deadlock – a disputation about which version of CHDO we should take.

The two arguments I have considered in this chapter, one from Taylor and Dennett and another one from Lewis have used new terminology to describe the deadlock; they have also shown us what the two positions respectively imply. The incompatibilists cannot just say that the modal interpretation of CHDO is the best interpretation of CHDO; especially now they have to use the new terminology offered by these two arguments to defend themselves. These two arguments have helped us shifted the burden of proof to the incompatibilists's side. I do not mean that the incompatibilists cannot successfully formulate very convincing counter-argument; if we think it is a tie between compatibilists and incompatibilists when the deadlock was described, then at the end of my thesis, because the incompatibilists have to make the effort defending themselves now, the compatibilists' side has more strength.

## Conclusion

As I mentioned in the introduction, conditional analysis of CHDO wasn't considered to be successful by many. I find conditional analysis of CHDO to be quite convincing and interesting. I think it has captured what we normally mean when we say "I could have done otherwise", and I also believe what we normally mean is also compatible with determinism.

In my thesis, I have defended a special version of conditional analysis of freedom – the conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire.

I tried to achieve this goal, first, by arguing why the antecedent of "desire" has more advantages than the antecedent of an action sort; I said that because the antecedent of "desire" does not suffer the infinite regress problem and it will not be read as part of the action in question.

Subsequently, I've considered four problems the conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire faces: "substitution problem", "freedom-undermining situations" problem, "cases where the alternative action was not led to by the antecedent desire" problem and "desire is not enough" criticism. First, I argued that because there's an ambiguity of "can" in the "substitution problem", this problem does not hold itself. Then I pointed out that the way freedom-undermining situations deprive the agents' ability to do otherwise and the way determinism deprives the agent's ability to do otherwise are different, so the freedom-undermining situations problem does not take away the legitimacy of conditional analysis.

Some criticize that conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire did not include the cases where the alternative action was not led to by the antecedent desire; the critics believe it should because sometimes when we say "I could have done otherwise", we do not mean "I would have done otherwise if I had desired to" – our alternative action would come from some other causes. I argued that the antecedent "desire" conditional analysts posited was only a sufficient condition, not a necessary

condition, and if we have this in mind, then we understand that the conditional analysis does allow that the consequence is not necessarily led to by the antecedent.

Regarding the last problem listed here, the “desire is not enough” problem, I contended that the conditional analysts are aware of the fact that the antecedent desire would not automatically lead to the alternative action; their aim is to show us what we normally mean by CHDO and to make CHDO compatible with determinism. These two aims can be achieved by just positing the antecedent without saying anything else. By looking it this way, we understand that the “desire is not enough” problem is more of a misunderstanding. However, considering problem like this, I proposed that compatibilists should formulate a more clear and more detailed account of conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire.

After replying to all these problems, in Chapter 7, I considered one more criticism, namely, the conditional analysis of CHDO has lowered the standard for the compatibility between determinism and CHDO; the incompatibilists argue that we should insist that “I could have done otherwise” means just “I could have done otherwise”.

This criticism can be seen as a disagreement between the compatibilists and incompatibilists about which interpretation of CHDO we should take. I considered interesting two arguments in this chapter, one from Taylor and Dennett, and another one from David Lewis; I pointed out some similarities between these two arguments and I believe that both of these two arguments have shifted the burdens of proof to the incompatibilists’s camp.

After addressing all these problems, I think I’ve quite successfully supported my own thesis, which is to defend the conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire.

My thesis is certainly not just an overview of some of the problems this version of conditional analysis of CHDO faces; I have put these problems together, because I believe by demonstrating that these problems do not really pose a threat to this version of conditional analysis of freedom, we can say

confidently that the conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire does actually have lots of convincing power.

As far as I know, nobody wrote a paper like I did; nobody had put these problems together and by replying them to defend a single thesis. Some people argue that conditional analysis of CHDO fails and some of them modify conditional analysis of freedom into something very complicated. I kept a simple formulation “I would have done otherwise if I had desired to”, at the same time, I was proposing that conditional analysts should make it explicit what they have presupposed in this simple formulation.

Not many theorists, when talking about conditional analysis, consider the “possible world argument” and the “divergence miracle argument”; I have put them together with the previous discussion, because I believe these two arguments have strengthen the position of compatibilists who advocate the conditional analysis of CHDO. As I was inspired by Taylor and Dennett’s “possible world argument”, I hope to do more research on the possible worlds semantics of talking about conditional analysis, and I would like to bridge the concept of possible worlds and the concept of free will more closely.

## Bibliography

- Austin, John.L. (1961) "Ifs and Cans", *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, p 308
- Ayer, A. J. (1954) "Freedom and Necessity" , *Philosophical Essays by Professor Sir Alfred Ayer*, pp.110, 117
- Baggini, Julian. (2015) "Freedom Regained: The Possibility Of Free Will" ,Granta Books, pp. 12, 13, 15, 74
- Berosfsky, Bernard. (2002) "Ifs, Cans, and Free Will" in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Oxford University Press, p. 182, 185
- Bishop, Robert C. (2002) "Chaos, Indeterminism, and Free Will" in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Oxford University Press, p. 111
- Campbell, C.A. (1951) "Is Free Will A Pseudo-Problem?" Retrieved December 2016 from <http://www.informationphilosopher.com/solutions/philosophers/campbell/pseudo-problem.html>
- Clarke, Randolph. (2009) "Dispositions, Abilities to Act, and Free Will: The New Dispositionalism", *Mind*, Vol. 2009, p.323
- Davidson, Donald. (2002) "Freedom to Act", Clarendon Press. London, pp. 68, 67, 70, 72, 75, 77
- Dennett, Daniel. (2014) "Reflections on FREE WILL: A Review by Daniel C. Dennett". Retrieved July 2016 from <https://www.samharris.org/blog/item/reflections-on-free-will>
- Dennett, Daniel and Taylor, Christopher. (2002) "Who's Afraid of Determinism? Rethinking Causes and Possibilities" in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Oxford University Press, pp. 257-273
- Ginet, Carl. (1980) "The Conditional Analysis of Freedom", Reidel Publishing Company, p. 173
- Ginet, Carl. (2002) "Reasons Explanations of Actions: Causalist versus Noncausalist Accounts" in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Oxford University Press, p. 387
- Haji, Ishtiyaque. (2002) "Compatibilist Views of Freedom and Responsibility", Oxford University Press, P 208
- Hodgson, David. (2002) "Quantum Physics, Consciousness, and Free Will" in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Oxford University Press, pp. 85~87, 100~101
- Hurley, Susan. (1999) "Responsibilities, Reasons and Irrelevant Alternatives", Wiley: Philosophy and Public Affairs, p206
- Kane, Robert. (2002) "Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free Will Debates" in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Oxford University Press, p. 23

- Lehrer, Keith. (1996) "An Empirical Disproof of Determinism", Random House
- Lewis, David. (1981) "Are We Free to Break Laws" ,Theoria 4, p. 125
- Lewis, David. (1986) "On The Plurality of Worlds" ,Blackwell, Oxford
- Libet, Benjamin. (2002) "Do We Have Free Will" in The Oxford Handbook of Free Will, Oxford University Press, pp. 552, 556
- List, Christian & Rabinowicz, Wlodek. (2015) "Two Intuitions about Free Will: Aternative Possibilities and Intentional Endorsement", LSE Research Online, p1
- List, C. (2011) "Free will, determinism, and the possibility of doing otherwise" ,LSE Research Online, pp. 4~10
- Moore, G.E. "Ethics: Chapter 6. Free Will" (1912) Retrieved December 2016 from <http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/ethics/chapter-vi>
- O'Connor, Timothy. (2002) "Libertarian Views: Dualist and Agent- Causal Theories" in The Oxford Handbook of Free Will, Oxford University Press, p. 345
- Pauen, Michael. (2007) "Self- Determination: Free Will, Responsibility, and Determinism", SYNTHESIS PHILOSOPHICA
- Smart, J.J C. (1961) "Free-Will, Praise and Blame", Oxford University Press, p294-296
- Vihvelin, Kadri. (2011) "The Consequence Argument and Lewis's Reply", Kadri Vihvelin's Philosophy Blog
- Vihvelin, Kadri. (2004) "Free Will Demystified: A Dispositional Account", Philosophical Topics, P1

## Abstract

I'm taking a compatibilist position between free will and determinism. I'm mainly discussing "could have done otherwise" (abbreviated as CHDO throughout my thesis) in the free will debate. My thesis is that conditional interpretation of CHDO with an antecedent of desire is a convincing analysis that makes CHDO and determinism compatible with each other. I will support this thesis by discussing why the antecedent of desire is a better candidate than other antecedents and replying to some of the criticism against this version of conditional analysis.

One conception of conditional analysis of CHDO is that it is a watered-down version of modal interpretation of CHDO. I will consider some arguments which give us some new interesting perspective on the conditional interpretation of CHDO. I believe that these arguments have successfully shifted the burden of proof to the incompatibilists and further increase the convincing power of the conditional analysis of CHDO with an antecedent of desire.

## **Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public**

I, Yangsen Yu (3<sup>rd</sup> /April/1992)

1. herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to:
  - 1.1. reproduce, for the purpose of preservation and making available to the public, including for addition to the DSpace digital archives until expiry of the term of validity of the copyright, and
  - 1.2. make available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until expiry of the term of validity of the copyright,

### **“MA Thesis: Defending Conditional Analysis of the Ability to Do Otherwise”**

supervised by Bruno Mölder

2. I am aware of the fact that the author retains these rights.
3. I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe the intellectual property rights or rights arising from the Personal Data Protection Act.

Tartu, **15.05.2017**