

TWO NECESSITIES. Leibniz's key distinction is between absolute necessity and hypothetical necessity. We may state it thus: 193

- (9-1) a. A proposition P is absolutely necessary ('really, truly' necessary) if not- P leads to a contradiction.
- b. A proposition P is hypothetically necessary (and 'really' contingent) if not- P leads to a contradiction only when combined with some further non-trivial proposition R .

Examples of absolutely necessary propositions include 'The sum of the angles of the triangle is 180° ', 'God exists'. In general, absolute necessity is attached to mathematical/logical truths and divine existence. Among hypothetically necessary propositions there are, 'Paris is the capital of France', 'Napoleon existed', ' $E = mc^2$ '—indeed, every other proposition true in our actual world, but false in some possible world. But why declare these plainly contingent, empirical propositions necessary in some sense? And what is the proposition R that yields that necessity?

Well, events in our world (speaking differently, contingently true propositions) are not *random*. The reason they occur is, ultimately, the Divine choice that initiated the chain of events in accordance with mechanical laws. These laws are also instituted by God and are hypothetically necessary. *Given* the Divine choice (proposition R), all these events are necessary. On the other hand, God's choice itself is not absolutely necessary either. God is not *compelled* (how can He be?) to create the world and its contents the way they are created (or at all!), but chooses to create freely.

FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM. There is a further claim, too (a corollary on the distinction above). Events in the actual world are contingent not simply because they are consequences of God's (free) choice. They are so also because their mutual dependence is not a logical truth: their negation (to speak in linguistic terms) is not resolved, at least by a finite mind, into a contradiction. This, Leibniz says, is a central characteristic of a voluntary, free action. 194

On the other hand: choices *are* determined ('certainly true', as he says). Not only God, but also a perfectly wise person will always choose the best. Less wise people will follow the strongest inclination (possibly a passion). In this way we reconcile freedom (which now means 'freedom from necessity') with determinism, the idea that every event has a 'determining reason'. 194

FOREKNOWLEDGE AND FREEDOM. In the *Letter to Coste* Leibniz reassures us that determinism, strictly speaking, applies to our *present* choices. As for the future choices, they are to a very great extent up to us. That's because we can educate, habituate ourselves to be more or less attentive to certain thoughts and behaviours. 195

Question 1. How does this last claim hold up?

He then turns to foreknowledge: 'The present is big (i.e. pregnant) with the future etc.' Everything in the world is interconnected. We can't discern these connections, including between the present and the future, simply because we are weak in reason and perception. So foreknowledge is a comparatively trivial implication of this metaphysical outlook. 195

But this possibility of Divine foreknowledge, along with the earlier theses about individual essences, would be difficult to reconcile with freedom. A free choice is, at best, an illusion. Leibniz is certainly aware of this tension. Consider this passage: 61

In concurring with our actions, God ordinarily does no more than follow the laws he has established, that is, he continually conserves and produces our being in such a way that thoughts come to us *spontaneously or freely* in the order that the notion pertaining to our individual substance *contains* them, a notion in which they could be *foreseen* from all eternity. Moreover, in virtue of his decree that the will always tend toward the apparent good, expressing or imitating his will in certain particular respects (so that this apparent good always has some truth in it), God determines our will to choose what seems better, without, however, necessitating it. For, absolutely speaking, the will is in a state of

indifference, as opposed to one of necessity, and it has the power to do otherwise or even to suspend its action completely; these two alternatives are possible and remain so. (*DM*, §30, italics added)

How is the choice free if the individual essence already contains them? Could I actually choose an alternative that is *not* contained in the essence? If I couldn't, then the choice is only apparently free. The same question must be asked about foreknowledge, too.

As for the 'apparent good', is God's decree merely that we choose anything that seems good to us (whatever this good is), or that we choose a particular good in the given circumstance? The first alternative leaves ample room for free choice. God, in this picture, is an aloof designer issuing higher-order rules, like 'X will choose any y that appears good to him', without specifying *what* entity X will in fact choose. The particular choices are left at X's discretion—they are chosen freely. But this clashes with the idea of individual essences also determined by God and which are also supposed to determine the person's choices. There may also be a problem with foreknowledge: how would God foresee any of the choices? This last issue may be dealt with theologically by appealing to God's special capacities like being outside of time etc.

Still, Leibniz can't easily think of God as an aloof designer. But even if he were such a designer, how can we say that the will is in a state of indifference? Suppose that, on a given occasion, I prefer this cake to that ice-cream. Then, by God's decree, I *must* choose the cake. This is so, even if we now assume that the cake-preference itself arose in me freely, somehow.

Finally, consider Leibniz's appeal to the distinction between 'inclining' and 'necessitating'. He says that we should educate ourselves to choose well (so that *our* apparent goods are really good. Put together, this seems to mean:

- (9-2) a. To incline X to ϕ : to subject X to higher-order rules of choice where ϕ -ing is one of the alternatives.
- b. To necessitate X to ϕ : to subject X to a lower-order rule where ϕ -ing is the only real alternative.

Plausibly, this is how we ordinarily think of 'inclining'. For example, I want to educate you to be brave. The outcome, I say, will be that you will be 'inclined to act bravely'. That is: you'll be 'disposed' to so act, there will be a good chance that you so act. But it would be strange if I also said that it is already determined that you will be acting bravely, or that I could foresee that you'd be acting bravely.

In other words, if God is no more than a modest educator who puts certain dispositions in us—therefore inclining us—to act in a certain way, free choice is secure. But it is not secure when we also insist that essences include every choice that the person will make, or when we insist that someone (God) can, for this very reason, foresee how the person will act.

TAYLOR: AGAINST SOFT DETERMINISM. Taylor isolates three elements in 'soft determinism':

- (i) All human behaviour is caused and determined.
- (ii) Free actions (inactions) are voluntary actions (inactions) performed without obstacles.
- (iii) Voluntary behaviour is caused by internal states of the agent like volitions, choices, decisions (what Hobbes called generally 'endeavours').

Taylor's objection is straightforward. What of the endeavours themselves? Are they not caused?

Now consider this case: suppose that some enterprising surgeon inserts electrodes in my brain and begins manipulating my endeavours (note that, according to soft determinism, we oughtn't believe in a soul separate from the material body). Then my condition satisfies the requirements of a free agent. But am I free, really? More plausibly, I'm no more than a puppet controlled by external factors.

How can the debate go further? Perhaps we're reaching an impasse. The soft determinist happily concedes that there is no free will, precisely because all our endeavours are caused. But he also claims that with the freedom of action (=no-obstacles-freedom) we have all the freedom there is to have. The objector argues that this is no freedom, fake freedom really. The soft determinist insists that this is how we actually think of freedom when we describe water as 'flowing freely' and a man 'walking free'.

RACHELS: EVIDENCE FOR INCOMPATIBILISM. Clarence Darrow made an intuitive case for the absence of freedom. If your choices are fixed by your character, and if your character traits are fixed by your past history, what is left of the *free* choice? 95

This kind of argument was made already by d'Holbach (notice too the naturalist argument also advanced by d'Holbach). But we need to say something more concrete. 98

Rachels distinguishes between immediate and ultimate causes. Immediate causes are events in the brain. Physiological research shows that our choices, even those that appear *to us* as free choices, may be manipulated by stimulating the brain. A very telling detail is that we produce explanations of our choices *after* they have been made. 98 99

Psychology supplies evidence how more remote causes (I think they are not the 'ultimate' causes that Rachels has in mind) may alter our behaviour. Thus if you are placed in a particular social environment you will behave in accordance with the expectations of your peers, demands of your superiors, or even random, intuitively insignificant factors. But if no such environment was ever created, your behaviour and your choices would have been completely different. This is meant to show that the putative free choices are at least strongly influenced by external factor, even if it seems to the agents that they are completely free.

GENETIC INFLUENCES. What of the ultimate causes that stretch further back into our past history? Here Rachels uses the more recent research in behavioural genetics to show the influence of our genetic makeup. These studies are still in their infancy, but some phenomena have been extensively explored. For example, ASPD, intelligence, and shyness are highly heritable. 105ff

But can we use these facts to dismiss the reality of free will? As Rachels admits, genetic influences aren't determinism, but something 'close to it'. We have 'deep-seated desires' that we can resist with difficulty. Well, that's too close to the traditional Greek outlook that self-control (later to be associated with free will) can dominate desires, but often with difficulty. Even if our 'personalities' can affect behaviour, and even if these personalities are genetically influenced, mightn't free will be *another* factor in our choices? 108 106

There are two different problems with Rachels' invocation of genetic research. On one hand, he should be criticised for not going one step further. Behavioural genetics acknowledges non-genetic sources of our choices and actions, but attributes them to random environmental factors over which neither the subjects, nor the people around them like educators, have any control.

On the other hand, behavioural genetics has nothing to say specifically about individual agents. Its reasoning is statistical at the level of groups. It would be inconsistent with the methodology of this approach to take one individual and say, 'You have no free control over your actions, because the factors determining your choices are X, Y, Z.' I think a more careful argument is needed to apply the statistics of twin studies, for example, to the question of individual choice.

As it stands, Rachels' discussion of behavioural genetics is effective in buttressing Darrow's claim of reduced responsibility. I can't be held at least fully responsible for what I did, if genetic or other factors had a strong influence on me. On the face of it, this doesn't touch on the reality of free will, however diminished its role may be in practical decisions.