

Philosophy 101

Freedom & Determinism

May 28, 2014

Review

Quiz

- ① T/F: Pictorial representations cannot represent logical relationships
- ② T/F: Crane argues that linguistic and pictorial representation *don't* require interpretation
- ③ T/F: Strong AI claims that thinking is constituted by the manipulation of symbols, as in a computer program
- ④ T/F: According to Searle, Weak AI is false
- ⑤ T/F: According to Searle, syntax alone is not sufficient for thought

Strong & Weak AI

- Strong AI:** thinking is constituted by the manipulation of formal symbols, such as occurs in a computer program
- Weak AI:** thinking may be modeled by formal symbol systems, such as computer programs

Syntax & Semantics

Syntax: the formal or structural features of a symbol system which determine which expressions are legitimate members of the system and which are not

- The syntax of English (its grammar) requires that all complete sentences have a noun phrase and a verb phrase
 - 'John goes to school' vs. 'school John to goes'

Syntax & Semantics

Semantics: The system of meanings assigned to a symbol system, given by determining the referents of the symbols and the truth conditions of symbol strings

- 'Schnee' refers to snow
- 'weiß' refers to the property of being white
- 'Schnee ist weiß' is true just in case snow is white

The Chinese Room Argument

- ① Programs are purely formal (syntactic)
- ② Human minds have mental contents (semantics)
- ③ Syntax by itself is neither constitutive of, nor sufficient for, semantic content
- ④ \therefore Programs by themselves are not constitutive of nor sufficient for minds

Two Objections to Searle's Chinese Room Argument

- ① The 'Systems' Objection
- ② The 'Implementation' Objection

The Implementation Objection

- We need to distinguish between a *program* and an *implementation of the program*

The Implementation Objection

Programs are abstract computational objects and are purely syntactic. Certainly, no mere program is a candidate for possession of a mind. Implementations of programs, on the other hand, are concrete systems with causal dynamics, and are not purely syntactic. An implementation has causal heft in the real world, and it is in virtue of this causal heft that consciousness and intentionality arise. It is the program that is syntactic; it is the implementation that has semantic content.
(Chalmers 1996, 327)

The Implementation Objection

Chalmers's Parody:

- ① Recipes are syntactic.
- ② Syntax is not sufficient for crumbliness.
- ③ Cakes are crumbly.
- ④ \therefore Implementing a recipe is insufficient for a cake.

The Implementation Objection

A recipe implicitly specifies a class of physical systems that qualify as implementations of the recipe, and it is these systems that have such features as crumbliness. Similarly, a program implicitly specifies a class of physical systems that qualify as implementations of the program, and it is these systems that give rise to such features as minds. (Chalmers, 327)

Free Will

What is Freedom of the Will?

Freedom of Will: a capacity of an agent to choose according to her preference from amongst a set of relevant alternatives such that 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 intuitions

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 him 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
 - Where there is no free will there is no moral responsibility
 - Free will 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
- Source: moral responsibility is incompatible with the fact that the agent was not the source of the relevant intention to act

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: a person is morally responsible for what s/he has done only if s/he could have done otherwise (or chosen otherwise)

Source of Agency

- Moral responsibility seems to require more than that the agent could have done otherwise
- The agent must have control over the production of her decision to act if she is to be morally responsible for it
- If an agent does have control over the production of her decision to act then she is not morally responsible for it

Source of Agency

The Source Requirement: If an agent is morally responsible for her deciding to perform an action, then the production of this decision must be something over which the agent has control, and an agent is not morally responsible for the decision if it is produced by a source over which she has no control

Source of Agency

Jane is considering what to eat in the student union. She deliberates about her choices and decides that, of the options available, Subway's offerings most closely match what she desires, and so she decides to order a sub.

- Did Jane play an appropriate role in the production of this decision?
- Is she responsible for the decision?

Source of Agency

Jane is considering what to eat in the student union. Unbeknownst to her, Subway is filling the air with a chemical that subliminally generates in subjects an intention to eat a sandwich. Jane forms the intention, and decides on Subway accordingly. She enjoys her sandwich.

- Did Jane play an appropriate role in the production of this decision?
- Is she responsible for the decision?

Determinism

Determinism: For any state of the subject, that subject's states are necessitated by the condition of its previous states plus the laws of nature.

Determinism

- The following are all compatible with determinism
 - choice
 - the causal efficacy of choice & effort
 - deliberation
 - unpredictability
- Is determinism compatible with free will?
 - Yes: 'Compatibilism'
 - No: 'Incompatibilism'

Free Will & Indeterminism

perhaps [determinism] isn't true. Many scientists now believe that it isn't true for the basic particles of matter-that in a given situation, there's more than one thing that an electron may do. Perhaps if determinism isn't true for human actions, either, this leaves room for free will and responsibility. What if human actions, or at least some of them, are not determined in advance? (Nagel, 55)

- If actions aren't determined 'in advance' then what determines them?

Free Will & Indeterminism

is even [indeterminism] enough for free will? Is this all you mean when you say, "I could have chosen fruit instead?"-that the choice wasn't determined in advance? No, you believe something more. You believe that you determined what you would do, by doing it. It wasn't determined in advance, but it didn't just happen, either. You did it, and you could have done the opposite. (Nagel, 53)

Free Will & Indeterminism

- Is indeterminism enough for freedom?
- No: Indeterminism is incompatible with the source requirement
 - source of intention must issue in the right way from the subject

Incompatibilism

- ① Arguments for the claim that (in)determinism makes it impossible for us to *cause and control our actions in the right kind of way*.
- ② Arguments for the claim that (in)determinism deprives us of the *power or ability to do or choose otherwise*.

Varieties of Incompatibilism

Source Incompatibilism: The truth of (in)determinism is incompatible with an agent's having a causal history of a sort that allows the agent to be the source of her action in the manner required for moral responsibility

Leeway Incompatibilism: The truth of (in)determinism is incompatible with an agent's having the capacity to do otherwise than as she did

There is Free Will

Libertarianism: determinism is false and there is free will

There is No Free Will – Hard Incompatibilism

Hard Incompatibilism: There is no free will of the kind necessary for *basic desert*

Basic Desert: For an agent to be morally responsible for an action is for it to be hers in such a way that she would deserve to be the recipient of an expression of moral indignation if she understood that it was morally wrong, and she would deserve to be the recipient of an expression of praise if she understood that it was morally exemplary

Questions

- Is free will necessary for moral responsibility?
- Is free will compatible with determinism?
- Is moral responsibility compatible with determinism?
- Is free will compatible with indeterminism?
- Is moral responsibility compatible with indeterminism?