



Determinism with Deliberation

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fixed — number of such units: physically distinguished parts homogeneous and continuous in themselves.

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DETERMINISM WITH DELIBERATION

By PHILIP PETTIT

PETER VAN INWAGEN writes:

In my view, if someone deliberates about whether to do A or to do B, it follows that his behaviour manifests a belief that it is possible for him to do A — that he can do A, that he has it within his power to do A — and a belief that it is possible to do B. Someone's trying to decide which of two books to buy manifests a belief with respect to each of those books that it is possible for him to buy it.¹

If you are an incompatibilist about the possibility in question, or at least an incompatibilist determinist, then you may well worry about this claim. It would commit you to the view that to deliberate is to manifest a belief, or a belief which entails a belief, that is inconsistent with the belief in determinism: the offending belief is that for every option considered in deliberation that option is physically possible, being compatible with the laws of

¹ Peter Van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 155.

nature and the actual past. But I wish to show that even if you are an incompatibilist you need not worry. The claim is almost certainly false.² Van Inwagen appeals to intuition in support of his claim and I have a plausible hypothesis which would undermine that appeal.

Van Inwagen's intuition is that if I deliberate between certain incompatible options, it follows that I believe of each of those options that it is possible. Let the options be described as ' $O_1, O_2 \dots O_n$ ', where each option is a proposition of the form 'I do A', and let 'B' stand for 'I believe'. Symbolically, the intuition might be expressed then as follows: that for any option O_i , and for any world where I deliberate about O_i , at that world

B Poss O_i ; i.e., B Not Nec Not O_i .

I believe that a different intuition certainly is sound: viz., that if I deliberate between such options then for any option O_i , it follows that I do not believe – I fail to believe – that it is necessarily the case that not O_i . The intuition differs from Van Inwagen's only in the position of the negation operator. For any option O_i , and for any world where I deliberate about O_i , at that world

Not B Nec Not O_i .

Van Inwagen's intuition is suspect. We can imagine an incompatibilist determinist who continues to deliberate between O_1 and O_2 , despite admitting that in his sense one of these options is impossible. He may say that he does not know which is the impossible option and that he is happy about deliberating because it raises the probability that the option he eventually chooses – the only possible one, as it happens – will satisfy his desires.

The intuition I put forward is not suspect in the same way. The determinist in our example can readily deny both that he believes that it is possible that O_1 and that he believes that it is possible that O_2 : he will say that he does not know which is possible and that he is suspending belief about the possibility or impossibility of each. But he cannot deny that he fails to believe that it is impossible that O_1 and that he fails to believe that it is impossible that O_2 . After all, if he believed that either was impossible he could not treat it as an option inviting deliberation.

Given this position, I hypothesize that if Van Inwagen's intuition seems compelling, that is only because it is confused with the one I offer. The hypothesis is plausible, since the only difference between the intuitions arises from the position of the negation operator. It is also attractive, for absent other troublesome arguments, it would allow incompatibilist determinists to endorse the

² If Van Inwagen is right, I also have to say that 'all philosophers who have thought about deliberation' (p. 154) are mistaken.

beliefs manifested, and the beliefs entailed by the beliefs manifested, in deliberations.³

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³ I am grateful to David Braddon-Mitchell, Peter Van Inwagen and Jack Smart for helpful comments.

DENYING MORAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES

By BRUCE WALLER

INITIALLY the hard determinist denial of moral responsibility seems distinctive and full-blooded: no one deserves blame, credit, special treatment; punishment and reward are basically unfair, since one's character and behaviour result from forces beyond one's control. Such strong assertions herald a radically new approach to problems of reward and punishment and just distribution. But gradually the radical edge is dulled down by social policy considerations: no one deserves punishment, but we must protect society from criminals, and thus offenders may have to be isolated from society (imprisoned) and (regretfully) perhaps punished to improve them and deter others; and no one deserves reward, but reward is an effective motivator, so those who work hard and deliver the goods must continue to be rewarded. The policies proposed by hard determinists become practically indistinguishable from the policies advocated by those (compatibilists and libertarians) who champion moral responsibility. The fervent denial of moral responsibility apparently degenerates into petulant insistence on a difference that makes no difference.

But in fact the denial of moral responsibility is a significant moral assertion, with important practical implications. Its significance has been blunted by inadequate knowledge of the causes and control of human behaviour. The hard determinist denial of moral responsibility is a case of ethical insight ('all are equal in deserts') outstripping scientific development, of ethical advances awaiting improvements in psychology. No matter what view is held of moral responsibility and the desert of punishment and reward, so long as rewarding virtue and punishing vice are the most effective means of shaping behaviour then such practices remain in effect. Those who regard moral responsibility as genuine and those who think it a necessary fiction wind up advocating