

Facets of Kant's Metaphysics of Freedom

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In this paper, I shall explore some of the key metaphysical ideas at work in Kant's conception of freedom, mainly with regard to his position regarding the so-called "compatibility-question".

I shall explain that Kant has the resources for undercutting the consequence argument developed by Peter van Inwagen.

The consequence argument draws on a plausible notion of determinism according to which what happens in the future is a consequence of what happened in the distant past and the laws of nature. Further premises which suggest that neither the laws of nature nor the distant past are "up to us" so that not being "up to us" gets transferred to what will happen in the future. Given that freedom requires that what happens in the future is - to some extent at least - up to us, the conclusion is that there is no freedom with regard to the future.

As every argument, the consequence argument can be attacked on formal grounds or with regard to the truth of at least one of its premises, and in my opinion the second option can be chosen in this case. Kant will be shown to be a so-called "altered-law compatibilist" according to whom some of the laws of nature could have been different and are up to the agent after all.

The way laws of nature can be said to be up to us needs of course careful qualification and I show that Kant's subscription to Molinism minimally defined provides an important aspect of how this can be rendered intelligible.

According to Molinism minimally defined, there are true *counterfactuals of freedom* about each agent, and these propositions, for all their contingency, are metaphysically basic so that even a God could not change their truth value.

Strikingly, though, an argument structurally similar to that of van Inwagen's has been developed which is supposed to show that Molinism itself undercuts compatibility: according to this argument, an agent has no causal control over the truth of the counterfactuals of freedom and therefore cannot act otherwise.

This argument however falsely presupposes that causal control is the only relevant form of control over the truth value of these propositions. There is also something like counterfactual control according to which an agent has the capacity of doing something so that, were he to do it, a counterfactual of freedom which is in fact true, would be false.

Moreover, the idea of counterfactual control turns out to be helpful in accounting for the kind of capacity a free agent in Kant

has when also being part of nature and as such subject to the actual set of natural laws. Although an agent will act as he or she does as a matter of natural necessity, he nonetheless could do something else even though the alternative will never get actualized. This alternative is just "slumbering" there forever, and this hints at a form of syntagmatic contingency at the heart of Kant's approach.

Finally, I shall look at the implications of Kant's Molinism on his philosophical theology which he upholds as a set of doctrines justified ultimately by practical considerations. Kant is committed to the position that not all possible worlds are creatable worlds. This corollary has important consequences for his position with regard to questions about a final purpose of the world, a topic made prominent again in Arendt's lectures on Kant's political philosophy. In Kant, such a final purpose can only be achieved by human agents.

Kant's position in this regard can be explained by the doctrine of creation situations. While this doctrine is neutral about the metaphysics of modality, my suspicion is that realism about possible worlds is not suitable for Kant's Molinist environment. If there is a possible world in which my counterpart does what I should do, the question arises why God has not rendered this world actual. For a Molinist, God simply cannot do this, because it is me who acts freely. Hence, an actualist position and its conception of transworld-identity at least coheres better with Kant's approach.

There are basically two different accounts of creation situations in the literature, but what they have in common is the idea that the actualization of a world requires the co-operation of the divine subject on the one hand and human subjects on the other so that God's contribution to such an actualization is essentially incomplete. Depending on which counterfactuals of freedom are true about human agents, certain worlds cannot become actual. A creation situation is an account of how all the possible contributions God can make in bringing about the world would be completed by human agents.

Against this background, a number of surprising claims on the part of Kant can be rendered intelligible. One of those claims is his thesis - usually taken to belong to political philosophy - that there will be perpetual peace, a thesis often regarded as overly optimistic by even the most ardent supporters of Kant. It would seem though that Kant's thesis of there being a guarantee of perpetual peace follows from his metaphysical commitments. Since perpetual peace is a necessary condition for the end of creation to be achieved and since we can assume that God only created the world if he knew humans will act in a way consonant with achieving the end of creation, we can conclude that he created the world knowing that perpetual peace will come about.