

# PHILOSOPHY TALK

## The Irreducibility of Free Will

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Life presents many affordances for various forms of despair and prompts many cries of “wubba lubba dub dub” (in various shades of irony). All arguments for despair involve positive standards of value, but while many of these arguments are capable of being overcome by critiquing those standards and replacing them with more robust visions for meaning, there is a source of fatalism that is immune to such responses. This is the classic anxiety that comes from seeing ourselves as a part of the deterministic causal fabric of the universe and thus lacking in any meaningful sense of possessing a free will. With the loss of free will, there is concern that much of the most robust visions for meaning that humanity has considered are undercut by a world that doesn’t permit their existence. In other words, if all our choices and thoughts are determined, then certain (valuable) phenomena just aren’t possible.

In this talk, I will take a jog through the territory of how one might defend against this form of despair without either 1) defending that we can actually know we have the raw metaphysical ability to break the deterministic laws of the universe or 2) substituting for ‘free will’ a wimpy knock-off of the original values that determinism threatens. My answer is more or less the Kantian vision where seeing ourselves as free is something we are unable to avoid endorsing (in a non-ironic way!).

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Tuesday, May 22, 12:30 – 1:20  
LMC Event Center, Room D106

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