

1 Responsibility and free will

Remember that Chisholm argues that because we have moral responsibility, and because this is incompatible with both determinism and indeterminism, both views must be false.

- "... if a man is responsible for a certain event or a certain state of affairs ... then that event or state or affairs was brought about by some act of his, and the act was something that was in his power either to perform or not to perform."
(Chisholm, 441)
- Accounting for the power to do otherwise is assumed to be necessary for the compatibilist project.

Frankfurt advances a controversial thesis: moral responsibility does not require the power to do otherwise.

The Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP): A person S is morally responsible for performing act A only if S had the power to do not-A.

2 Against PAP

Frankfurt distinguishes *coercion* and *the power to do otherwise*.

- When S is coerced into doing A, we tend to think that S is not morally responsible. Frankfurt argues that what confers moral responsibility is not that S could not have done otherwise.
- His counterexamples are meant to be instances in which S could not have done otherwise, but is still morally responsible for performing A.

Proposed counterexamples to PAP have these two features:

- Person S performs A because of X.
- Person S could not have done otherwise because of (distinct) Y.

"Now consider a third possibility. [Jones] was neither stampeded by the threat nor indifferent to it. The threat impressed him, as it would impress any reasonable man, and he would have submitted to it wholeheartedly if he had not already made a decision that coincided with the one demanded of him. In fact, however, he performed the action in question on the basis of the decision he had made before the threat was issued. When he acted, he was not actually motivated by the threat but solely by the considerations that had originally commended the action to him. It was not the threat that led him to act, though it would have done so if he had not already provided himself with sufficient motive for performing the action in question." (Frankfurt, 474)

Response: Jones could have done otherwise; he could have resisted the threat and suffered the penalties.

- Frankfurt: Alter the example so that Black will ensure that Jones performs the act no matter what Jones sets out to do.
- “Given any conditions under which it will be maintained that [Jones] cannot do otherwise, in other words, let Black bring it about that those conditions prevail.” (Frankfurt, 476)
- In fact, it seems that whether or not Jones could have done otherwise is independent of his actually performs the act.

“We often do ... excuse people for what they have done when they tell us (and we believe them) that they could not have done otherwise. But this is because we assume that what they tell us serves to explain why they did what they did.” (Frankfurt, 478)

Revised PAP: A person S is not morally responsible for performing act A if S performed A only because S did not have the power to do not-A.

3 Implications for compatibilism?

“... he will not be morally responsible for what he has done if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise, even if what he did was something he really wanted to do.” (Frankfurt, 479)