

First Literature Review

Daniel Hoek — Proseminar — Spring 2024

Due date: Monday January 29, before class.

Word count: 300-600 words.

Your question is **“If the universe is deterministic, are we free to act as we please?”**

Your challenge is to do a brief write-up (one to two pages, preferably one) in which you map the philosophical terrain around this question. Your write-up should:

1. Identify the philosophical issues that this question raises, and explain how these issues could affect the right answer to the question.
2. List the main positions that philosophers have taken on those issues, articulating them in your own words. (Your list does not have to be exhaustive — but try if you can to include the most influential positions.)
3. Try to identify at least one philosopher who has defended each position you describe. Where you can, sketch in very broad terms what reason(s) that philosopher has for taking the position.

Since none of you are experts on this particular issue, this really is a challenge! I don't expect perfection — just give it a shot.

Thankfully there are a number of useful resources that can help you with this (no obligation to use them all):

- ▶ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu>. The survey articles on this website are mostly excellent and give you a good starting point for diving into pretty much any philosophical topic you can think of. You may find articles here that already do a good deal of mapping for you — feel free to borrow as liberally as you like! Sometimes the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <https://iep.utm.edu> can also be quite good; Wikipedia is rarely any good on philosophical topics.
- ▶ Another good source of high quality survey articles is the journal *Philosophy Compass*.
- ▶ Philpapers <https://philpapers.org>. This website indexes pretty much all philosophical texts from the past century, mostly with abstracts and, in the case of journal articles, a link to where you can download them. If you don't have one already, you should make a PhilPapers account and indicate you're at Virginia Tech: that way you will be able to download papers from home

using VT's proxy. This is easier than using the library website. Philpapers also allows you to browse articles by topic. (For this assignment, you should not be reading any articles from start to finish — but you may want to look at an abstract or introduction here and there).

- ▶ If you come across a book that looks useful and is not in the library (or a chapter in an anthology), try and see if you can access the book online through the publisher — e.g. Oxford Scholarship Online. Failing that, you can download pirated editions of many books from an extremely useful website called “LibGen”: <http://libgen.st> . (For any given book the site will typically give you about five numbered links — sometimes you have to try a few different ones before it works.)

Good luck!