



Free will, karma, and the cycle of death and rebirth: Rethinking determinism in Buddhist eschatology

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ABSTRACT

Background: The debate over determinism and free will has traditionally centered on whether divine causation is compatible with human freedom, framed through compatibilist and incompatibilist positions in Western philosophy. Buddhist philosophy reframes this problem entirely: rather than divine will, it is karmic causality, the causal chain binding beings to samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth, that raises the question of whether freedom is possible at all. This shift from theistic to karmic determinism offers a distinct eschatological lens, since liberation (*nirvana*) in Buddhist thought is precisely the transcendence of causally-determined rebirth through the exercise of will, ethical action, and insight. **Methods:** This article analyzes Buddhist teachings on karma, dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and liberation as a framework for resolving the determinism–free will debate, contrasted with Western theistic compatibilism and incompatibilism. **Findings:** Buddhist philosophy suggests karmic determinism and freedom are not strictly opposed: causal conditioning shapes but does not fully determine action, leaving space for volitional transformation (*cetanā*) that enables escape from the death-rebirth cycle. This reframes the classical debate around a soteriological rather than theological axis. **Conclusion:** Buddhist teachings offer a distinct eschatological resolution to the determinism–free will problem, locating freedom not in opposition to divine will but in the capacity to transcend karmic causality and the cycle of death and rebirth. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This article shifts the determinism–free will debate from a theistic to a karmic-eschatological framework, addressing questions of mortality and liberation absent from Western treatments of the problem.

KEYWORDS: Buddhism; determinism; divinity; freedom; free will.

1. Introduction

The philosophy of God is one of the discourses in philosophy that began to focus on the concept of God. In this discourse, God and faith are brought into a more rational and philosophical realm, offering a new perspective in explaining the issues and phenomena related to faith and the divine in a more philosophical way. In this context, the philosophical and rational realm is not intended to prove the transcendence and immanence of God in a metaphysical sense, but rather to validate humanity's ability to explore their faith and trust in God. Moreover, by allowing humans to validate their faith and belief in God, the philosophy of God also contributes to the development of human life by attempting to explain realities that cannot be observed by humans. The journey of the philosophy of God does not stop at this point, as explaining the transcendent world itself brings many challenges. Human limitations ultimately lead to a significant issue in the philosophy of God,

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which attempts to explain the relationship between God's identity and humanity as His creation: the problem of determinism and free will (Magnis-Suseno, 2006).

The issue of determinism and free will originally became a heated topic in moral and ethical discourse regarding how humans should be accountable for their actions. The two options presented contradict each other, making the problem of determinism and free will a hot debate even in modern times. This issue was raised by Jean-Paul Sartre, who argued that humans would no longer be free if God's omnipotence existed (Magnis-Suseno, 2006). The philosophy of God then addresses this issue through the lens of faith and God's omnipotence, where determinism and free will are understood as ways to determine God's role in human freedom regarding their actions. This argument begins with the premise that God's omnipotence and omniscience imply that, since God is not bound by time like humans, He knows everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen. Therefore, God's omnipotence is seen as not allowing space for human free will in making life choices. In other words, humans are considered unable to play an active role in their lives, which creates a disconnection between humans and their existence as determined by God.

The problem arising from this issue has been attempted to be addressed through the choice between determinism and free will. Unfortunately, even today, this issue has not been fully answered due to human limitations. Several philosophers and theologians maintain their positions with contradictory claims. Therefore, there is still no definite answer regarding which choice is more appropriate in the issue of determinism and free will. Philosophers, theologians, and religious scholars in contemporary times continue to attempt to resolve this problem. If this issue is solved and a definite answer is found, it would not only solve the problem of God but also serve as a certainty in addressing ethical and moral issues that are more worldly in nature. Thus, the discourse on determinism and free will will continue to be discussed from both an ethical and a theological perspective.

In this article, the author aims to introduce a new perspective in an attempt to resolve this issue and make it explicit in the realm of Eastern philosophy, specifically through the perspective of Buddhism. Through the Buddhist perspective, the issue of determinism and free will can be viewed from a different standpoint, as this debate is more often discussed within the context of Western philosophy of God rather than Eastern philosophy. Moreover, Buddhism itself offers a different view on the connection between the universe, God, and humanity as His creation, making the Buddhist perspective a suitable choice for revisiting this issue. Despite the different cultural and background context in the Buddhist perspective used to address this issue, it cannot be certain that the debate between determinism and free will can be answered given the current limitations of human understanding. Therefore, the Buddhist perspective is employed to provide a clearer and more distinct viewpoint on the debate between determinism and free will.

Based on the brief introduction above, the reader can understand the introduction and the flow of the discussion on the topic to be covered in this article. However, in order to convey the essence of this article's theme more clearly and systematically, the author has formulated several questions to narrow down the scope of the article so that readers can more easily understand the debate between determinism and free will. The debate between determinism and free will arises from the philosophical exploration of the extent to which humans have control over their actions, given the existence of an all-powerful, omniscient deity. How this debate developed historically is central to understanding how it continues to be discussed in moral and theological contexts.

Determinism, in the philosophy of God, refers to the view that every event, including human actions, is determined by God's will and omnipotence. This perspective raises questions about the nature of free will, as it suggests that human choices may not be free if they are predestined by God. Free will, conversely, is the belief that humans are capable of making independent choices, free from divine predestination. In the philosophy of God, free will is often discussed in terms of human responsibility and accountability for their actions, despite the belief in a powerful and knowing deity.

From the perspective of Buddhism, the debate between determinism and free will can be viewed differently. Buddhism focuses more on the idea of karma and the nature of

suffering, which may not align directly with Western ideas of divine omnipotence. Instead, Buddhist teachings offer an alternative framework for understanding human agency and moral responsibility, thus providing a fresh angle on the discussion of free will and determinism. These problem formulations are created to narrow the focus of the article. The author hopes that with the inclusion of these questions, the discussion on the Buddhist perspective in the debate between free will and determinism can stay on track. Thus, these questions are expected to help readers understand the context of the discussion and the problems addressed in this article.

2. Methods

The author uses a qualitative method to examine and analyze the themes and main issues in this academic article. The author applies this qualitative method by analyzing and reviewing primary and secondary sources such as books, scholarly articles, journals, and reliable websites that are relevant to the main theme of this article. Through these sources, the author aims to provide reflective and argumentative reading results, while also presenting the author's position in addressing the issues raised in the article. The insights gained from this understanding will then be used to answer the problem formulation in this article. Based on this method, the author hopes that this article can be explained in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *Determinism and free will*

First, we must return to the concept within the problem of determinism and free will, which is God's omniscience. This means that God knows all truths in the world. God's omniscience also means that God already knows what we will do in the future, and every event that will or has already happened is actually predetermined by God. In Ancient Greek and Medieval times, God was portrayed as the "unmoved mover," and from this statement, God was understood as the cause of everything. God is the primary cause of human life, but He is not caused by anything other than Himself, so God already knows what will happen and, at the same time, allows it to happen because, through this, God can fulfill His purpose.

Then, if God determines human actions, does that mean human ability to act freely is no longer considered when determining their actions? Not stopping there, God's omnipotence means that His beliefs are never wrong, and every action taken in the past cannot be changed. Therefore, what God has believed and what has truly happened in the past will never be interfered with. However, as subjects living in this world, can human freedom be reconciled with God's omnipotence? This ultimately becomes the problem between God's omnipotence and human freedom. Second, we need to define what determinism and free will are (Magnis-Suseno, 2006). Free will is a hypothesis that believes every decision made by an individual is based on their own desires, and those desires are not influenced by anything other than themselves (Westen, 2005). Meanwhile, determinism is a hypothesis that believes that every action and deed in the world is based on transcendental factors outside of the individual (theologically) or is a relationship between cause and effect (physically).

Second, we need to define what determinism and free will are. Free will is a hypothesis that believes every decision made by an individual is based on their own desires, and those desires are not influenced by anything other than themselves (Westen, 2005). Through free will, the subject is morally responsible for their own actions (O'Connor & Franklin, 2022). Freedom in the context of free will is defined as a preference or choice that is entirely the subject's own, regardless of any circumstances that might prevent the subject from carrying out that action (Startup, 2021). Meanwhile, determinism is a hypothesis that believes that every action and deed in the world is based on transcendental factors outside of the individual (theologically) or is a relationship between cause and effect (physically). It can be

thus concluded that the actions taken by the subject lie beyond the subject's own capabilities. This means that all of the subject's actions are the result of prior actions that have already transcended it (Tadic, 2026).

In this issue, Kleinman (2013) presents four principles that encompass the problem of determinism and free will. The first is the principle of universal causality, which illustrates that if we eat because we feel hungry, then hunger and eating are both actions, and the action of hunger precedes the action of eating. The second is the principle of free will, which emphasizes that human beings possess free will and act according to their own volition. The third is the principle of avoidance and freedom, which highlights that if people can act freely, they can choose to act differently from what they have done, but if they cannot act differently, then no one truly possesses freedom in action. The fourth is the principle of help, which explains that if every event has a cause, then individuals cannot perform any action other than what they have already done, yet if someone can act otherwise, it implies that some events occur without a cause.

Through these four principles, it can be understood that the principles offered are contradictory and opposed to one another. In answering this problem, there are two general approaches and perspectives most often used to provide solutions, namely the compatibilist and the incompatibilist. The compatibilist view needs to be distinguished into two contexts, which are naturalistic compatibilism and theological compatibilism. In general, compatibilism does not reject the possibility that free will and determinism, whether determined by God or by the universe, can be reconciled. In the compatibilist position, determinism in both theological and naturalistic forms does not deny the existence of free will.

Naturalistic compatibilism argues that a person can do whatever they want if they desire it without coercion or limitation. For example, when someone goes to a restaurant and is given the choice of ordering fruit ice or plain water, they may decide to order fruit ice because they strongly want it. At the same time, they can imagine that they could also choose plain water, but if determinism is assumed to be true, fruit ice is the only choice that they can actually make. Therefore, free will in compatibilism is considered as the process of deliberation in making a decision, where human beings have various desires and impulses when determining something. When faced with the choice between fruit ice and plain water, they realize that they cannot order both, so they decide to order fruit ice after considering all of their desires.

Theological compatibilism, in contrast, provides a slightly different approach. In this perspective, God is likened to a novelist who does not force his creations to do something, but rather makes them perform their actions (McCann, 2015). The relationship between God and human beings is not like that of a puppeteer and a puppet, but rather that of an author and the characters that he creates. God is the foundation and creator of human beings, yet he does not interfere in the actions and choices determined by them. Through this concept, God only determines the creation of human beings but does not determine all of their interactions and actions in the world. God also cannot relate directly as a subject to another subject because they exist in different realms, namely the world of the author and the world of fictional characters (McCann, 2005). Therefore, God cannot intervene in human freedom and will, but human beings as the result of his creation are sufficient to serve as proof of divine omnipotence.

Apart from the compatibilist perspective, there is also the incompatibilist view which rejects the idea that free will and determinism can be reconciled. The incompatibilist argues that if determinism is true, then no human being has freedom in action, and conversely, if free will is true, then all human actions are not determined (Warfield, 2000). There are two arguments that support incompatibilism, namely the consequence argument and the argument from initiation. The consequence argument is the most well-known form of incompatibilism, and it bases its reasoning on the asymmetrical relationship between the past and the future (Timpe, 2006). This argument begins with a thought experiment and asks us to imagine a situation of time travel, formulated in the following way: the statement "I attended the Philosophy of Divinity class on November 29, 2021" is true, but if I were to

return to November 29, 2021, I could decide not to attend the Philosophy of Divinity class on that date, and if I were to return to the past and decided not to attend the class, then the statement “I attended the Philosophy of Divinity class on November 29, 2021” would be false. Therefore, the second point in the formulation is shown to be incorrect.

The asymmetrical relationship between the past and the future is illustrated by the fact that we cannot deliberately change the past as we can with the future (Timpe, 2006). This happens because the future appears to be open and is determined by us, while what has already taken place in the past cannot be changed. For this reason, when we exercise free will, what we actually do is consider the choices that exist regarding the future and determine which option is best to pursue. The consequence argument seeks to show that determinism is false, because if determinism is assumed to be true, then what exists in the future cannot be changed, just as the past cannot be altered. This conclusion is proven false through the formulation that has been presented, and therefore determinism and free will cannot be reconciled with one another (Magnis-Suseno, 2006).

The second argument is the argument from initiation, which illustrates that if determinism is true, then when someone performs an action based on desire and belief, that action may be said to be correct. However, the desire and belief themselves are the result of an unavoidable chain of causality (Timpe, 2006). In other words, it can also be said that if a person acts according to their own free will, the action can only truly be called free if that person is the primary source of their own action. This argument can be formulated as follows: one can act according to one's own free will only if one is the determiner of one's own actions, but if determinism is true, then what a person does entirely depends on and is based on things beyond their control. If what one does entirely depends on factors outside of oneself, then one is not the determiner of one's own actions. Therefore, if determinism is true, one is not the determiner of one's own actions, and consequently, if determinism is true, one does not possess free will.

Through the incompatibilist perspective, two further views emerge, which are the results of combining incompatibilism either with the belief in free will, known as libertarianism, or with the belief in determinism, known as hard determinism. The libertarianism in this context differs from the perspective of politics insofar as it is a view that accepts only free will and completely rejects the existence of determinism (Fischer & Kane, 2007). Subject freedom is understood to mean that when a subject performs action A, the causal possibility of actions B, C, and D which were not chosen will not occur deterministically (Moore, 2023). On the other hand, hard determinism is the view that rejects the existence of free will and only affirms the truth of determinism. The hard determinists believe that causal determinism is universal, so subjects do not possess the freedom of action that requires moral responsibility (Rakos et al., 2025). These two perspectives develop as logical extensions of incompatibilism, depending on which of the two positions is accepted as valid.

3.2 The Buddhist perspective in addressing the problem of determinism and free will

The problem of determinism and free will is a modern problem that is not explicitly addressed within Buddhism. Moreover, the law of cause and effect, samsara, and the law of karma in Buddhism provide an implication that Buddhism responds to this issue by positioning itself on hard determinism, yet in this chapter the author will attempt to make explicit the position and perspective of Buddhism in the debate on determinism and free will. In essence, Buddhism rejects the libertarian view that human free will serves as the primary and original source of all human actions, yet at the same time Buddhism does not entirely deny the existence of free will as claimed by hard determinism. Therefore, Buddhism serves the compatibilist view as a middle path, in which free will is understood as a condition for each individual to exercise self-control as well as responsibility for all moral actions they perform. Within compatibilism, free will is defined as the ability of the subject to determine actions according to their own desires and beliefs without being

constrained by coercion or pressure, and this understanding of free will is aligned with the ultimate goal of Buddhism, namely Nirvana (Federman, 2010).

Buddhism itself offers a path of truth toward liberation, freed from coercion, pressure, restrictions, and other forms of bondage to the material world, which is also referred to as *vimuttimaggā*. In this case, liberation is interpreted as freedom from mental limitations that are the root and primary cause of suffering as well as the five mental hindrances known as Nirvana. For those who are still entangled in Nirvana, their thinking will remain constrained, thus Nirvana as the ultimate path in Buddhism carries the same meaning as free will within compatibilism, since one can only achieve the purest and most perfect freedom (Nirvana) when mental limitations have been entirely released. Furthermore, free will in the sense of compatibilism also functions as a condition within the very essence of human existence in Buddhism, because everyone requires free will to be aware of, to control, and to act upon their own desires. *Cetana*, which is understood as intention and direction, is required for someone to reach the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariyo Atthangiko Maggo*) like stated in the *Magga-vibhanga Sutta* (Bhikkhu Thanissaro, 1996). In that text, the second stage requires the individual to possess *Samma-sankappa* (right thought, liberated from mental limitations such as lust, evil, hatred, and cruelty) in order to attain *Samma-vaca* (right speech). Right thought means that the actions determined by a person become his or her responsibility with regard to morality and karma.

Free will as interpreted within compatibilism is also required as a condition to become aware of one's desires and needs, which is also a component of the Noble Eightfold Path at the seventh stage, namely right mindfulness (*Samma-sati*). *Samma-sati* arises from an individual's desire to be freed from negative desires in the mind (*samvara-padhana*) and provides reflection for the subject so that he or she may recognize bodily conditions (*kaya-nupassana*), feelings (*vedana-nupassana*), states of mind (*citta-nupassana*), and mental phenomena (*dhamma-nupassana*). When one can recognize his or her own thoughts, feelings, and desires, then one is able to reflect and deliberate on the action one wishes to perform. Thus, as long as there are no mental limitations confining the mind, a person can act according to his or her own desires.

Through this explanation, it can be understood that free will is a very important condition in Buddhist teachings, as one must liberate the mind from the mental limitations of *Nivarana* in order to act as a subject with free will in determining one's choices. According to Federman (2010), a purified mind serves as a guide to one's own desires and becomes a powerful tool for transforming knowledge into wise choices, and in Buddhism this is referred to as the cultivation of awakened desire. A person's thinking is not entirely free, but he or she is free in the sense of not being mentally constrained and being able to recognize his or her own condition, thereby enabling one to imagine consequences and choose the most appropriate path in the future.

How does Buddhist thought relate to determinism in this debate? Returning once again to the first paragraph of this chapter, Buddhism itself possesses the law of cause and effect, which is strongly bound within its teachings, also known as *Pattica Samuppada*. *Pattica Samuppada* contains laws that include the following: first, if there is a cause, then there will be an effect; second, if there is no cause, then there will be no effect; third, if a cause arises, then an effect will arise; and fourth, if the cause ceases, then the effect will also cease. This law of cause and effect is independent, autonomous, and constant toward anything that occurs in the present (*Niyamata*) (Bhikkhu Boddhi, 2000). Therefore, whatever happens in the present always produces an inevitable effect, regardless of whether or not one is aware of it.

Through the principle of the law of cause and effect from *Pattica Samuppada*, twelve interdependent chains of causality are created. First, from ignorance (*Avijā*), karma (*Sankhara*) arises. Second, from karma, consciousness (*Vinnana*) arises. Third, from consciousness, mind and matter (*Nama-rupa*) arise. Fourth, from mind and matter, the sense faculties (*Salayatana*) arise. Fifth, from the senses, contact (*Phassa*) arises. Sixth, from contact, feeling (*Vedana*) arises.

Seventh, from feeling, craving (*Tanha*) arises. Eighth, from craving, attachment (*Upadana*) arises. Ninth, from attachment, becoming (*Bhava*) arises. Tenth, from becoming, birth (*Jati*) arises. Eleventh, from birth, aging and death (*Jara-marana*) arise. Twelfth, from death, the cycle of suffering (*Samsara*) arises. Thus, in Buddhist teaching, there is nothing that escapes this causal order. In Buddhism, everything is subject to causality, beginning from nature, mentality, the law of karma, and the transcendent. Buddhism rejects the notion that events occur on their own, since every phenomenon must have a cause within itself. Buddhism also teaches that every event in reality is part of causality, in which past events can determine our desires and influence the choices we will make in the future. Therefore, the world as understood by Buddhism is also understood in a deterministic form. Free will in compatibilism can only be realized when it is applied to a world already determined by the law of cause and effect, since one cause can only lead to one consequence or one future that will occur (Federman, 2010).

Ultimately, every individual still has free will to determine what they wish to experience. However, karma and the law of cause and effect cannot be separated from human attachment. The freedom we possess functions as the subject that controls the possible future we will undergo. Reality itself, however, does not function as a subject with the ability to control whatever it desires. Thus, freedom in Buddhism always exists within the framework of the determination of the law of cause and effect, which makes such freedom limited yet still meaningful.

The notion of freedom does not represent a comprehensive definition of the term in itself. However, Buddhism does not refute the premise that every individual possesses agency in all of their actions (Caruso, 2020). According to the Buddhist doctrine, every individual is inherently endowed with the capacity for freedom. Therefore, at the moment of birth, the fundamental aspiration of every individual is to be liberated from the burdens of life that is full of sufferings. Nonetheless, the ignorance of an individual concerning this subject and worldly causality serves to restrict them within the cycle of *samsara*. The capacity for self-control can be realised through the recognition that every individual action is inextricably bound to the universal law of cause and effect. It is important to recognise the existence of an agency within oneself which is devoid of any essence. This relates to the concept of *anatta*, which is also explicitly stated in the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikaya* 25 about Non-Self.

The *Anattalakkhana Sutta* is a sermon delivered by the Buddha to a group of five monks at the Deer Park in Isipatana. The discourse focuses on the nature of reality and the concept of self-definition, exploring the ideas that physical form, perception, the mind, consciousness, and sensations are not permanent and do not define the self. In this *Sutta*, the Buddha explains one of his key teachings regarding *anatta* and *anicca*. *Anatta* is the concept of the non substance self, while *anicca* is impermanence.

Based on this concept, freedom cannot be possessed because the essence of the subject is not recognized. The issue of free will is therefore brought to the fore, as the existence of the self is a prerequisite for the determination of one's own actions through autonomy (Bernier, 2019). However, the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* states that the self is completely free when the realization arises that the essence of the self is emptiness. As quoted in the *Anattalakkhana Sutta*, the Buddha said, "A learned noble disciple grows disillusioned with form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness. Being disillusioned, desire fades away. When desire fades away they're freed. When they're freed, they know they're freed." (Bhikkhu Sujato, 2018b). For this reason, Repetti (2015) interprets freedom as agency without an agent, given that it does not negate the possibility of an agency accompanied by a rejection of one's own substance.

This state of freedom is already determined when the subject becomes aware of its non-essential self-actualization. The cultivation of awareness of freedom is achieved through a sequence of interconnected causes and effects. Freedom attains absolute status when it becomes a prerequisite component of the cycle. In summary, the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* expounds the notion that enlightened freedom constitutes an absolute state that can be experienced by the subject, yet it is not fully within the subject's control (Adam, 2010).

Moreover, the *Anguttara Nikaya* in *Tittha Sutta* also offers further insights into Buddhism's stance on this debate. In this text, the Buddha refutes the doctrine that all situations are the result of past karma, not that events are the result of God's will, and that they simply happen as they do. The fallacies of the three views mentioned before are *Pubbekata-hetu-ditthi*, *Issara-nimmana-hetu-ditthi*, and *Ahetu-apaccaya-ditthi*. This interpretation is followed by the assertion that adopting this perspective would imply that the subject lacks any intention or motivation regarding the right action (Bernier, 2019). In this text, kamma is described as an inferior realm that shapes an individual awareness of how they act through body, mind, and speech, which in turn leads to the confirmation of a future that is bound but also dynamic since it is constantly changing (Bhikkhu Sujato, 2018a).

Right action is then realized through right thought and awareness of ignorance, as mention in the *Sammaditthi Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikaya* (Bhikku Nanamoli & Bhikku Bodhi, 2026). The absence of such awareness and understanding serves as the starting point from which every individual must determine how to live their life. The *Moliyasivaka Sutta* also acknowledges experiences and actions that do not fall within the cycle of karma. It states that not all actions are experienced as the result of past karma and therefore there are no moral considerations involved in such actions (Javanaud, 2018). In other words, the concept of freedom is also addressed in various Buddhist texts, which are then linked to the application of the law of cause and effect as a fundamental principle of the universe.

The discourse surrounding the dualism of free will and determinism within the Buddhist tradition can also be addressed through the utilisation of a methodological approach that draws upon the principles of Buddhism, namely the Middle Way. The Middle Way or *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, written by Nagarjuna, serves as the foundation for addressing various dilemmas, particularly those related to worldly matters. This philosophical approach of Buddhism emphasizes the rejection of both dualism and externalism by offering a middle path that transcends binary oppositions (Winters, 1994).

This is not a matter of bridging the dualism debate between free will and determinism, nor of rejecting either of them, but rather of focusing on how individuals use their agency to cope with suffering. Freedom is not posited as an intrinsic value that individuals possess metaphysically, rather, it is proposed as limited agency through which individuals are held accountable for their lives in practical and ethical terms within an interconnected universe. Buddhism does not provide a completely binary response to the discourse on free will and determinism that is part of the Western tradition. Instead, it offers an alternative approach to address this issue without introducing a new concept. Within this context, the role of Buddhist perspective is to reinstate the concept of freedom as an individual act that is related to morality in which the individual must assume personal accountability.

4. Conclusions

In the end, the problem of determinism and free will will certainly never be resolved until there is concrete evidence regarding the Omnipotence of God and the free will of human beings. However, the role of the philosophy of divinity does not attempt to resolve this problem in its entirety, but rather serves as proof that human capability and thought can attempt to understand and recognize issues that lie beyond their reality. By employing a different approach from what has been adopted in Western philosophy, the Buddhist perspective in the debate on determinism and free will offers a new explanation through the ultimate goal, the essence of humanity, and the natural law of cause and effect in Buddhist teachings. Determinism, which is explained through the Buddhist law of cause and effect and the analogy of a novelist and the fictional characters he creates within the position of compatibilism, is able to provide a logical explanation regarding the Omnipotence of God and the free will of human beings.

If we return to the initial problem raised by Jean-Paul Sartre, namely that humans no longer have free will because of the existence of God, through the arguments offered in compatibilism, both theologically and from the Buddhist perspective, such a problem can

then be considered invalid. The presence and Omnipotence of God in relation to humans cannot be understood as the relationship between a puppeteer and his puppets, but rather as a dependency formed in the analogy of a novelist with his fictional characters. The dependency created, as in the analogy of the novelist with his fictional characters, signifies that God creates and empowers humans so that they become beings who are whole within themselves. Therefore, the more humans are free and whole within themselves, the more it means that humans are increasingly dependent on God as their Creator.

As a conclusion, the author shares the same opinion with the approach offered in the perspective of Buddhism and theological determinism. According to the author, the problem of determinism and free will arises from a misunderstanding of how people define the position of God in relation to human beings. When God and humans are positioned as in the analogy of a puppeteer and his puppets, then humans as puppets are not understood as the result of God's creation as their puppeteer, but rather as God's dolls. This mistake ultimately leads to a misguided thought that the existence of God nullifies the presence of human beings in their own lives. Therefore, when we become aware of how to properly place our position in relation to God, we will also realize that the free will we possess can only exist because of the Omnipotence of God, as explained in Buddhist teachings. Similarly, in Buddhism, the freedom possessed by humans will ultimately lead them to increasingly depend on and accept their existence in relation to the transcendent God. In Buddhism, human awareness in its entirety of their freedom will become the ultimate goal of the Buddha's teachings. Once humans have fully realized their freedom, they will reach the highest stage and move toward the transcendent realm called Nirvana, and through that, humans will become increasingly close to their Creator.

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Author Contribution

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Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, to assist in improving grammar, clarity, academic language, and the organization of the manuscript. The generative AI tool was not used to generate or alter research data, conduct the substantive analysis, interpret the findings, or formulate the study's conclusions. After using this tool, the author critically reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and final content of the publication.

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