

## FREE WILL VII

### Taylor

Taylor is a libertarian, at least about our *concept* of free will. (In the closing passage he seems to accept that we might discover that we don't have free will (someone who held that the ordinary concept is not instantiated is an error theorist). In particular, he embraces an agent causal version of libertarianism, which amounts to two theses:

- (i) unlike the event causation that obtains elsewhere in nature (one event causes another event), free acts are caused by agents, i.e. by things, and not by events.
- (ii) when an agent causes a free act to happen, the agent is not caused to act by anything else

(Does Taylor give a convincing argument for these two claims? In particular, whilst (ii) is fairly intuitive, what is the motivation for (i)? Why not simply say that there is an act of an agent deciding, but that act is not caused by anything else? Elsewhere Taylor gives two motivations for (i): any mental state could always be implanted; an argument from deviant causal chains. But neither of these seems convincing.)

A similar account is given by Chisholm in various writings.

### Two kinds of objections

(i) coherence objections: is this account really coherent? Can it explain the way in which free actions are done for a reason? Can it explain how we are responsible for our free actions?

(ii) empirical objections: does the account fit with how we empirically take the world to be? Does it fit with our experience of action.

If the coherence objections can't be answered, then there is no need to consider the empirical objections.

### Clarke

The idea seems to be (although I find it very obscure) that we modify Taylor's account by replacing (ii) with something like:

- (ii\*) when an agent causes a free act to happen, whilst the agent is caused to act by some other cause, that cause does not determine what they do.

The crucial move is to make causation non-deterministic: it is merely probabilistic. (Note though that this doesn't seem to mesh with what is said towards the top of p. 193, where probabilistic accounts are held to fall foul of the same problems.) Clarke keeps (i) from Taylor. Like Taylor, he holds the causal relation to be primitive, but unlike him, Clarke thinks that it is the same relation that obtains in both agent causation and event causation.

