

PHILOSOPHY 101

FALL 2017

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FREE WILL

WHAT IS FREEDOM OF THE WILL?

Freedom of Will:

(1) a capacity of an agent to (2) choose according to her preferences (3) from amongst a set of relevant alternatives such that (4) the agent is responsible for that choice or action

WHY IS FREEDOM OF THE WILL IMPORTANT?

- Desert & Moral responsibility
 - Praise & blame
 - Distribution of resources
- Punishment

HOW TO TALK ABOUT FREEDOM

- Analysis of cases (casuistry)
 - Testing philosophical 'intuitions'
 - How do we respond to different cases?
 - Why do we respond the way that we do?

KINDS OF FREEDOM

- Freedom from coercion (mental or physical)
- Freedom from manipulation

COERCION

Jane didn't want to share her chocolate bar with John, but the teacher threatened her with detention (or worse) if she didn't, so she gave John half.

- Did Jane act freely?
- Is she to be (morally) praised for sharing the chocolate?
 - Deserving praise vs. praising to shape an agent's future behavior

Jane is attacked by a mugger. Under threat of her life, she gives up her jewelry, including cherished family heirlooms like her grandmother's engagement ring. Her family will be very upset about their loss.

- Did Jane act freely?
- Is Jane (morally) blameworthy for giving up the jewelry?

MANIPULATION

John is a nice guy, who would never intentionally hurt someone. But government agents have brainwashed him into attempting to assassinate the President.

- Is John acting freely in his assassination attempt?
- Is John morally blameworthy?

INCOMPATIBILISM

- An agent who is coerced or manipulated is (typically) not morally responsible for her actions
- Moral responsibility and coercion/manipulation are '*incompatible*'

WHAT GENERATES THE INCOMPATIBILITY?

- (Lack of) Control?
- (Lack of) Self-initiation?
- (Lack of) Options?
- (Lack of) Something else?

NAGEL ON ALTERNATE POSSIBILITIES

If you believed that about yourself and other people [i.e. that you couldn't have acted any other way] , it would probably change the way you felt about things. For instance, could you blame yourself for giving in to temptation and having the cake? Would it make sense to say, “I really should have had a peach instead,” if you couldn't have chosen a peach instead? It certainly wouldn't make sense to say it if there was no fruit. So how can it make sense if there was fruit, but you couldn't have chosen it because it was determined in advance that you would choose cake? (Nagel, 53)

The Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP):

a person is morally responsible for what they have done only if they could have done (or chosen) otherwise

- What explains why an agent is not morally responsible in cases of coercion/manipulation?
 - Proposal: PAP is violated – The agent could not have done otherwise

