



Frankfurt's greatest hits

Some really nice stuff from HJF

Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP)

- “This principle states that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if **he could have done otherwise.**” (p. 1)
- (Many people see CDO (could have done otherwise) as a necessary condition of *free will* as well. $FW \Rightarrow CDO$)
- “It has generally seemed so overwhelmingly plausible that some philosophers have even characterized it as an a priori truth. ... But [it] is false.”

Jones₄ and Black case

- Black wants Jones to do something X, but will only intervene to *make* Jones do it if it looks as if Jones is about to do something else.
- As it turns out, however, Jones never gives any indication of doing something other than X.
 - Black, therefore, does not intervene. He is merely a close observer of Jones's action, and not a participant.
 - Jones does X “all by himself”
- Jones does X freely, and yet he could not have done otherwise.

Concrete cases

- For a concrete case, suppose that Black wants Jones to vote Republican.
 - So he monitors Jones, and if Jones is *about* to vote Democrat, then Black intervenes and compels him to vote Republican.
- Another Frankfurt case is the **dormant drug addiction**. Suppose someone with a dormant addiction decides freely to shoot up.
 - If they hadn't, a few minutes later the addiction would have become active, and powerful cravings would have forced them to take the drug.

Causation? Determination?

- Some questions:
 - a) Did Black *cause* Jones to do vote Republican?
 - b) Does Black *determine* that Jones votes Republican?

Answers:

- a) **No.** Black “never has to show his hand”
- b) **Yes.** At least, Black’s presence is a part of the total situation that is a “sufficient condition for” X, i.e. that determines X.

What kind of causation?

- N.B. In describing these examples, Frankfurt doesn't explicitly use the term 'cause'.
 - "This fact played no role at all in **leading** him to act as he did"
 - "this fact may play no role whatever in the **explanation** of why he did it"
 - It may not figure at all among the circumstances that actually **brought it about** ...
- But he seems to be referring to the kind of causation that Anscombe called 'derivedness', and I call 'concrete causation'.

C.f. chance raising

- Recall one problem with chance-raising theories of causation:
 - **Events that *might* cause E raise the chance of E.**
- E.g. Black's mere presence in the shadows, ready to act if needed, "causes" Jones to do X, according to chance-raising theories.
 - This is another case where concrete causation is the kind we're interested in.

Determined by *non-causes*

- So this is an odd situation.
- Jones's act *X* is *caused* by his own deliberation. *X* is (let's say) not determined by its causes.
 - (I.e. let's assume that *X* has libertarian free will.)
- But *X* is determined by the total state of the world, when some *non-causes* are taken into account.
- (I think we tend to assume that if an event is pre-determined, then it's determined by its causes.)

Response?

- Do you agree with the above analysis?
- What's the best response from an incompatibilist?
- One argument for incompatibilism is:
 - $FW \Rightarrow CDO$
 - So, $\neg CDO \Rightarrow \neg FW$
 - Also, Determinism $\Rightarrow \neg CDO$
 - So, Determinism $\Rightarrow \neg FW$
- This argument is destroyed?

Options for incompatibilists

1. The Frankfurt cases are too unusual to be of interest. In *normal* cases, $FW \Rightarrow CDO$.
2. Even in a Frankfurt case, there are “flickers of freedom”, so the person *can* do otherwise in small ways.
3. Abandon PAP as usually formulated, but replace it with a similar principle (or see the new principle as the *proper* formulation of the PAP)
4. Abandon PAP altogether, but use a different argument to support incompatibilism.
 - E.g. the consequence argument doesn't use PAP.

1. Are the cases that unusual?

Some cases seem pretty normal:

- Locke's content prisoner
- Frankfurt's case of dormant addiction
- The dual-control driver instruction vehicle

These are described in the SEP entry, "Moral Responsibility and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities", by David Robb.

2. Flickers of freedom?

- There are several versions of this idea.
- One is that, even though Jones could not have refrained from voted Republican (because any inclination to do so would have triggered Black's intervention), Jones could have refrained from *freely* voting Republican.
- Another is that, even though Jones cannot vote Democrat, he can have the brief inclination to vote Democrat.

3. Revise PAP?

- Frankfurt suggests a possible revision to PAP, but his idea seems muddled to me. There are many other suggestions though.
- One is to say that “could have done otherwise” is a logical relation of the form $P \nRightarrow Q$, which we can express as “Q could have been otherwise, given P”
 - (N.B. recall that ‘ \Rightarrow ’ means logical consequence, not mere material implication.)
- So, in judging whether someone could have done otherwise, we need to ask, “Given what?”

E.g. the video footage proves it

- Suppose a hidden camera at the polling booth gets crystal-clear footage of Jones voting Republican.
- Then the video evidence *determines* that Jones voted Republican.
 - Given the footage, it is impossible that Jones did anything other than vote Republican.
 - But the existence of such determining footage clearly doesn't threaten free will in general, because it's an *effect* of the free act, not a *cause*.
- Perhaps, when we say that FW implies CDO, we mean (or should mean) that the person could have done otherwise *given all the actual causes*?

The Control Argument

- We previously thought that *A controls B* iff the actions of A both **cause** and **determine** those of B.
- One argument for incompatibilism is that, if determinism is true, then we are completely *under the control* of external events and physical laws.
- In the Frankfurt case, note that *Jones isn't under Black's control* because Black doesn't *cause* Jones's action.
- And Jones, could have done otherwise, **given the actual causes** (that don't include any intervention from Black).

Revised PAP

- Every total external cause of my action allows me to do otherwise.
 - I can do otherwise, **given all the external causes.**

Part 2

Free *will* > Free action

Frankfurt's concept of a person

- Traditional compatibilism says:
 1. To act freely means to act without external impediment, under the sway of one's own beliefs and desires.
 2. If one acts freely in this sense, then one is *punishable* (and sensitive to persuasion, etc.)
 - Punishment can discourage similar *choices* in the future, but has no effect on *involuntary* acts.

Free will = choice (?)

“We have now collected a number of cases of actions which, in the ordinary usage of the English language, would be called cases in which people have acted of their own free will. We should also say in all these cases that *they chose to act as they did*. We should also say that they could have acted otherwise, if they had chosen.”

Walter T. Stace, a *traditional* compatibilist

“We may therefore frame the following rough definitions.

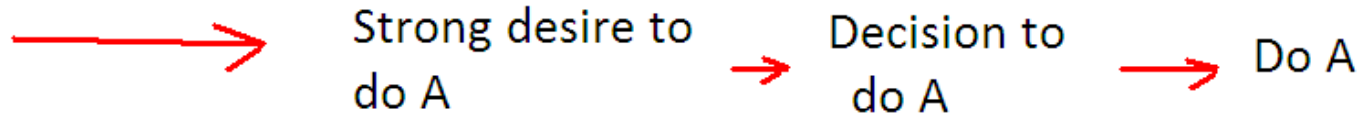
- *Acts freely done are those whose immediate causes are psychological states in the agent*
- *Acts not freely done are those whose immediate causes are states of affairs external to the agent.”*

(Stace)

“It is plain that if we define free will in this way, then free will certainly exists, and the [hard determinist’s] denial of its existence is seen to be what it is—nonsense. For it is obvious that all those actions of men which we should ordinarily attribute to the exercise of their free will, or of which we should say that they freely chose to do them, are in fact actions which have been caused by their own desires, wishes, thoughts, emotions, impulses, or other psychological states.”

(Stace)

Richard Taylor's control box argument



He did A of his own free will!

- Taylor imagines an “ingenious physiologist” who “can induce in me any volition [i.e. choice] he pleases, simply by pushing various buttons on an instrument...”

Compatibilists on CDO

- Trad. Compatibilism offers a “conditional analysis” of CDO as:

“If I had chosen otherwise, then I would have done otherwise”

(N.B. Actions resulting from one’s own choices are susceptible to modification through rewards and punishment. So CDO amounts to: “punishment might have caused this person to do otherwise”.)

Counter-example to compatibilist CDO?

“Despite the classical compatibilists’ ingenuity, their analysis of *could have done otherwise* failed decisively. ...

Suppose that Danielle is psychologically incapable of wanting to touch a blond haired dog. Imagine that, on her sixteenth birthday, unaware of her condition, her father brings her two puppies to choose between, one being a blond haired Lab, the other a black haired Lab. He tells Danielle just to pick up whichever of the two she pleases and that he will return the other puppy to the pet store. Danielle happily, and unencumbered, does what she wants and picks up the black Lab.” (SEP)

Could Danielle have done otherwise here? Did she act freely?

Enter Frankfurt

- For Frankfurt, being a **person** is more than just having desires and acting on them. (Animals have that too.)
- Similarly, free will requires more than just doing what you want (contrary to traditional compatibilism).
- A person (unlike an animal) has *second-order* desires as well, i.e. desires concerning their own desires.

Frankfurt's definition of *will*

- To identify an agent's **will** is either to identify the desire (or desires) by which he is motivated in some action he performs
- (I.e. the agent's *will* is the desire that is *effective*, it actually *causes* the action.)

Second-order *volitions*

- When a person wants a certain desire to be his *will*, that is called a second-order *volition*.
- For Frankfurt, a “person” must have second-order volitions. (Otherwise they’re just a “wanton”.)
- E.g. the unwilling drug addict is a person. He has conflicting first-order desires (he wants to take the drug, and wants not to take it). He also wants the latter desire to be his will.

Wantons

- A wanton has desires, and acts on them, so has some freedom. But, even if he has 2nd order desires, he still doesn't care which of his 1st order desires brings about an action.
 - Young children (and some adults?) are wantons.

Not wontons



Free will

- When you do what you want, you *act* freely, but this isn't enough for free **will**.
 - Even animals have free acts, but they lack free will.

“It is in securing the conformity of his will to his second-order volitions, then, that a person exercises freedom of the **will**. And it is in the discrepancy between his will and his second-order volitions, or in his awareness that their coincidence is not his own doing but only a happy chance, that a person who does not have this freedom feels its lack.”

Free will

- Free will means that:
 - He is free to will what he wants to will
 - He has the will he wants.
 - He has secured “the conformity of his will to his second-order volitions”
- E.g. The unwilling addict does what he wants (no external factors force him) but he still lacks free will. Why?
- Because he isn’t getting the *will* that he wants.
 - He doesn’t want his desire to take the drug to be effective, but it is effective.

Is this all the free will we want?

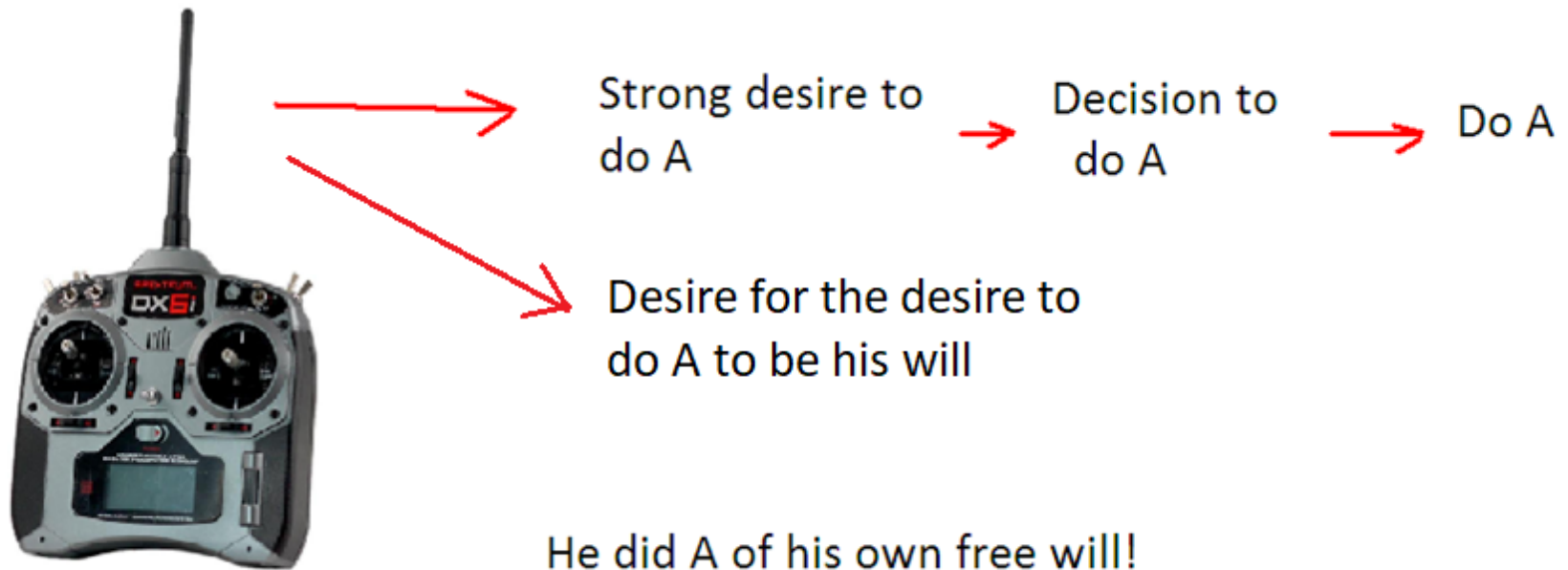
“A person who is free to do what he wants to do may yet not be in a position to have the will he wants. Suppose, however, that he enjoys both freedom of action and freedom of the will. Then he is not only free to do what he wants to do; he is also free to want what he wants to want.

It seems to me that he has, in that case, all the freedom it is possible to desire or to conceive.”

This is compatible with determinism

“My conception of the freedom of the will appears to be neutral with regard to the problem of determinism. It seems conceivable that it should be causally determined that a person is free to want what he wants to want.”

Upgrade the control box?



- The “ingenious physiologist” (being ingenious) has read Frankfurt’s paper and upgraded his control system. He can now induce 2nd order volitions that match the 1st order desires!

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- “It is in securing the conformity of his will to his second-order volitions, then, that a person exercises freedom of the will. And it is in the discrepancy between his will and his second-order volitions, **or in his awareness that their coincidence is not his own doing but only a happy chance**, that a person who does not have this freedom feels its lack.”
- Under what circumstances is their coincidence “his own doing”, rather than due to external causes?