

REASON & COMPATIBILISM

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1 Reason

1. The faculty of “mediate” inference
2. Mediate inference as the activity through which one comprehends the material connection of (the truth of) one judgment with another
3. Comprehension as the activity of grasping how one thing is conditioned (necessitated) by another
4. In mediate inference conditioning relations are represented by means of the representation of laws (i.e. “principles”) which stand as the “conditions” of the conclusion of a rational inference
5. Reasoning is either practical or theoretical
 - *Theoretical* reasoning is always reasoning *from* some given actuality, for the purpose of explaining it (i.e. articulating its condition)
 - *Practical* reasoning is always reasoning *to* an actuality as its condition; practical reasoning thus aims at *production* rather than (or in addition to) *explanation*

2 Practical Reason & The Will

The Will (der Wille): The capacity (or its law) through which choice determines its activity

The Power of Choice (die Willkür): The capacity to be, through one’s representation and as one pleases, the cause/ground of some actuality (e.g. object or state of affairs)¹

- Choice is an *essentially* self-conscious form of efficacious representation
- Non-rational beings can make choices, but these are not self-conscious, and they are controlled by the “will of nature”^{2,3}
- Kant is addressing the issue of a will *in general*, so the laws in question are *objective* laws, not *subjective* maxims
- The will is a *capacity*, and as such exists even when not exercised, or exercised appropriately (i.e. in conformity with a law)
- Two kinds of rational will
 1. *Holy will*: a will which *always* acts in conformity with reason/rational law
 2. *Finite (human) will*: a will exposed to subjective and non-rational (sensible) incentives
 - Only finite wills have imperatives that apply to them⁴

¹ The capacity for desiring in accordance with concepts, insofar as the ground determining it to action lies within itself and not in its object, is called the capacity for *doing or refraining from doing as one pleases*. Insofar as it is joined with one’s consciousness of the capacity to bring about its object by one’s action it is called the capacity for *choice*; if it is not joined with this consciousness its act is called a *wish*. The capacity for desire whose inner determining ground, hence even what pleases it, lies within the subject’s reason is called the *will*. The will is therefore the capacity for desire considered not so much in relation to action (as the capacity for choice is) but rather in relation to the ground determining choice to action. (MM 6:213)

² Freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the power of choice from necessitation by impulses of sensibility. For a power of choice is sensible insofar as it is pathologically affected (through moving-causes of sensibility); it is called an animal power of choice (*arbitrium brutum*) if it can be pathologically necessitated. The human power of choice is indeed an *arbitrium sensitivum*, yet not *brutum* but *liberum* because sensibility does not render its action necessary, but in the human being there is a faculty of determining oneself from oneself, independently of necessitation by sensible impulses (A533-4/B561-2; see also *Metaphysik L₁* 28:255 (c. 1778–1781); *Metaphysik Mrongovius* 29:896 (c. 1782/3); *Metaphysik L₂* 28:589 (c. 1790); MM 6:213)

³ Animals have a will, though they do not have their own will but rather the will of nature [*den Willen der Natur*] (*Naturrecht Feyerabend* 27:1320 (1784))

⁴ The representation of an objective principle in so far as it is necessitating for a will is called a command (of reason), and the formula of the command is called IMPERATIVE. All imperatives are expressed by an ought, and by this indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will that according to its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by it (a necessitation). (4:413)

2.1 Imperatives

- Imperatives are principles (representations of laws) that have normative force for an agent
 - In what sense ‘normative force’?
 - * phenomenological (feeling of compulsion or “necessitation”)
 - * favoring/representing as good⁵

Hypothetical Imperative: command to do something whose value is conditioned by its status as a means to some further end, which is also willed

- In virtue of willing some end, Kant thinks it is *analytic* that one wills the means to that end⁶

Categorical Imperative: command to do something whose value is unconditional – i.e. whose value is an end in itself

- A categorical imperative is synthetic a priori since we experience it as a command, which is not entailed simply by the concept of a rational (holy) will as such⁷

2.2 The Problem of Evil/Irrationality

- How is it possible to freely (and so imputably) act against the rational law (i.e. act irrationally)?
 - Kant’s considered position is that evil/irrational acts are not the positive result of our capacity to act irrationally, but rather an *incapacity* to do what is good/rational⁸
 - But how can imputability for irrational actions be founded on an incapacity?⁹
 1. Authorship of an action, necessary for imputability, requires that one play a particular “spontaneous” causal role in the generation of the action
 2. In irrational action one fails to play a spontaneous causal role with respect to the action
 3. ∴ Irrational action cannot be imputed to an agent
- R₁: An act A is imputable just in case it is brought about by an agent that possesses a spontaneous capacity S, whether or not S is causally productive of A
 - This seems too strong, for it makes *all* actions of a rational being imputable
- R₂: An act A is imputable just in case it involves an exercise of a spontaneous capacity S, whether or not S is successful in its exercise

⁵ Practical good, however, is that which determines the will by means of representations of reason, hence not by subjective causes but objectively, that is, from grounds that are valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the *agreeable*, as that which influences the will only by means of feeling from merely subjective causes, which hold only for the senses of this or that one, and not as a principle of reason, which holds for everyone (GII, 4:413)

⁶ Whoever wills the end also wills (in so far as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the indispensably necessary means to it that is in his control. As far as willing is concerned, this proposition is analytic; for in the willing of an object, as my effect, my causality is already thought, as an acting cause, i.e. the use of means, and the imperative already extracts the concept of actions necessary to this end from the concept of a willing of this end (GII, 4:417)

⁷ Without a presupposed condition from any inclination, I connect the deed with the will a priori, and hence necessarily (though only objectively, i.e. under the idea of a reason that has complete control over all subjective motives). This is therefore a practical proposition that does not derive the willing of an action analytically from willing another that is already presupposed (for we have no such perfect will), but connects it immediately with the concept of the will of a rational being, as something that is not contained in it. (GII, 4:420, note)

⁸ But freedom of choice cannot be defined – as some have tried to define it – as the capacity to make a choice for or against the law (*libertas indifferentiae*)... Only freedom in relation to the internal lawgiving of reason is really a capacity; the possibility of deviating from it is an incapacity. How can that capacity be defined by [*erklärt aus*] this incapacity? It would be a definition that added to the practical concept the exercise of it, as this is taught by experience, a hybrid definition [*Bastarderklärung*] (*definitio hybrida*) that puts the concept in a false light. (MM 6:226)

⁹ An action is called a deed insofar as it comes under obligatory laws and hence insofar as the subject, in doing it, is considered in terms of the freedom of his choice. By such an action the agent is regarded as the author of its effect, and this, together with the action itself, can be imputed to him, if one is previously acquainted with the law by virtue of which an obligation rests on these. (MM 6:223)

3 Kant's Compatibilism?

3.1 Textual Evidence for Compatibilism?

1. The Canon of Pure Reason^{10,11}
2. The Critique of Practical Reason¹²
3. The Review of Schulz¹³
4. Groundwork III^{14,15}

QUESTION: To what extent does the evidence merely show that Kant construed *agnosticism* about transcendental freedom as compatible with acceptance of practical freedom rather than the *compatibility* of belief in freedom and determinism?

3.2 Deliberation & Two Standpoints

- Deliberation is an activity according to which one must proceed “as if” one is “free” in weighing reasons for believing or intending

Occasionally one meets the objection that the freedom that we discover in reflection is a delusion. Human actions are causally determined. The philosopher's bugbear, the Scientific World View, threatens once more to deprive us of something we value. When desire calls we think we can take it or leave it, but in fact someone could have predicted exactly what we will do. But how can this be a problem? The afternoon stretches before me, and I must decide whether to work or to play. Suppose first that *you can predict* which one I am going to do. That has no effect on me at all: I must still decide what to do. I am tempted to play but worried about work, and I must decide the case on its merits. Suppose next *I believe that you can predict* which one I'm going to do. You've done it often enough before. What then? I am tempted by play but worried about work, and I must decide the case on its merits. [...] The freedom discovered in reflection is not a theoretical property which can also be seen by scientists considering the agent's deliberations third-personally and from outside. It is from within the deliberative perspective that we see our desires as providing suggestions which we may take or leave. (Korsgaard 1996b, 94-6)

1. Does deliberation presume that the future is genuinely (i.e. metaphysically) “open” or just that it is not predictable (i.e. it is merely epistemically open)?
2. Does deliberation presume that one has the ability to do or refrain (i.e. that one has leeway) from doing the action being deliberated upon?
3. Does deliberation presume that one's deliberations are causally efficacious? If so in what sense?
4. Are there distinct (practical vs. theoretical) “standpoints” from which one can both believe and deny the truth of determinism without irrationality?¹⁶
 - What constitutes a “standpoint”?
 - Does the existence of different standpoints allow for contradictory beliefs?

¹⁰ for the present I will use the concept of freedom only in a practical sense and set aside, as having been dealt with above, the transcendental signification of the concept, which cannot be empirically presupposed as an explanatory ground of the appearances but is rather itself a problem for reason.

¹¹ But whether in these actions, through which it prescribes laws, reason is not itself determined by further influences...in the practical sphere this does not concern us, since in the first instance we ask of reason only a **precept** for conduct; it is rather a merely speculative question, which we can set aside as long as our aim is directed to action or omission. ... The question about transcendental freedom concerns merely speculative knowledge, which we can set aside as quite indifferent if we are concerned with what is practical (A803-4/B831-2)

¹² One can therefore grant that if it were possible for us to have such deep insight into a human being's cast of mind...that we would know every incentive to action...as well as all the external occasions affecting them, we could calculate a human being's conduct for the future with as much certainty as a lunar or solar eclipse and could nevertheless maintain that the human being's conduct is free. (5:99)

¹³ the practical concept of freedom has nothing to do with the speculative concept, which is abandoned entirely to metaphysicians. For I can be quite indifferent as to the origin of my state in which I am now to act; I ask only what I now have to do, and then freedom is a necessary practical presupposition and an idea under which alone I can regard commands of reason as valid. (8:13)

¹⁴ I say now: every being that cannot act otherwise than *under the idea of freedom* is just because of that really free in a practical respect, that is, all laws that are inseparably bound up with freedom hold for him just as if his will had been validly pronounced free also in itself and in theoretical philosophy (GIII 4:448)

¹⁵ I follow this route - that of assuming freedom, sufficiently for our purpose, only as laid down by rational beings merely *in idea* as a ground for their actions - so that I need not be bound to prove freedom in its theoretical respect as well. For even if the latter is left unsettled, still the same laws hold for a being that cannot act otherwise than under the idea of its own freedom as would bind a being that was actually free. Thus we can escape here from the burden that weighs upon theory. (4:448, note)

¹⁶ The deliberating agent, employing reason practically, views the world as it were from a noumenal standpoint, as an expression of the wills of God and other rational agents. [...] The theorizing spectator, on the other hand, views the world as phenomena, mechanistic, and fully determined. The interests of morality demand a different conceptual organization of the world than those of theoretical explanation (Korsgaard 1989, 37).

3.3 *Reasons to Reject a Compatibilist Reading*

1. Kant explicitly rejects the claim that freedom is compatible with our reason being temporally determined in its activity as a “wretched subterfuge” and nothing more than the “freedom of a turnspit”¹⁷
2. Compatibilist readings are unable to explain how Kant’s conception of spontaneity is compatible with temporal determination
 - Presumes that Kant has a non-question-begging argument for why time is a feature of receptivity rather than spontaneity
3. Compatibilist readings of Kant fail to explain why he might have thought that only Transcendental Idealism could provide the basis for freedom of action/rationality

References & Further Reading

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¹⁷ It is a wretched subterfuge to seek to evade this by saying that the kind of determining grounds of his causality in accordance with natural law agrees with a comparative concept of freedom ... Some still let themselves be put off by this subterfuge and so think they have solved, with a little quibbling about words, that difficult problem on the solution of which millennia have worked in vain and which can therefore hardly be found so completely on the surface. That is to say, in the question about that freedom which must be put at the basis of all moral laws and the imputation appropriate to them, it does not matter whether the causality determined in accordance with a natural law is necessary through determining grounds lying *within* the subject or *outside* him, or in the first case whether these determining grounds are instinctive or thought by reason; if, as is admitted by these men themselves, these determining representations have the ground of their existence in time and indeed in the *antecedent state* ... if the freedom of our will were none other than the latter (say, psychological and comparative but not also transcendental, i.e., absolute), then it would at bottom be nothing better than the freedom of a turnspit, which, when once it is wound up, also accomplishes its movements of itself. (CPrR 5:95-7)

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