

Week 10: Freedom of the will

1. Two senses of 'freedom'

- Freedom in the political sense; freedom from interference by others; or freedom to do what one wants.
- Freedom in the metaphysical sense: 'could have done otherwise'.

2. Freedom as opposed to what?

- Determinism
- Not free

3. Kant's notion of freedom and The Third Antinomy (A444/B472 ff.) Thesis and Antithesis

Thesis: >Causality according to the laws of nature is not the only causality operating to originate the phenomena of the world. A causality of freedom is also necessary=

- Assume (for a RAA) that the only causality is in accordance with laws of nature
- Then >everything which takes place presupposes a preceding state which it invariably follows according to a rule=
- Each cause will then presuppose an antecedent cause
- There will then never be a >first beginning, and consequently no completeness of the series on the side of the causes=
- BUT >the law of nature is ... that nothing takes place without a cause sufficiently determined a priori=
- So the assumption is self-contradictory. Thus we must assume some other kind of causality

Antithesis: >There is no such thing as freedom, but everything in the world happens solely according to the laws of nature=

- Assume (for a RAA) that there is transcendental freedom
- Then there is a >power of absolutely beginning a state= and its consequences
- Thus there will be a spontaneous cause which itself has an absolute beginning
- BUT >every beginning of action presupposes a state of the not yet acting cause=
- Yet the first beginning presupposes an uncaused cause
- So transcendental freedom cannot be met with in experience and is >an empty thought entity=; there can be no such thing

Resolution of the Third Antinomy: Both thesis and antithesis may be true: they are compatible

But:

- Kant does not claim to have shown the reality of freedom - merely its possibility: >causality through freedom is at least not incompatible with nature= (A558/B586)
- However, Kant is not a compatibilist: he rejects the idea that freedom is when causality flows through the agent: this is >no better than the freedom of a turnspit= (CPrR97)

The relevance of the >cosmological= antinomy to an antinomy of agency: Reconciliation through the

two standpoints

- Choice is in some sense >up to us= (free agency). >An absolute spontaneity of cause=: The >act of incorporation= of an incentive into your maxim (R24)
- But choice is causally determined by prior states (causal determinism)

Freedom cannot be a >concept of experience= (G455)

>Reason would overstep all its limits if it took upon itself to explain how pure reason can be practical. ... Freedom, however, is a mere Idea; its objective reality can in no way be exhibited by reference to laws of nature and consequently cannot be exhibited in any possible experience. Thus the Idea of freedom can never admit of full comprehension= (G459; cf G448, 453, 455, CPrR4, 47, 48, 105)

But nevertheless >it holds only as a necessary presupposition of reason in a being who believes himself to be conscious of a will= (G459); >we must presuppose it if we wish to conceive a being as rational and as endowed with consciousness of his causality in regard to actions= (G449)

>Nothing is left but defence - that is, to repel the objections of those who ... declare freedom to be impossible= (G459; cf. G456, CPrR48, 94)

Freedom is thus : not demonstrable; we cannot be acquainted with it; it can only be an Idea of reason; the best we can do is defend its possibility; and >comprehend its incomprehensibility= (G463).

4. Nietzsche against Schopenhauer and Kant.

A Nietzschean >genealogy=. See for example: Twilight of the Idols: AThe Four Great Errors@; Beyond Good and Evil, "9-23. Gay Science, '345, '347. Human, All Too Human, "18, 39, 70, 99, 105-107, 133-135. Daybreak, "115-131. Genealogy of Morals, Essay 1, '13.

- From the consciousness of guilt to freedom: 'the erroneous conclusion' (HAH Section 39).
- Its genealogy: 'the theologian ... making mankind "accountable" in his sense of the word'; 'the doctrine of will has been invented essentially for the purposes of punishment, that is of finding guilty' (Twilight Section 7). For another alternative naturalistic account of conscience (not recognition of the moral law as a fact of reason), see for example, Freud=s the Ego and the Id, and Civilisation and its Discontents. Cf. Scheffler=s Human Morality.
- We can get rid of the feeling: 'The feeling is, moreover, something one can disaccustom oneself to' (HAH Section 39). 'But if the idea of God falls away, so does the feeling of "sin" as a transgression against divine precepts' (HAH Section 133).
- But don't go from the idea that we are not free 'in the superlative metaphysical sense' (BGE Section 21), 'to the contrary of this monstrous conception of "free will": I mean "unfree will", which amounts to a misuse of cause and effect' (ibid.). 'The "unfree will" is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of strong and weak wills' (ibid.).

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