

This Is Philosophy - Chapter 4.25 : 4.61

Summary

Freedom Cont.

A Regress of Reasons for Acting Why There is No Free Will, Part 3

The Threat of Determinism

A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities:

"All we need is a snapshot of the universe, one so finely detailed that we could tell the position and momentum of every particle, and we could in principle figure out the entire future history of the universe and everything in it."

Determinism - given the laws of nature and a set of initial conditions, there is exactly one physically possible future.

"The initial conditions of the universe are the physical facts at the moment of the Big Bang. Those facts, coupled with the laws of physics, determine everything that has happened since. The universe is simply in the process of unfolding"

Incompatibilism - Either we have no free will or determinism is false.

Will Randomness Make Us Free?

"If an action is undetermined, if it occurs randomly, then its happening is a matter of chance or luck, and not a free action. The whole idea behind free will, as we have defined it, is that we have a choice in what we do, that we have a sort of volitional control over our thoughts and actions. But random actions aren't under the control of anything."

The Dilemma Argument Against Free Will

1. Either determinism is true, or it is false. (trivial)
2. If determinism is true, then you can never choose to perform one action

instead of another.

3. If you can never choose to perform one action instead of another, then you do not have free will.
4. Therefore, if determinism is true, no one has free will.
5. If determinism is false, then some events are random (those not random are determined).
6. If you do something randomly, then it is not the result of choice.
7. Therefore, an action that is random is not the result of free will.
8. Therefore, if determinism is false, there is no free will.
9. Therefore, there is no free will. (from 1, 2-4, 5-8)

Free Will and Moral Responsibility

"See, if you're not free, then there was never anything else you could do, no matter what you do. Either forces outside of your control determine every action you perform, in which case you never had a choice, or your actions are the result of randomness, in which case you never had a choice. Either way, you were never free to do anything differently; there was nothing you could have done to produce a different outcome."

The Principle of Alternate Possibilities - you are morally responsible for an action x only if at the time you did x, there was alternate possible action y that you could have done instead.

"Therefore the Zorg scenario is a case in which someone is morally responsible for an action, despite the fact that at the time the action was performed there was no alternate possible action that she could have done instead. Thus the principle of alternate possibilities is false. The existence of a possible alternative action to what one actually did is not a requirement for moral responsibility."

Frankfurt - one is not morally responsible for what one does if one does it only because one could not have done otherwise.

Agent Causation

Agent Causation - the alternative to determinism isn't randomness at all, but our own free will.

Objection 1: Mystery

"either your reasons for acting are due to causal forces outside of you, you have an infinite chain of reasons for acting to do anything, or your reasons are random and not the exercise of free will."

Objection 2: Magic

"Agent causation insists upon a sort of causation that is connected to the rest of the physical world in a most peculiar way ... the universe does not leave its mark upon us, but we can leave our mark upon it. Surely for agent causation our choosing is beyond the reach of science to treat; there can be no psycho-physical laws or rigorous predictions of our behavior. We are magicians, casting spells, with causal powers outside the domain of science."

Compatibilism

Libertarian Free Will - Your will is free just in case you can choose to perform one action instead of another.

Compatibilist Free Will: Your performance of an action is free just in case it is the result of your beliefs, desires, and intentions.

Objection 1: Too Little Freedom

"Compatibilism [means] that the plain ordinary facts about the world imply that we're still not free."

Objection 2: Too Much Freedom

"cases where we are intuitively unfree come out as free action under compatibilism compatibilism then looks absurdly inclusive—everything you do is free, no matter what. You're every bit as free in prison as you are on the outside."

The Feeling of Freedom

"It turns out there is a difference in the brain between a freely voluntary act, such as you consciously lifting your arm, and involuntary motions, such as your arm jerking up as a result of cerebral palsy, Parkinsonism, Huntington's chorea, Tourette's, etcetera."