The Rise of Compatibilism: A Case Study in the Quantitative History of Philosophy

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Incompatibilists about free will and responsibility often maintain that incompatibilism is the intuitive, commonsense position. Recently, this claim has come under unfavorable scrutiny from naturalistic philosophers who have surveyed philosophically uneducated undergraduates.[1] But there is a much older problem for the claim that incompatibilism is intuitive—if incompatibilism is intuitive, why is compatibilism so popular in the history of philosophy? In this paper I will try to answer this question by pursuing a rather different naturalistic methodology. The idea is to look not at the responses of the philosophically naïve, but at the views of the most sophisticated—the philosophers themselves. But we look at the history of philosophy not by further close reading of the texts, but rather, by doing the numbers.

1. For statements of the intuitiveness of incompatibilism, see Robert Kane, "Responsibility, Luck, and Chance," *Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999): 217–40 and Galen Strawson, *Freedom and Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). For empirical challenges to the claim that incompatibilism is intuitive, see Eddy Nahmias, Stephen Morris, Thomas Nadelhoffer, and Jason Turner, "Is Incompatibilism Intuitive?" forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* and Rob Woolfolk, John Doris, and John Darley, "Identification, Situational Constraint, and Social Cognition: Studies in the Attribution of Moral Responsibility," *Cognition* (2006). And for a partial empirical defense of the intuitiveness of incompatibilism, see Shaun Nichols and Joshua Knobe, "Moral Responsibility and Determinism: The Cognitive Science of Folk Intuitions," forthcoming in *Nous*.

The paper will first set out the basic philosophical background of interest and then give a general methodological account of how a quantitative history of philosophy might proceed. This methodology will then be invoked as a tool for answering the question, "why did compatibilism catch on?" The hypothesis about compatibilism will be familiar—that compatibilism thrived because it is motivationally attractive. The novelty will be in using quantitative history to support the hypothesis.

1. PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

Compatibilist accounts of free will have grown ever more sophisticated. The literature is impressive in both its subtlety and its volume. But we will be interested in the most elemental claim shared by all compatibilists, viz., the compatibility thesis: free will and moral responsibility are compatible with determinism. That is, even if determinism is true, it does not threaten free will or moral responsibility. Those of us who embrace incompatibilism deny the compatibility thesis, of course. We maintain that determinism does conflict with our ordinary notions of free will and responsibility. In contemporary discussions of free will, incompatibilists self-identify as the underdog.[2] But we console ourselves with the idea that incompatibilism is the natural, intuitive view of free will and responsibility. The history of philosophy seems to have been unkind to our natural, intuitive notions.

On one standard view, Hobbes was the first philosopher in the early modern period to articulate the compatibilist view clearly. But after Hobbes, compatibilism takes off. It might not be accurate to say that compatibilism becomes the dominant position in the early modern period, but it clearly enjoys an impressive members list. The enormous success of compatibilism is something of an embarrassment for those of us who think that incompatibilism is the natural commonsense position. Incompatibilists are accordingly inclined to regard compatibilists as philosophically shallow. However, when compatibilism enjoys the support of Hobbes, Locke, Leibniz, and Hume, the charge of philosophical superficiality starts to seem rather less plausible. Thus we are stuck with the question, "If compatibilism violates common sense, why is it such a hit?"

Many of us incompatibilists think we know the answer to this: it's *wishful thinking*! Philosophers embrace compatibilism because they want it to be true. This view is, I think, common among incompatibilists. Famously, James dubs compatibilism a "quagmire of evasion." Even more famously, Kant says it is a "wretched subterfuge." We can put the incompatibilist's motivational hypothesis somewhat more precisely as follows:

M: Philosophers embrace compatibilism despite its counterintuitiveness because compatibilism is *motivationally attractive*.

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2. See Derk Pereboom, "Determinism al dente," *Nous* 29 (1995): 21–45 and Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies* 75 (1994): 5–24.

But this might sound rather petulant and *ad hominem*. It would be nice to have at least a smattering of evidence for the charge. We need to devise a method to sharpen and evaluate our motivational hypothesis.

2. TOWARD A QUANTITATIVE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Traditional history of philosophy proceeds by close readings of the texts, by using textual evidence and supplementary biographical materials to interpret the philosophical views of the great minds of the past. Here I want to advocate a more abstract approach that draws on traditional work in the history of philosophy. We can exploit traditional interpretations of historical philosophers to chart patterns of distribution of philosophers over philosophical positions. A related quantitative approach to literature has been championed by Franco Moretti.[3] For instance, Moretti argues that we can get a better understanding of the history of genre literature by tallying the number of books published annually in a given genre. It is an unabashedly radical way to think about literature.[4] It is no less radical to apply such a method to philosophy. But, as with Moretti's fledgling attempts to understand the history of literature, one can hope that a quantitative approach will give us a new way to understand features of the history of philosophy, and even perhaps something about the philosophical mind. The guiding idea is that a more abstract, quantitative approach can reveal patterns that get lost in the traditional project of close readings. In much empirical research, one tries to detect patterns through the noise of individual variation. Similarly, by doing quantitative history of philosophy, we might be able to find interesting generalizations through the din of history.

Whereas for Moretti, the unit of analysis is the book, for our project, the relevant unit will be the philosopher. And rather than sort philosophers into genres, we will place them into the space of philosophical positions. How will we determine which philosophers go into which slots? It will not do for the quantitative historian of philosophy to decide on his own where the philosophers are located in philosophical space. For that will be a source for something like experimenter bias. Rather, the quantitative historian should rely on the work of others to determine where the philosophers lay in the philosophical geography. There is, however, an obvious problem with this method. Historians of philosophy notoriously disagree about how to interpret the philosophers. That's their bread and butter. Indeed, from an outsider's perspective, it can seem that the surest path to fame as a historian of philosophy is to make some outrageously heterodox interpretation seem plausible. Descartes isn't a rationalist, Berkeley isn't an idealist, Kant isn't a Kantian. For doing quantitative history of philosophy, we want to avoid such controversies. Ideally, we will want to use the dominant interpretations among

3. Franco Moretti "Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History—1," *New Left Review* 24 (2003): 67–93.

4. Although the application of quantitative history to literature is radical, within the field of history, quantitative history has been an established methodology for decades (see e.g., W. Adyelotte, A. Bogue, and R. Fogel, eds., *The Dimensions of Quantitative Research in History* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972]).

the experts in the area. The expectation is that if we get a good number of philosophers into our sample, it will not matter all that much if some of the standard interpretations we use are mistaken. Of course, if *most* standard interpretations are wrong, that spells real trouble for the quantitative history of philosophy. But if we are so bad at interpretation, this spells trouble for history of philosophy quite generally.

Merely plotting philosophers into a table of philosophical positions is not very illuminating. One needs hypotheses about the expected distributions to make the tables informative. And our hypotheses may come from many different sources since there are, in fact, many influences and constraints on the distribution and evolution of philosophical theories. In constructing hypotheses about the history of philosophy, we would do well not to focus exclusively on the constraints imposed by Truth and Rationality, but also to consider the influence of religion, politics, and culture. Philosophical inquiry is likely also shaped in ways that are illuminated by economic models.[5] The particular aims of the research will largely determine which resources are appropriate to the task.

For our purposes, the most important factors are psychological, since we're interested in the psychological underpinnings of philosophy. Here too, there are very many psychological factors that might influence the distribution and evolution of philosophical theories. For instance, researchers in cultural evolution maintain that cultural evolution is shaped by innate modules dedicated to folk psychology, folk physics, and folk biology. If they are right, it seems overwhelmingly plausible that these modules also shaped philosophical theorizing. Other work in cultural evolution indicates that emotion systems shaped the cultural evolution of norms.[6] Again, it seems likely that emotions are an important psychological factor in the evolution and distribution of philosophical theories. But for our purposes, we want to focus on yet another psychological factor: motivation. For the claim I want to defend is that motivational factors explain the rise of compatibilism.

There are several general reasons to think that motivation has an effect on theory building. The social psychology literature reveals a number of biases that make us more likely to adopt and retain beliefs that are motivationally attractive.

5. See P. Kitcher, *The Advancement of Science: Science without Legend, Objectivity without Illusions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) on economic models of scientific inquiry. To explain the history (and rationality) of science, Kitcher introduces the notion of a *scientific entrepreneur* who will pursue neglected lines of research purely out of self-interest. We might appropriate this idea into a quantitative approach to philosophy. We have philosophical economies, sets of theories that are in competition for attention and discussion, and we have *philosophical entrepreneurs* who want to make novel contributions to the field. Although we philosophers sometimes think we're above all this crassly self-interested jockeying, the idea of philosophers as entrepreneurs is likely no more of a distortion than that of scientists as entrepreneurs. Even Kant, revered for his philosophical purism, had an abiding, even passionate desire to say something new (see M. Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* [Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2001]).

6. For innate modules and cultural evolution see Pascal Boyer, "Cognitive Constraints on Cultural Representations: Natural Ontologies and Religious Ideas," in *Mapping the Mind*, eds. L. Hirshfeld and S. Gelman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 391–411 and Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996). For emotion and cultural evolution, see Shaun Nichols, "On the Genealogy of Norms," *Philosophy of Science* 69 (2002): 234–55.

Consider just two important biases, motivated memory search and motivated belief construction. When we search for memories, we show a bias, looking disproportionately for memories that are comforting or self-enhancing. For instance, in one experiment, subjects were induced to think either that being introverted was desirable or that being extraverted was desirable. Then subjects were asked to recount memories of past behaviors that indicated the extent to which they were introverted or extraverted. Subjects induced to find introversion desirable were more likely to recount introverted memories first and to produce more introverted memories than subjects induced to find extraversion desirable.[7] Empirical work has also indicated that motivation affects which beliefs people are likely to acquire from new information. In one experiment, two groups of subjects were given information indicating either that people in their group were more prosocial or that they were less prosocial than a different group. The information presented to all of these subjects was based on a small sample. However, the subjects who were presented with an undesirable conclusion (that their group was less prosocial) were significantly more likely to call into question the adequacy of the sample size than the subjects who were presented with the desirable conclusion.[8] This itself is a small sample of a rich body of work that indicates that motivation plays a powerful role in theory construction.

The psychological literature thus leads us to expect that motivationally attractive theories should enjoy an advantage. Of course, that alone does not guarantee that these forces would have *historical* influence. However, there is some historical evidence that motivation has indeed shaped the history of ideas, in particular, religious ideas. In the evolution of Abrahamic religions from Judaism through Christianity and Islam, the doctrines that get preserved seem to be disproportionately those that are motivationally attractive.[9] The foregoing provides reason to suspect that motivation plays an important role in the history of philosophical ideas as well. But it is easy to talk historicity. It will be more persuasive if we can marshal some historical evidence.

3. SHARPENING THE HYPOTHESIS

Now that we have a very general sketch of the methods, we need to focus more closely on the factors that will be important to our case study. Sometimes, a given view is motivationally attractive to virtually everyone. This is plausibly the case for religious doctrines of heaven and divine justice. However, in other cases, a doctrine will be motivationally attractive to one group but not to another. Racist doctrines

7. Rasyid Sanitioso, Ziva Kunda, and Geoffrey Fong, "Motivated Recruitment of Autobiographical Memories," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57 (1990): 229–41.

8. Bertjan Doosje, Russell Spears, and Wim Koomen, "When Bad Isn't All Bad," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69 (1995): 642–55. For a terrific review of the literature on motivated reasoning see Z. Kunda, *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Bradford Books, 1999).

9. Shaun Nichols, "Is Religion What We Want?" *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 4 (2004): 347–71.

Table 1 The Philosophical Geography

	Determinist	*Indeterminist*
Compatibilist		
Incompatibilist		

provide an obvious example. Racist doctrines will be less attractive to members of the denigrated race than to others. When a view has this kind of differential motivational attractiveness, this will give rise to differential predictions about the groups that will tend to adopt the view. Such, I suggest, is the situation with compatibilism.

The motivational explanation for the rise of compatibilism generates a specific prediction about how the philosophical geography should be populated. The reason is simple. Compatibilism will be especially motivationally attractive for people who find determinism plausible. For those who independently reject determinism about choice, there is less motivational pressure to think that free will and responsibility are compatible with determinism.[10] But of course, in terms of the metaphysics, there is no particular reason why the truth of determinism should bear on the consistency of determinism and free will. It is perfectly consistent to maintain that determinism is false about choice, but orthogonal to whether we are free and responsible. So the differential prediction is generated by the fact that compatibilism will be more attractive to determinists than to indeterminists. Hence, from our initial hypothesis (M) we can now fashion a more refined prediction:

MD: Determinists will be more likely than indeterminists to be compatibilists.

Table 1 sets out the philosophical geography, and, put graphically, the prediction is that the upper right cell in Table 1 will be systematically underfilled.

10. For the purposes of this paper, the indeterminist claim is restricted to *choice*. The claim is that one fact about choices is that they are not always determined. For our historical purposes, this will work well, since in the period we will consult (the early modern period), indeterminism was almost exclusively a view held about choice. Quantum mechanics hadn't arrived to complicate the picture. Note, however, that the claim that choices are not determined is entirely consistent with compatibilism. For one might well think that as a matter of fact, choices are not determined, but this is irrelevant to what makes us free and responsible. A compatibilist can maintain that indeterminism is true of choice but inessential to free choice. To offer a naïve analogy, suppose that it turns out (as it might) that only earth has intelligent life, then it's a fact that all choices occur in our solar system. But that doesn't mean that it's essential to being a free choice that the choice happens in our solar system. It's a fact that is uninteresting for the metaphysics of choice. Similarly then, one might hold that although choice happens to be indeterministic, this just isn't important to what makes us free and responsible.

4. TESTING THE PREDICTION

To do quantitative history of philosophy, we need to focus on an appropriate population. That means picking a set of philosophers. Clearly we want to do this in the most objective way possible, and we would do well to begin with a set of philosophers that does not range wildly across philosophical history. That is, we should begin with a set that is constrained in its historical range.[11] The early modern period will be a good focus for our purposes. For here, the major issues in the history of philosophy were systematically explored by dozens of sophisticated minds. Of course, there were many philosophers in the early modern period, and I will be unable to investigate very many of them here. For a first pass, let us consider the Magnificent Seven, those that are standardly taught in early modern courses: the continental rationalists Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, the British empiricists Locke, Berkeley and Hume, and the singular Kant. On standard interpretations, the Magnificent Seven populate the positions as reflected in Table 2.

Table 2 The Magnificent Seven[12]

	Determinist	*Indeterminist*
Compatibilist	Locke, Leibniz, Hume	
Incompatibilist	Spinoza	Descartes, Berkeley, Kant

11. The reasons for this restriction parallel the reasons for using closely matched samples in other domains of research. We want to minimize extraneous influences. So by focusing on philosophers who worked in roughly the same period, we can minimize the worries that would arise if we had a set that picked a few philosophers from each historic period. So for instance, it would be seriously problematic to use a set that consisted only of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Russell, and Quine. The huge historical differences that attended those philosophers would introduce confounding factors that we want to avoid as much as possible.

12. To determine standard interpretations of the philosophers, I went first to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967). If the philosopher's view was not described there (or the description was equivocal), I next went to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998). If the view was not described in either *Encyclopedia*, then I relied on the secondary literature. For Table 2, the sources are as follows: Berkeley: P. Olscamp, *The Moral Philosophy of George Berkeley* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 91–98. Descartes: R. Taylor, "Determinism," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 2*: 365. Hume: D. MacNabb, "Hume, David," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 4*: 89. Kant: W. Walsh, "Kant, Immanuel," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 4*: 318. Leibniz: L. Russell, "Leibniz, Gottfried," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 4*: 426–27. Locke: R. Abelson, "Ethics, History of," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 3*: 92. Spinoza: A. MacIntyre, "Spinoza, Benedict," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 7*: 540.

In contemporary work, some maintain that Locke is an incompatibilist and indeterminist (e.g., Gideon Yaffe, *Liberty Worth the Name: Locke on Free Agency* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000]), but this remains a heterodox interpretation. Rather more contentious is the interpretation of Descartes. While many interpret Descartes as indeterminist and incompatibilist (e.g., Lex Newman, "Descartes on the Will," in *Blackwell Companion to Descartes*, eds. J. Broughton and J. Carriero [Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, forthcoming]), many others (e.g., Vere Chappell,

Table 3 The Big Ten: (the Seven, plus the major figures on free will)[13]

	Determinist	*Indeterminist*
Compatibilist	Locke, Leibniz, Hume, Hobbes	
Incompatibilist	Spinoza, D'Holbach	Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, Reid

Here we see that the indeterminist compatibilist position is unoccupied, which is just what was predicted. Still, seven is a pretty low number, and we only have a single figure in one of the cells. A bigger sample would be nice. How do we get a bigger sample? One way is by expanding our list to include the major representatives of positions on free will in the early modern period. That gives us Table 3.

The same pattern holds. No one occupies the crucial cell, even when we include the major theorists of free will. Now, however, an objection to the method emerges. Perhaps someone who held the position of indeterminist compatibilism could not be bothered to write about free will because it would seem like a nonproblem. By focusing on people who are devoted to the issue of free will, we might have collected a skewed sample. We need a larger sample of philosophers, and one that is assembled independently of our project.

The natural place to look for a larger sample is in expanded anthologies of early modern philosophers that are used to introduce students to the major philosophers of the period. One widely used set of such anthologies is the series *Readings in the History of Philosophy*. Two volumes, one edited by Richard Popkin and the other by Lewis White Beck, include philosophers from the early modern period.[14] Since Hobbes is often regarded as providing the first explicit statement of compatibilism in the early modern period, we will want to include him and the subsequent philosophers up to Kant. *Readings in the History of Philosophy* includes a total of twenty philosophers from Hobbes to Kant.[15] By plotting these philosophers, independently assembled by anthologizers, I can avoid the charge that I have cherry-picked the philosophers from the free will literature. For as luck would have it, the major philosophers in the early modern period tend to be

"Descartes's Compatibilsm," in Reason, *Will and Sensation: Studies in Descartes's Metaphysics*, ed. J. Cottingham [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994]) interpret Descartes as determinist and compatibilist. Note, however, that none of these interpretations puts a philosopher in the key cell—indeterminist and compatibilist.

13. The sources for categorizing the additional philosophers are as follows: Hobbes: R. Peters, "Hobbes, Thomas," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 4*: 41. D'Holbach: A. Vartanian, "Holbach, Paul-Henri," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 4*: 50. Reid: S. Grave, "Reid, Thomas," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 7*: 121.

14. Popkin, ed., *The Philosophy of the 16th and 17th Centuries: Readings in the History of Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1966); Beck, ed., *Eighteenth Century Philosophy: Readings in the History of Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

15. Newton is also in the anthology, but he is excluded from our sample since he is not a systematic philosopher.

Table 4 The major twenty[17]

	Determinist	*Indeterminist*
Compatibilist	Locke, Leibniz, Hume, Hobbes, Pascal, Wolff, Condillac	
Incompatibilist	Spinoza, D'Holbach, Diderot, Lessing, Voltaire	Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, Reid, Bayle, Gassendi, Malebranche, Rousseau

systematic, and so they tend to *have* a position on free will.[16] Thus, we can plot our major twenty to generate Table 4.

As we can see from Table 4, even with the major twenty, we do not find any philosopher holding the view that indeterminism is true, but so is compatibilism. With twenty philosophers plotted, we now have a big enough sample to attempt some statistics.[18] But statistics aren't required to recognize the striking fact that the key cell continues to be empty. *No one* occupies it. Here was a gaping vacancy in the philosophical geography, and as far as we can tell from the major twenty, no one was interested in homesteading. Thus, our motivational hypothesis is supported by the quantitative history.

In a sense, the pattern we have found just confirms the historical aptness of William James's traditional tripartite division of positions into libertarianism, soft

16. By contrast, today's major philosophers are less likely to pronounce so widely. What, for instance, is Jerry Fodor's view of free will? Or David Kaplan's? Or David Hull's?

17. The sources for categorizing the additional philosophers are as follows: Bayle: J. Kilcullen, *Sincerity and Truth: Essays on Arnauld, Bayle, and Toleration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 179–80. Condillac: P. Johnson, "Condillac, Etienne," in Craig, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 2*: 526. Diderot: N. Torrey "Diderot, Denis," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 2*: 401. Gassendi: M. Osler, "Gassendi, Pierre," in Craig, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Lessing: H. Chadwick, "Lessing, Gotthold," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 4*: 446. Malebranche: S. Nadler, "Malebranche, Nicolas," in E. Craig, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 6*: 63. Pascal: M. Moriarty, "Grace and Religious Belief in Pascal," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. N. Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 149–52. Rousseau: R. Grimsley, *The Philosophy of Rousseau* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 77–78. Wolff: L. Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 237, 271 (Wolff is characterized as a Leibnizian about free will). Voltaire: N. Torrey, "Voltaire, Francois-Marie," in Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, v. 8*: 265.

18. There is some question about the propriety of using statistical tests on this kind of material. For certain assumptions about the standard statistical tests are not met. For example, one assumption for a χ^2 test is that the sample is randomly selected. That's not the case here, of course, since the philosophers were not randomly selected by the anthologizers. On the other hand, the selection was not biased by the hypothesis that we are exploring. If we think of statistics as a tool for uncovering patterns, as opposed to an end in itself, then we might think it worth at least considering the results of some simple analyses. With that caveat, using a χ^2 test on the distribution in Table 4, determinists are significantly more likely than indeterminists to be compatibilists (χ^2 [1, $N = 20$] = 7.179, $p < .01$, two-tailed), compatibilists are more likely to be determinists than indeterminists (χ^2 goodness-of-fit [1, $N = 7$] = 7.00, $p < .01$, two-tailed), but incompatibilists are not more likely to be indeterminists than determinists (χ^2 goodness-of-fit [1, $N = 13$] = .692, $p = .405$, two-tailed, n.s.).

determinism, and hard determinism. Why not the obvious remaining combination of indeterminism and compatibilism? The motivational hypothesis explains this aspect of the history of philosophy.

5. COMPETING EXPLANATIONS

Although I have argued that the motivational hypothesis is confirmed by the quantitative history, there might be alternative explanations for the pattern we've observed. I want to consider briefly some alternative explanations.

The motivational hypothesis says that the reason philosophers embrace compatibilism is because they want it to be true. However, the compatibilist might play turn about and offer a different motivational explanation: indeterminism is embraced because it is motivationally attractive to *incompatibilists*. Indeed, John Doris suggested the following perversion of Kant's swipe at compatibilism: indeterminism is the wretched subterfuge of the incompatibilist.

The plot in Table 4 helps to fend off this competing hypothesis. Consider again the fact that no one occupies the indeterminist compatibilist cell. My explanation for this is that without the inclination to determinism, there is little motivation to embrace compatibilism. At first glance, it seems that one might counter that the real explanation is that incompatibilists are motivated to be indeterminists. However, even if incompatibilism does play some such motivational role, this doesn't suffice to explain the pattern. For there is a major asymmetry to explain. Why is it that there are no indeterminist compatibilists but there are plenty of hard determinists (i.e., determinist incompatibilists)? The motivational hypothesis I have been urging explains this asymmetry, since it allows that some philosophers might acknowledge that the news is bad. But the competing compatibilist account has no obvious explanation for why there are hard determinists but no compatibilist indeterminists.

A very different response is to reject the basic explanatory method urged here. One might maintain that we must look at each individual philosopher in detail to determine his particular path to his philosophical views, and at that level the motivational explanation might well disappear. Obviously, the in-depth historical analyses of particular philosophers is a worthy endeavor. The suggestion here is that the broad perspective of a quantitative history provides an additional resource for understanding the history of philosophy. Although it might seem paradoxical, important factors are often missed when one is engaged in close study of a single case. It is characteristic of generalizations in the sciences that many factors are explicitly ignored in order to explore general trends. Imagine a major drug trial in which researchers find that sixty-five percent of flu sufferers who get the drug recover in two days, whereas only forty percent of those who receive the placebo recover in two days. For each individual in the study, one might draw on numerous factors to explain why that individual did or did not recover in two days. Indeed, one can likely devise a perfectly plausible explanation for each individual without even attending to the fact that the individual was in a drug trial. Although these explanations might be plausible enough, the overall picture they present would turn out to be incomplete in a vital sense. The drug did have causal influence over

recovery, even though this would not have been discernable if one focused narrowly on each individual rather than on the aggregate data. The causal influence of the drug is only apparent once the detailed case histories are set aside and one looks at the patterns. Just as experimenters purposely neglect personal details in their attempt to find interesting patterns, so too in exploring the history of philosophy, it will sometimes be illuminating to step back from the rich individual detail to consider broader patterns. In the present case, the broader pattern seems to confirm the motivational hypothesis.

Now, I do not mean to suggest that the motivational explanation is the only explanation of the distribution. No doubt there are other ways to explain the pattern. The thrust, however, is that this pattern is exactly what the motivational hypothesis predicts. Of course, even if all alternative explanations are inferior, even if it is true that the historical prominence of compatibilism can be attributed to motivational factors, that does not show that compatibilism is false. It may be that motivation drove the philosophers to recognize a heretofore neglected feature of our concepts of free will and responsibility. As is familiar from discussions of the genetic fallacy, demonstrating that arational factors played a key role in the origin of a view does not demonstrate that the view is false. The point rather is that the incompatibilist has a plausible and evidentially supported explanation for the rise of compatibilism. So the incompatibilist need not relent on the claim that incompatibilism is the intuitive, commonsense position.

Part of the goal in this paper has been to support the view that incompatibilism is intuitive by defending a motivational explanation for the rise of compatibilism. The fact that compatibilists are disproportionately determinists supports the hypothesis that motivation drives the success of compatibilism. More broadly, though, this case study is also meant to illustrate the potential for doing a quite different kind of history of philosophy, by the numbers.[19]