

# Philosophy 101

Determinism & Freedom

October 28, 2014

# 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] she 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*

- Did Jane act freely?
- Is she to be (morally) praised for sharing the chocolate?
  - deserving praise vs. praising to shape her future behavior

## Coercion

*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?

- Alternate Possibilities: moral responsibility is incompatible with the the fact that the agent could not have done otherwise

## Alternate Possibilities

*If you believed that [you couldn't have acted any other way] about yourself and other people, 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)*

# Alternate Possibilities

The Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP): a person is morally responsible for what s/he has done only if s/he could have done otherwise (or chosen otherwise)

## Alternate Possibilities

- 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