

One of the key issues in the free will debate is what it means to say that an agent has the ability to do otherwise. In an indeterministic universe, agents can have the unconditional (or actual) ability to do otherwise—that is, they could have done other than they did even if everything leading up to their decision remained the same. Libertarians suggest that this unconditional ability to do otherwise in the actual sequence of events is necessary for free will and responsibility—an ability that all parties to the free will debate agree is incompatible with a deterministic universe. After all, if determinism is true, given the past and the physical laws, one and only one thing is possible at any given moment. So, given determinism, an agent couldn't have done otherwise if everything leading up to her action was kept constant. Instead, agents merely have the conditional (or counterfactual) ability to do otherwise—that is, agents could have acted differently only insofar as something had been different than it actually was. Compatibilists suggest that this conditional ability to do otherwise (along with other cognitive and volitional capacities) can ground free will and moral responsibility. Incompatibilists disagree.

This feature of the free will debate—that is, the difference between the unconditional and the conditional ability to do otherwise—has been underexplored in the empirical literature on free will beliefs. While researchers have probed people's intuitions about free will and responsibility using indeterministic and deterministic scenarios, not enough attention has been focused on the abilities to do otherwise afforded to agents by these different scenarios. Our goal is to address this lacuna. In a series of vignette-based studies, we will explore (a) the difference between people's intuitions about indeterministic scenarios and their intuitions about deterministic scenarios, (b) the difference between people's intuitions about indeterministic scenarios and their intuitions about neurodeterministic scenarios (that is, scenarios where the determinism is described at the neurological level), and (c) the difference between people's intuitions about neutral scenarios (such as when an agent walks his dog in the park) and their intuitions about negatively valenced scenarios (such as when an agent murders a stranger). Based both on previous research and on very promising preliminary results with some of our new vignettes, we predict that once we focus participants' attention on

the two different abilities to do otherwise available to agents in indeterministic and deterministic scenarios, people's intuitions will support folk incompatibilism.