

Analysis of Video By Sabine Hossenfelder ("You Don't Have Free Will But Don't Worry")

Post by "Martin" of July 31, 2021 at 8:49 AM

Here is my first response to the video of Sabine Hossenfelder on free will:

Reductionism combined with hard determinism excludes the possibility of free will. It seems that is essentially what she correctly presents in the video. She knows math and physics much better than I. Therefore, it surprises me that she makes a number of contradictions/mistakes which mislead her into reductionism and hard determinism:

Science has provided what is probably our best methodology to understand the world and act in it by applying scientific models in analogy of using maps to find our way. However, she is promoting reductionism, which means in that analogy that she is confounding the map with the territory.

She follows hard determinism by claiming that everything has been predetermined since the big bang. Later on, she correctly refers to quantum indeterminacy but overlooks that it contradicts the hard determinism she just claimed before.

It seems she implies that there is no evidence that free will exists because we cannot turn back time and make a different decision. However, that same reason constitutes no evidence that free will does not exist.

I have repeatedly read claims by professors of theoretical physics that classical thermodynamics already rules out hard determinism but I do not understand the reason. I guess that lack of understanding is why the reference to emergent properties to justify the existence of free will does not convince me. She does not address that path to free will. Therefore, it seems that she does not know that reason either :-).

One of the statements where I agree with her is that quantum indeterminacy does not directly support free will because we cannot influence quantum indeterminacy. In my view, quantum indeterminacy breaks hard determinism and thereby may enable free will but it is not obvious how beyond that precondition that hard determinism is ruled out.

One aspect which she does not cover is that free will has connotations of a supernatural soul. Therefore, agency is a much better term for what we claim in Epicurean philosophy based on the observation that different individuals take different actions even when all circumstances appear to be the same. Once we put our mind into something we put in a lot of effort in making the goal happen. A person who has resigned to a predetermined fate is less likely to put in a lot of effort. Agency seems to be compatible with Hossenfelder's differential equations determining

the immediate future from the presence if a random term from (quantum) indeterminacy is included.

I did not watch the video on Noam Chomsky. I agree mostly with what is quoted from his interview when using free will in the sense of agency except that I expect that eventually, neurophysicists, neurologists or the like will eventually come up with a good model and possibly a suitable redefinition to describe what we feel like Chomsky to be free will/agency.