

The Phenomenology of Freedom

Tomis Kapitan

Northern Illinois University

John Searle describes our sense of freedom as an experience of a “gap” between an intentional action and its psychological antecedents, specifically, our reasons. Since the gap is itself understood as a lack of causation, then no agent can accept the antecedent determination of voluntary action except at the price of “practical inconsistency.” I argue that despite Searle’s insightful discussion, the sense of freedom is not an experience of a gap as he describes it but, instead, is a higher-order attitude concerning one’s limited grasp of causes. As a result, a determinist can engage in voluntary action without falling into inconsistency.

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As practical beings, we act with a sense of freedom or, to use Kant’s memorable phrase, “under the idea of freedom.” This feeling derives from our experience of alternative courses of action as being open to us, and from our envisagement of a past as partly shaped by our own voluntary doings, and an incomplete future partly subject to our deliberations. There is tremendous emotional investment in this attitude. It is the basis for pride about our past achievements, regrets about what we have done or failed to do, and hopes that we can change our ways for the better. It is central to the belief that we might have acted otherwise and, thereby, are responsible for the way we have acted. Without it, it is difficult to see why we would plan, give advice, establish normative systems, or put forth any effort at all.

What exactly is the sense or experience of freedom? Is it a type of perceptual awareness? Is it a purely intellectual or conceptual cognition? Is it a conscious doxastic state? And what exactly is its content? John Searle, agreeing that feeling of freedom derives from “a sense of alternative possibilities” (2001, p. 67), speaks of a causal *gap* between our reasons and our decisions —

our reasons do not causally determine our decisions — and claims that we attain our conviction in freedom of the will because of our experiences of this gap (p. 278). Moreover, as rational agents, we must *presuppose* that there is such a gap, so that any agent who believes that his or her decisions are determined beforehand is guilty of a kind of “practical inconsistency” (pp. 71–72). On this view, our awareness of a gap between reasons and decision is fundamental to the very structure of human agency, and for this reason, deterministic accounts of human behavior render a “free rational life” illusory (p. 296).

Apart from terminology, Searle’s description of the sense of freedom in terms of an experience of, or commitment to, a causal gap is not uncommon, especially among those with libertarian leanings, and he admits that “the gap” is simply his term for what is traditionally called “freedom of the will” (p. 13).¹ In what follows, I will set forth his account and principal argument concerning the practical inconsistency of a determinist. I then challenge his claims that the sense of freedom involves the agent’s experience or presupposition of a causal gap, and that an agent’s denial of such a gap implies inconsistency. I focus on Searle’s presentation for two reasons: first, it is among the most developed phenomenologies of freedom, and second, his text suggests a promising alternative account that does not underwrite a libertarian perspective (see below).

The Gap and the Experienced Gap

Searle gives at least two distinct descriptions of what he calls “the gap,” at one point offering this semantic characterization:

“The gap” is the general name I have introduced for the phenomenon that we do *not* normally experience the stages of our deliberations and voluntary actions as having causally sufficient conditions or as setting causally sufficient conditions for the next stage. (2001, p. 50)

Taking his words at face value, the gap is an *absence* of a certain psychological state, namely, of an experience of one stage of voluntary action as being causally sufficient for a subsequent stage. Obviously, this description is inadequate since viruses, oak trees, and diesel engines are also characterized by such an absence, and we do not normally attribute a sense of freedom to them. Restricting attention to systems capable of voluntary behavior, the gap amounts to a hiatus in cognition, specifically, in understanding causal relationships among events. This hiatus is not necessarily a deficiency in knowledge, for if the said causal relationships do not exist then there is nothing to know about or be ignorant of.

¹See, for example, Clarke, 2003, pp. 112–114; Taylor, 1966, pp. 178–182; and van Inwagen, 1983, pp. 160. By contrast, Bok, 1998, p. 121; Kapitan, 1986; and Nelkin, 2004, pp. 106–113, resist the view that the practical viewpoint is libertarian.

Still, more needs to be said about the gap if it is to be the content of a positive sense of freedom. Searle provides this in a subsequent definition of the gap where he writes that it is only a “backward” description that portrays the gap as not experiencing a causal relationship between reasons and decisions (and actions). There is also a “forward” description that focuses on a feature of our conscious decision-making whereby we sense alternative actions and decisions as being “causally open” to us (pp. 62, 68). The attitudes involved in the latter, and precluded in the former, appear to be some sort of immediate awareness on one hand, what Searle calls “experiencing” and a doxastic commitment on the other, what is labeled “presupposing” (p. 71). Together they provide the *psychological description* of the gap.

In other places, Searle describes the gap in purely relational terms, namely, as the absence of causally sufficient conditions between different stages of voluntary action (pp. 14–15, 50, 71, 275). This absence of causation is manifested in at least three places within the structure of voluntary action, namely,

- (a) between reasons for a decision and the decision to act;
- (b) between a *prior intention* (to perform an act at some future date) and *intention-in-action* (to perform an act while performing it);
- (c) between the intention-in-action and the completion of the action.

Whether there actually is a lack of causation between these factors is another matter — apart from additional considerations, the gap might be an illusion (p. 71) — but central to Searle’s theory of agency is that that there is at least a “manifestation” of this threefold gap within volitional consciousness (p. 276).

Thus, Searle uses the term “gap” to cover distinct though closely related phenomena: a lack of causation between the two factors mentioned in each of (a) to (c) — the *causal gap* — and an experience of this lack — the *experienced gap*. Regarding a course of action A and an interval t, the content of the forward experienced gap includes instances of the following forms:

- (1) Doing A at t is causally open to me.
- (2) Deciding to do A at t is causally open to me.

Backwardly, the experienced gap is the fact that I do *not* have higher-order experiences with content of these sorts:

- (3) My reasons are causally sufficient for my decision to A at t.
- (4) My prior intention to do A at a future time t is causally sufficient for my intention-in-action to do A then.
- (5) My intention-in-action to do A now is causally sufficient for the completion of my A-ing during t.

Insofar as the experienced gap embodies a sense of freedom, it would appear that states with the contents of sort (1) and (2) carry the weight rather than the mere absence of states whose contents are of type (3) to (5). A mere lack of experience, knowledge, or belief, does not add up to a positive sense of, or a commitment to, anything.

Two questions arise at this point. First, why is the exclusion of higher-order states with contents (3) to (5) part of the experienced gap, thus, of the psychology of voluntary agency? Perhaps Searle means to say no more than this: the exclusion of such states is a consequence of the forward experienced gap, that is, of experiences or commitments having contents (1) and (2). But then a second question concerns the latter. What is it to experience one's decisions and actions as causally open? Searle's answer is that the content of the forward experienced gap is "the absence of sufficient causal conditions" (p. 70). Again when he speaks of the sense of freedom he writes,

The sense of freedom in voluntary action is a sense that the causes of the action, though effective and real in the form of the reasons for the action, are insufficient to determine that the action will occur. (p. 69)

It is important to understand that what Searle is describing is not the absence of an experience of causes, but the experience of the absence of certain causes. It is one thing to not experience A as causally sufficient for B, quite another to experience A as not being causally sufficient for B. While Searle follows the first pattern in describing the backward psychological gap, he adopts the latter in the passages just cited where he places negation within the scope of psychological verbs. He is evidently claiming that the forward experienced gap involves a higher-order feeling of negation, that is, of the absence of causal sufficiency between each of the pairs in (a) to (c).

On this account, if an agent endorses relevant instances of (1) and (2) of the forward experienced gap then he or she is also committed to instances of the following:

- (6) My reasons are not causally sufficient for my decision to A at t.
- (7) My prior intention to do A at a future time t is not causally sufficient for my intention-in-action to do A then.
- (8) My intention in action-to-do A now is not causally sufficient for the completion of A-ing during t.

It is not clear that Searle takes these as a full or only partial explication of (1) and (2). In either case, having answered the second question, at least in part, we can return to the first. Since the psychology of voluntary action includes experiences with contents (6) to (8), and since the latter are the negations of (3) to (5) respectively, then, experiences of, or commitments to, (3) to (5) must be excluded, at least for rational agents. In this way the forward experienced gap guarantees the backward experienced gap.

The Principle of Least Effort

Central to Searle's account is that the content of the experienced gap must be presupposed by rational agency (pp. 13, 71). Suppose I am deliberating about

whom to vote for in an upcoming Congressional election, having narrowed my options to candidates from the Democrat, Republican, and Green parties. I feel it is open to me to vote for any of these candidates. But if I also feel that the existing psychological causes operating on me are already sufficient for my voting for candidate X — where X is one of the three — then it would be a waste of time to deliberate. The matter is already settled as it were, and, as Searle says, “I could just sit back and watch the action unfold in the same way as I do when I sit back and watch the action unfold on a movie screen” (p. 71). So, it would be irrational for me to accept the following two claims:

(a) I am now trying to make up my mind whom to vote for in the next election.

(b) I take the existing psychological causes operating on me right now to be causally sufficient to determine whom I am going to vote for.

By accepting (a), I not only prepare myself for future effort, I am already expending effort, but “if I really believe [b], then there seems to be no point in making the effort involved in [a]” (p. 72). In sum, one who accepts (b), and who is thereby “convinced that there is no gap” between his reasons and his eventual decision, would either not deliberate or would be guilty of a “practical inconsistency” if he does. Consequently, a rational deliberator must presuppose the gap.

Some sort of *principle of least effort* is operative in this argument, namely, that no rational agent would intentionally put forth an effort to do or to decide upon an action A if he or she felt the effort to be pointless. What does “pointless” come to? I can think of two factors. First, I would not put forth an effort without feeling that effort is needed to achieve some goal, e.g., ending a state of indecision. For example, were I convinced that my decision to vote for the Green Party, say, is already causally necessitated, then I would not feel such a need and, being lazy, would not put forth an effort to decide. Second, if I felt that an action is impossible, or that the decision to omit the action is already causally necessitated, then, again, deciding to perform it would be pointless. I must sense that an appropriate opportunity exists, viz., that conditions are such that undertaking the action — expending effort to do it — might enable me to achieve my goals. In its simplest form, then, the principle of least effort is the claim that an agent would not put forth effort without presuming it to have a point, that is, without sensing both a *need* for the effort in order to accomplish something and an *opportunity* for its success.² This not only explains the oddity of accepting (a) upon accepting (b), but also why an

²I have defended a similar such principle in Kapitan (1991), expressed there as a principle of intention-acquisition: an agent acquires an intention to do an action A only if by presuming that undertaking A would not automatically be a wasted effort, that is, effort is needed in order to do A and A-ing is, as of yet, an *open* alternative for us.

agent who takes a decision to A at t to be causally open does not view it as determined by his reasons.

Searle's argument that a denial of a causal gap between reasons and decisions condemns one to practical inconsistency seems to be this:

Premise 1. An agent deliberates about a course of action only if the agent believes that so deliberating would not be pointless.

Premise 2. If an agent believes that his decision among various alternatives is already determined by his reasons, then the agent would see no point in deliberating about which to undertake.

Therefore,

Conclusion. An agent who deliberates about various alternatives and who believes that his decision is already determined by his reasons, is practically inconsistent.

Let me refer to this pattern of reasoning as the *least effort argument*.

The reasoning is readily generalized. If I sense that voting for candidate X is an open alternative for me now, then I not only take my voting for X and my deciding to vote for X to be undetermined by my present reasons, I also feel that both are as yet undetermined by *anything at all*. If I thought my decision to vote for X was already necessitated, say, by some remote events involving my fifteenth century ancestors, then, in Searle's words, I would "sit back and wait" since I would view any additional effort as wholly unnecessary. In other words, given that my decision-making is governed by a principle of least effort, then my experience of freedom involves a broader gap than Searle suggests. His formula (6) [above] is an instance of the more general,

(9) No past or present facts are causally sufficient for my decision to A at t or for my not deciding to A at t.

The experience of this broader gap would then be the more fundamental phenomenon from which any awareness of a gap between my present reasons and my eventual decision derives.

A more general formula concerning "practical consistency" comes out of this. Since "we must presuppose freedom in making decisions" (p. 73), and since we cannot consistently presuppose freedom while holding our decision to be causally determined by any sort of causes operating on us, then any agent who espouses determinism is practically inconsistent. This result can be expressed through a *generalized* least effort argument that is just like the argument above except that the phrase "by his reasons" in premise 2 and in the conclusion is deleted. If sound, it validates a libertarian phenomenology of freedom.

Least Effort and Scope Ambiguity

It is doubtful that the least effort argument succeeds in rendering inconsistent the determinist who engages in voluntary action. Searle's psychological principles

are dubious if the verbs “sense,” “experience” and “presuppose” express a type of acceptance, direct or tacit.³ Can we realistically suppose that every deliberator is capable of understanding a gap, that is, of having a belief with contents of the form (6) or (9)? What about small children, or people who have never had the luxury to frame such abstract thoughts about the causal relations among their reasons and decisions? Even if they can think such thoughts, are they all committed to such highly theoretical beliefs?

Suppose I am deliberating about how to cast my vote. I am disposed towards the Green candidate, yet, not desiring to throw my vote away, I weigh my general distrust of Republican policies with my dislike of the Democratic candidate. *Must* I endorse the claim that any and every complex of these and other reasons is not, or will not be, sufficient for the decision I will eventually make? I certainly do not detect an absence of causation through perception or conceptual analysis. For all I now know, my desire for a better environment might prevail, or maybe some overlooked reasons will tip the balance. Am I nevertheless committed to a gap? Suppose I am a generally cautious believer, having been fooled in the past in thinking that a factor C does not bring about an event E when in fact it did? I remain cautious while I deliberate; unaware of *what* my eventual decision will be, I allow that my reasons are sufficient for *whichever* selection I make.

If this is correct, I am a counterexample to Searle’s claim that rational agents are committed to recognizing a gap with respect to each considered alternative.⁴ I need not believe, for any particular candidate X, that my deciding to vote for X is causally contingent per se, for I can allow that circumstances unknown to me are sufficient for me to decide upon X. What I *can* say, without reservation, is this: because I am unsure what I will do, then *I am also unaware that* my reasons — or any other circumstances — are causally sufficient for my voting for a Republican, or for my voting Democrat, or for my voting Green. Moreover, since (i) my mind is not made up on the matter, (ii) I want to make a best choice, and (iii) I do not yet assume that my choice of any one of the three candidates is already necessitated or ruled out, then deliberation makes perfect sense.

The fact that deliberation occurs under uncertainty exposes the flaw in least effort arguments. If I am a determinist deliberating about whether to swim or to run this afternoon, then I believe that my eventual decision is already determined and I deny that there is a causal gap between past events and what I will eventually decide, whatever that might be. But, given my uncertainty about what I will decide, I am neither inconsistent nor in viola-

³Some sort of doxastic endorsement seems evident, especially given Searle’s use of “presuppose” (see also Kapitan, 1986, p. 237; and Nelkin, 2004, pp. 115–118).

⁴Mele (2002) raises this criticism against Searle.

tion of the least effort principle since I need not believe of any alternative that my deciding it is already determined. Of course, I might believe the disjunction, that either my deciding to swim or my deciding to run is determined, but one can accept a disjunction without accepting either disjunct separately.

It is a scope ambiguity in the second premise of the least effort arguments that is the source of confusion. If the description "his decision among various alternatives" in the antecedent is read attributively and occurs inside the scope of "believes," then the premise is not obviously true for the reasons just given. If the attributive description occurs outside the scope of "believes," or, if it is read referentially, then, while the premise is true, the argument shows merely that I cannot consistently believe of a particular alternative that my decision to do it is already determined. But I might consistently believe that *whatever I will decide* is causally necessitated. That is, while the principle of least effort rules out,

(10) For whatever alternative I will decide upon, I believe that my deciding to do it is already determined,

where "whatever" outside the scope of "believes," it does not prohibit what a determinist accepts, namely,

(11) I believe that for whatever alternative I will decide upon, it is already determined that I will decide upon it,

where "whatever" is inside the scope of "believes." Therefore, the least effort arguments do not demonstrate that a libertarian phenomenology of freedom is needed to escape "practical inconsistency."

A New Look at the Phenomenology of Freedom

Let us agree with Searle that "a sense of alternative possibilities" is at the core of the psychology of voluntary agency, and examine whether a different phenomenology of freedom is available. Return to the case of my deliberating about whom to vote for in the upcoming election. As I survey the alternatives, considering their comparative pros and cons, I have a firm sense that each is still open to me to perform. In turn, this sense seems to be nothing other than my awareness or conviction that I am *able* to do it or that I *can* do it. But what exactly is it to think this?

Some philosophers are disinclined to push for a deeper analysis of a presumed "can" (Coffman and Warfield, 2005, pp. 26–29, 43). Yet, there are reasons why an analysis is appropriate. *First*, there is no one concept of "can" or "ability" even at the commonsensical level. We routinely distinguish having a general ability or skill to do something, say, to play piano or to speak Russian, from a capacity to acquire some such skill, yet "I can" may be used equally to express both. Both are also distinct from a third sense of "can," namely, a specific ability to exercise a general ability at a certain time. My sense that I am able to play a particular Bach prelude on a piano at a particu-

lar time is also a recognition of an opportunity to do so, e.g., that there's an unlocked piano nearby, and that there are no external impediments such as my hands being bound.

Second, my sense that I can now vote for X at t, where I take voting for X at t as an alternative course of action, is my accepting that it is both possible now that I vote for X at t *and* possible now that I do something else instead at t, minimally, that I refrain. The "I can" involved in the sense of openness embodies *temporal* contingency: both my voting for candidate X and my refraining from so voting are seen as possible at the time. But to view something as being possible at a time is to take it to be possible relative to the prevailing circumstances. Which circumstances are these? All obtaining facts? Only the situations I recognize? Until we settle upon what is captured by "the prevailing circumstances" we are not clear about the character of this modality.

Third, quite apart from this matter, the "can" of presumed openness involves more than temporal contingency. It is contingent whether I win the next state lottery, but I do not assume that winning the next state lottery is an open alternative about which I might deliberate, even if I take purchasing a lottery ticket to be open. What one thinks one *can* do is an intentional action, not a mere happening, say, one's winning a lottery. Assuming that intentional action involves causation by means of intentions (Searle, 2001, p. 60), a sense that I can vote for candidate X at t is a realization that it is likely, given the prevailing circumstances, that I would vote for candidate X at t were I to undertake (decide, intend) so doing.⁵ This feeling of the *efficacy* of my effort given circumstances as they stand, and probabilistically qualified, is also vital in the sense that "I can."⁶

⁵I assume a conception of intentional action according to which one acts intentionally only if so acting is a reliable and foreseen consequence of what one directly intends (Kapitan, 2002, pp. 136–137), and see also Bratman, 1987, chps. 3 and 8; Castañeda, 1975, chp. 12; Goldman, 1970, chp. 3; Mele and Moser, 1994. I borrow the term "undertakes" from Roderick Chisholm (1976, chp. 2) who also uses the term "endeavors" as a synonym. I do not equate "undertaking" with "intending." Intending is a purely mental state that need not involve an attempt, whereas undertaking involves attempting or trying to do what is intended. An undertaking is typically prompted by a volition, though not always, for example, as in immediate reactions to perceptual stimuli, such as ducking when a stone is thrown at one's head, reactions that are caused by past policy decisions (intendings). See Bratman, 1987, pp. 133–138, which distinguishes intending, endeavoring and intentionally doing an action and allows that one can endeavor (undertake, try) to A without necessarily intending to do A.

⁶A purely conditional analysis of "can" is standard compatibilist fare (see Berofsky, 2002). Coffman and Warfield (2005, p. 41) doubt that all deliberators, e.g., small children, have a sense of efficacy insofar as this is understood as endorsing a conditional of the form that I would do A were I to choose to do A. They do not cite evidence to support their contention, and the empirical evidence concerning small children suggests that they are capable of discerning a causal connection between intention and desired result. For example, Gopnik and Shulz (2004) report that at 15 months, infants are capable of grasping failed intentions, and by two years they can explicitly explain goal-directed actions in terms of internal mental states designed to alter the world in specific ways. Again, Baird and Astington (2005, p. 231) say that infants can distinguish intentional agents from inanimate objects by their end of the first year. See also Sobel (2004).

If the “I can” or the felt openness of deliberation involves a sense of efficacy and contingency relative to prevailing circumstances, how exactly are these circumstances represented to the agent? Lacking omniscience, we plainly do not consider *all* past and present circumstances. Instead, our sense that we can perform a given action is established by measuring it against background circumstances we take to be relevant (Bok, 1998, p. 93) or, more generally, against what we accept as true (Kapitan, 1989, pp. 32–33). But this must be taken with care. Taking *acceptance* to be any affirmative attitude towards a content, ranging from unqualified belief to low degrees of tentative affirmation, then, at any given moment, I accept a great deal of information. I do not review each such piece of information while deliberating, nor do I assess my ability to perform the action against each of the pieces of information that I regard as relevant; there’s no time for that. Rather, I make a general reference to *what I accept* or, more colloquially, I presume that I can perform the action “as far as I can tell” where this phrase modifies the modality occurring within the scope of my presumption.

Searle’s talk about an experienced gap is relevant here, but we now have the materials for an alternative description of the forward experienced gap. My sense that doing action A at time t is open to me is not an awareness that A-ing at t is open to me *tout court*, relative to all past circumstances, but that it is open to me relative to *what I now accept*, including what I recognize to be my own reasons for acting. Understood in this doxastic manner, the “forward” experienced gap is a higher order attitude whose content — that an act is open to me — includes instances of the efficacy conditional,

(12) It is probable that I would do A at t were I to undertake A-ing at t,
relative to what I now accept.

where the qualifier “relative to what I now accept” expresses part of the content. The attitude also includes a presumption of contingency, similarly relativized:

(13) My undertaking (decision) to A at t is contingent relative to what I
now accept.

Accordingly, we have an alternative analysis of the sense of openness as regards a course of action.

An agent S experiences (feels, believes) a course of action A to be open just in case S experiences (feels, believes) that relative to what her/she now accepts (i) it is probable that he/she would do A at t were he/she to undertake A-ing at t, and (ii) his/her undertaking (decision) to A at t is as yet contingent.

Clauses (i) and (ii) are third-person representations of the first-person contents specified in (12) and (13), with the pronouns “he” and “she” functioning as quasi-indicators, devices for attributing first-person reference (Castañeda, 1967).

Can we avoid saddling agents with libertarian beliefs on this account of the forward gap? How is it that an agent is committed to (12) and (13) without accepting instances of (6) or (9)? The answer is that my experience of the “backward” psychological gap is nothing other than an avowal of my own ignorance, namely, that my current cognitive state does not contain the information that my reasons — or any other antecedent circumstances — are causally sufficient for my eventual decision. When I realize that I do not experience this or that reason as being causally sufficient for a subsequent decision, the content with respect to A-ing at time *t* is not given by (6), but rather, by,

(14) I do not experience (feel, believe) my reasons to be causally sufficient for my undertaking (decision) to A at *t*;

and, at a more general level, not by (9), but by,

(15) I do not experience (feel, believe) any past or present facts to be causally sufficient for my undertaking (decision) to A at *t*.

My commitment to (15) and, hence, to (14), is an immediate consequence of my commitment to (13), for if I assume that my undertaking A is contingent relative to what I now accept then I do not, at the same time, experience my undertaking as already necessitated by past or present facts. Note that with its first-person character (15), like (12) and (13), displays the content of an experience, not merely a description of a way that I am not experiencing.⁷ It specifies that I am aware that my own experience does not yield information about the causes of my eventual decision. As such, I am aware that my decision to take any of the alternatives under consideration is contingent relative to things as I experience and understand them — including with respect to my own reasons, as Searle insists — but *not* relative to the entire past. In short, the felt contingency of my decision regarding any alternative, like its felt efficacy, harbors an implicit epistemic or doxastic relativization. This is what is required to provide a rational agent with elbow room for intentional action.⁸

Conclusion

The foregoing account conforms to Searle’s view that a sense of freedom involves an experienced hiatus or “gap” between decisions and their antecedents,

⁷Castañeda (1967) argues that there are no first-person contents or facts except within the scope of attitudinal operators. I have developed this view in Kapitan (2006).

⁸The idea that practical thinking requires only a type of epistemic openness, is championed by Dennett 1983, chp. 5. He writes that it is this “epistemic openness, this possibility-for-all-one-knows, that provides the elbow room required for deliberation” (p. 113). In Kapitan, 1986, pp. 238–239, I argue that this formulation will not do as it stands since different ways of reading the scope of “all” vis-à-vis “knows” make the phrase “possibility-for-all-one-knows” ambiguous.

though without his libertarian gloss. An agent's sense of openness is not built upon some magical insight into, or some bold belief about, the total lack of causal antecedents of one's eventual decision. Instead, it derives from a reflection about how things stand vis-à-vis one's own cognitive state, for it is an acknowledged deficiency of one's grasp of the course of events that underlies one's sense of open alternatives.

That the sense of freedom or openness conforms to the least effort principle is immediate. It would be practically inconsistent for me to take a course of action as open if I think that my decision to perform it is already determined, for if that were the case, then I could not then take it as contingent. Without a sense of contingency, in turn, my effort would be seen as pointless. But I can believe that whatever decision I will make is causally determined prior to knowing which alternative that will be. It is our recognition of our limited grasp of what has been and what is yet to come that provides for the sense of efficacy and contingency that permeates practical thinking. Our sense of freedom depends upon *acknowledged* gaps in our understanding of reality, not on an acceptance of causal gaps in the chain of events.

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