

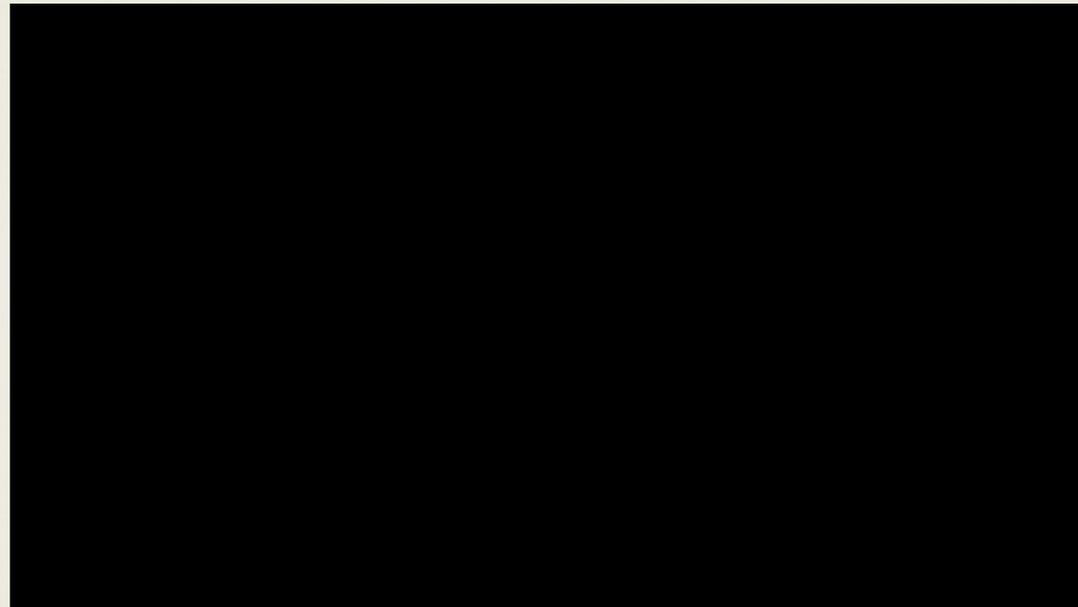
Human Freedom

Encroaching Objectivity?

Nagel's Two Problems

- * **Autonomy:** How is it that we contribute to the direction of the world, even of that part of the world we inhabit?
 - * From the inside, alternative possibilities seem to lie before us; but from the external perspective, things look rather different.
 - * 'The objective view seems to wipe out such autonomy because it admits only one kind of explanation of why something happened—causal explanation—and equates its absence with the absence of any explanation at all' (VN, 115).
- * **Responsibility:** How is it that we are morally responsible for our actions if those actions blend into a broader spatiotemporal pattern over which we have no control at all?
 - * We hold people responsible (we praise them and blame them), thinking that they might have done other than they in fact did do. Yet under what set of assumptions can we offer them any such ability?
 - * 'The radically external standpoint that produces the philosophical problem of responsibility seems to make every alternative ineligible' (VN, 122).

A Domino Universe



An Inconsistent Triad

1. Every event has a cause.
2. If every event has a cause, we are not free.
3. We are free.

Causal Determinism (CD)

- * Let causal determinism be the thesis that every event has a cause.
 - * By *cause* let us understand an *antecedent sufficient condition*.
 - * To illustrate: if domino D^1 falls, then domino D^2 will fall; if D^2 then, D^3 ; if, D^3 , then D^4 ; and so on.
 - * D^1 falling is sufficient for D^2 falling, which in turn is sufficient for D^3 falling. . .
- * One thought: if CD, then our universe is a line of dominoes, each event necessitating the one which follows.

Why suppose CD?

- * Nothing can change or alter unless it's *made* to change or alter.
 - * Nothing, in fact, *simply happens*.
 - * Aristotelian formulation: only something actual can make something potentially ϕ become actually ϕ .
 - * Thus, a grey fence is potentially white. Only something actual—e.g., a painter painting it with white paint—can make it actually white.
- * Further, CD seems to be a presupposition of all scientific and rational inquiry: to understand something is in part just to know what brought it about.
 - * To come to understand, e.g., what illness an afflicted group suffers, one must come to know how it is they came to be ill—to know, that is, what caused their illness.
- * Finally, one might argue: if not CD, then any given event might be uncaused; but that result is intolerable; so, CD must be accepted, at least as an unavoidable hypothesis.

CD and Agency

- * If CD, then every event is necessitated; and if every event is necessitated, then it is made to happen.
 - * Yes, one might say, 'tis I myself who makes certain events happen: that is what happens when I freely choose one alternative among others.
 - * Yet, a choosing is itself an event. So, if CD, that event too is made to happen.
 - * If I choose to go left rather than right, then, if CD, something caused me to choose to go left rather than right. So, going left was necessitated.
 - * If it was necessitated, I was not the agent of my own choice; I was determined.
 - * So, my choice was a choice in name only.

More Expansively

1. If CD, then every event has a cause.
2. If every event has a cause, then the chain of events in which my actions are implicated is but part of a causal chain extending back to the time before I was born.
3. If so, then I have no control over what I do.
4. If I have not control over what I do, I am hardly an agent.
5. So, if CD, I am not an agent at all.

* In sum, if CD, we are but dominoes falling in a row; but no domino is an agent.

Why suppose we are agents?

- * One perfectly neutral reason: we experience ourselves as agents.
 - * Let us call this the *phenomenology of agency*.
- * It is difficult to know how we might come to regard ourselves as other than agents.
 - * Perhaps this is something we might come to acknowledge, but even then it could not be, even in its own terms, anything we could decide or choose to acknowledge.

Our Problem

- * So, we have a problem: (1), (2), and (3) all seem well-motivated.
- * Yet (evidently) at least one of them must be false.
 - * Our first question: which?

Maybe (3)?

- * Might we be non-agents?
- * Consider a version of the Dilemma of Determinism:
 1. Either determinism is true or it is not true.
 2. If determinism is true, then we are not agents.
 3. If determinism is not true, then we are not agents.
 4. So, we are not agents .

DD 1

- * This is evidently analytic.
- * Either universal causal determinism (CD) obtains or it does not obtain.
 - * That is, either every event is caused or at least one event is uncaused.

DD 2

1. We could have done otherwise with respect to a only if it was in our power to refrain from a .
2. If determinism is true, then there are causal chains stretching back to the times before our births which eventuate in our doing a .
3. We are powerless to effect changes in events which occurred before we were born.
4. Hence, if determinism is true, we could not have done otherwise with respect to a .

DD 3

1. If determinism is false, then there is at least one uncaused event a .
2. We are free with respect to a only if a is not random.
3. If an event a is uncaused, then a is random.
4. Hence, we are free with respect to a only if a is caused.
5. Hence, if determinism is false, then we are not agents.

Why hold others responsible?

* All practices of praise and blame seem to presuppose agency.

* This suggests a simple argument:

1. We are right to praise/blame *S* with respect to *a* only if *S* is responsible for *a*.
2. *S* is responsible for *a* only if *S* could have done otherwise with respect to *a*.
3. So, we are right to praise/blame *S* with respect to *a* only if *S* could have done otherwise with respect to *a*.
4. *S* never could have done otherwise with respect to *a*.
5. So, we are never right to praise/blame *S* with respect to *a*.

Could have done otherwise?

- * We have been supposing: S is free with respect to action a only if S could have done otherwise (e.g. S could have done b instead of a or simply refrained from doing a and done nothing).
- * So, here is an argument:
 1. S is an free with respect to a only if S could have done otherwise.
 2. If CD, then S can never do other than a (for any randomly selected a).
 3. So, if CD, then S is not free.

Challenges to (1) and (2)

- * (1) S is free with respect to a only if S could have done otherwise.
 - * Suppose you go to the theatre and see an engaging play. You are wholly engaged and have no interest in leaving. Still, it is possible that you have been locked in the theatre for the last entire second act without your knowing it.
 - * If so, you could not have left.
 - * Still, that is consistent with your having remained here freely.
- * (2) If CD, then S can never do other than a (for any randomly selected a).
 - * Even if S was caused to do a , it does not follow that it was necessary that S did a .
 - * Consider an ancient fortune teller, correctly predicting that you would have to hold class virtually today. Does it follow *from that fact alone* that you could not have done otherwise?

On Behalf of Compatibilism

- * It's not really necessary for S's being free that S could have done otherwise.
- * What really matters is:
 - * . . .that are not pathologically overwhelmed by an irresistible desire (Hume).
 - * . . .that we have a suitable second-order desire (Frankfurt).
 - * . . .that we are reason-responsive (Fischer).
 - * . . .we can grasp and apply moral reasons in particular (Wallace).

Against Compatibilism

- * The Consequence Argument:

- * ‘If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequence of laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it's not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us’ —Van Inwagen (1983, 56)

Do these suffice?

* Four cases against compatibilism:

1. A team of neuroscientists control Prof. Plum as if she were a puppet, using implanted electrodes and radio technology.
 - * Presumably Prof. Plum, who meets all of the compatibilist's conditions for freedom (suitable second-order desires, stable character, is reason-responsive, etc.) is manifestly not free.
2. A team of neuroscientists program Prof. Plum at birth to act as they wish her to act, again using implants and so forth; she does so.
 - * Presumably Prof. Plum is not free. The same conditions apply, except that they're a bit removed in time.
3. Prof. Plum is conditioned from birth to behave a certain way, without electrodes or technology, but successfully: she behaves as determined.
 - * Not as obvious as (1) and (2), but here's the challenge: the only difference seems a difference of implementation. So, if she not free in scenarios (1) and (2), neither is she free in (3).
4. CD is true of the universe in which Prof. Plum lives.