

PHIL 3923H: Honors Colloquium on Free Will  
Prof. Funkhouser  
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Fischer and Ravizza, Chapters 6 & 7

## Chapter 6

### I.

- F&R now turn to the Direct Argument (i.e., one that does not argue from the lack of alternative possibilities) for the incompatibility of causal determinism and moral responsibility.

### II.

- The critical premise for this argument is very similar to the Principle of the Transfer of Powerlessness. But, in place of *power* this principle — the Principle of Transfer of Non-Responsibility (Principle NR) — substitutes *moral responsibility*. (This is also van Inwagen's *Principle B*.)

If causal determinism is true, then there is some state of the world in the distant past *b* that is connected by the laws of nature to any action *A* that one performs in the present. But since no one (alive now) is even partly morally responsible for the state of the world *b* in the distant past, and no one is even partly morally responsible for the laws of nature that lead from *b* to *A*, it follows that no one is even partly morally responsible for any action *A* that is performed in the present. (153)

Note how this differs from the Indirect Arguments.

- F&R rise to van Inwagen's challenge to propose counter-examples to Transfer NR.

### III.

- F&R suggest that perhaps the appeal of Transfer NR is simply that it seems that an agent is not morally responsible for that which is inevitable. But, this line of reasoning was rebutted with respect to the Indirect Arguments.

- The "Avalanche" case on pp. 155–156 is supposed to cast doubt on Transfer NR. Actually, it serves as a counter-example to Transfer NR\*. The only

difference is that Transfer NR\* is specific to one person's moral responsibility. This is a case of preemptive overdetermination

- "Erosion" is just like "Avalanche", but replaces the human counterfactual intervener with natural forces.

- F&R also discuss examples of actions and omissions that also seem to pose counter-examples to Transfer NR.

IV.

- Objection: These are all cases in which the Ensuring Condition does not actually bring about the consequence (action, etc.). So, it is acceptable to allow for moral responsibility in these cases. But determinism provides Ensuring Conditions in the *actual sequence*. F&R still need to come up with a case in which the Ensuring Condition is actually efficacious, and yet we think it is clear that the agent is morally responsible.

V.

- A case of simultaneous overdetermination: "Joint Assassins". This case is supposed to be a counter-example to Transfer NR\*. Here, there is an Ensuring Condition for the mayor's death (Jack's trigger-pulling) that is actually efficacious and for which Sam has no responsibility.

- Consider:

As the cases of simultaneous overdetermination illustrate, what matters is not just *whether* an Ensuring Condition plays a role in the actual sequence, but also *what kind* of role this Condition plays. For example, in the case of "Joint Assassins", even though the other assassin is causally efficacious in the actual sequence, his action neither undermines Sam's free action of shooting the mayor, nor does it interfere with the way in which Sam's action affects the world — the bullet is fired and finds its way to the mayor's body, just as it would have had Jack not been present.  
(163)

VI.

- Q: Why is Transfer valid, but not Transfer NR?

- The presence of an Ensuring Condition (which we have no control over) is sufficient to render us powerless (with respect to the consequences of

that Ensuring Condition), but not devoid of moral responsibility (for those consequences). Frankfurt-type cases were supposed to show this. Transfer concerns regulative control; Transfer NR concerns guidance control.

◦ Check out F&R's analysis of where van Inwagen goes wrong in his examples that purport to support Transfer NR (165–166).

## Chapter 7

### I.

- Recall that guidance control requires a mechanism that is the agent's own and is reasons-responsive. This chapter considers what conditions must be met in order for such a mechanism to count as one's own. F&R argue that this is, in part, an *historical* notion.

### II.

- Distinguish historical and non-historical phenomena.

### III.

- On pp. 173–183, F&R discuss a variety of apparently historical phenomena. I think that a lot of this is too tangential.

◦ On p. 183 they finally turn to the question of whether moral responsibility is also an historical notion. Frankfurt is representative of the alternative, historical camp. This is evident in several of the Frankfurt articles that we already read. F&R remind us of some of the details of Frankfurt's nonhistorical (structural) account of moral responsibility.

◦ Note the interesting, Hume-inspired, comments about character and moral responsibility on p. 186.

### IV.

- Epistemic vs. genuine historicism. A phenomenon is epistemically historical if turning to the past is necessary, but only for all practical purposes (i.e., but not in principle), to discover truths about the present state.

◦ An interesting, but ugly sounding, question: Is love nonfungible? (193)

### V.

- Objection: Perhaps moral responsibility is only epistemically historical.

Thus, scrutiny of an individual's childhood or past experiences can only be useful to responsibility ascriptions if the past is found to have left some trace or shadow on the present, just as in the psychoanalytic context discussed earlier. (195)

- F&R counter with 2 sorts of cases: the drunk driver and hypnosis. The drunk driver is morally responsible for what he does while drunk because he had guidance control over getting into that condition (recall the "tracing" aspect of their theory). And the hypnosis story is supposed to show that responsibility-undermining conditions could bring about the structural conditions that the nonhistorical theorists take to be sufficient for moral responsibility.

- Note their criticisms of Frankfurt's nonhistorical theory, on pp. 198–201.

VI. & VII.

[You can ignore these 2 sections.]