

Free Will and Deliberation

Lecture 2: Deliberation-Compatibilism

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Today:

A quick recap of the basic argument for deliberation-incompatibilism.

The deliberation-compatibilist response in two parts:

- (1) The deliberative efficacy condition.
- (2) The epistemic openness condition.

Some notes about the dialectic.

The Basic Argument

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P4: Rationally believing in determinism requires believing that there is only one possible option.

C: Believing in determinism is incompatible with rational deliberation.

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Question: Can anyone think of an objection or response to this claim?

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The main strategy of deliberation-compatibilists has been to explain the cases that deliberation-incompatibilists point to as evidence without implying any incompatibility between deliberation and belief in determinism.

The Two Door Problem

van Inwagen (1983, 154) provides the following very influential example [somewhat modified]:

Imagine that you are in a room with two doors and that you believe one of the doors to be unlocked and the other to be locked and impassable, though you have no idea which is which; then attempt to imagine yourself deliberating about which door to leave by.

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The standard deliberation-compatibilist response is to say that what is missing here is a belief in *deliberative efficacy*.

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But, deliberation-compatibilists say, it is *not* the case that if determinism is true then our deliberation will always be ineffective.

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And I might believe this precisely because I believe that determinism is true and my actions are caused by the beliefs I form about my reasons during deliberation.

To deny this is to mistake being *determined* for being *fated*. And (almost) everyone agrees that rational deliberation is incompatible with believing an act is fated.

Deliberative Efficacy

The exact statement of the deliberative efficacy condition is up for debate, but we will use Pereboom's version as the most developed example:

(DE) In order to rationally deliberate about whether to do A1 or A2... an agent must believe that if as a result of her deliberating about whether to do A1 or A2 she were to judge that it would be best to do A1, then, under normal conditions, she would also, on the basis of this deliberation, do A1; and similarly for A2 (Pereboom 2014, 118-119).

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Question: can anyone give me an objection to the deliberative efficacy condition?

Deliberative Efficacy

Deliberative efficacy is not only endorsed by deliberation-compatibilists.

It is required to make sense of why we cannot deliberate in more day-to-day cases.

For example: I can't deliberate about whether or not to get better from a cold, even though I believe I might or might not get better, because I do not believe my deliberation would be effective in controlling whether or not I get better.

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This is analogous to how the traditional conditional analysis of free will—that one can do X if one would do X if one tried to do X—faces the objection that one may not be able to try to do X.

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What about the deliberation-incompatibilist?

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At a first pass to say that an action is epistemically open for an agent is to say that that action is consistent with all the propositions that the agent justifiably believes.

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2. The agent believes that their deliberation will be effective in determining (perhaps probabilistically) which of $\{A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n\}$ they perform.
3. Any other non-controversial conditions are satisfied.

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The question is whether they are *sufficient* (when combined with other non-controversial requirements).

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For example, *having a beard* is **not** sufficient for *looking like Ned Kelly*.

But *having the exact same facial features as Ned Kelly* is sufficient for *looking like Ned Kelly*.

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3. The belief that the disjunction of all the options is possible.

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Deliberation-incompatibilists claim that the relevant sense is possibility given the laws and facts about the past.

This disagreement is equivalent to the necessary condition debate because possibility given the past and laws, according to the deliberators beliefs, is a subset of epistemic possibility.

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The most common strategy for doing this is to look for cases where:

1. An agent cannot engage in deliberation.
2. All the deliberation-compatibilists conditions are met.
3. The agent does not meet the extra necessary condition.

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If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequences of these things (*including our present acts*) are not up to us (van Inwagen 1983, 16) [emphasis added].

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Question: Can anyone see how a deliberation-compatibilist could respond to this argument?

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Summing Up

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Deliberation-compatibilists claim that rational deliberation only requires epistemic openness and belief in deliberative efficacy, both of which are compatible with belief in determinism.

This debate is young and it is not clear who currently has the upper hand.

Extension: Manipulation Arguments for DI

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They then suggest, by way of a series of cases that each modify the manipulation a small amount, that there is no relevant difference between the manipulation and determinism, and as such that rational deliberation (moral responsibility) must be incompatible with determinism.

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They then suggest, by way of a series of cases that each modify the manipulation a small amount, that there is no relevant difference between the manipulation and determinism, and as such that rational deliberation (moral responsibility) must be incompatible with determinism. (The number of cases is arbitrary.)

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Set up:

Betty is faced with a choice between two buttons. Pressing the left button will get Betty \$1,000,000. Pressing the right button will give oxfam \$1,000,000. Doing *anything* else will burn the money (we will assume Betty is definitely going to press one of the buttons).

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Betty believes there are reasons for keeping the money for herself (it is not always wrong to be egoistic) and that there are reasons for donating the money to oxfam. She has not *yet* formed a judgement about which thing she should, all things considered, do.

Extension: Manipulation Arguments for DI

Case 1:

Betty believes the following. A team of neuroscientists has the ability to manipulate her neural states at any time by radio-like technology. Prior to Betty's deliberation, the neuroscientists have decided arbitrarily (on the basis of a coin toss) to causally affect Betty's imminent decision. As a result, the neuroscientists will manipulate Betty to press (and decide to press) one of the buttons by exerting either an egoism-enhancing or egoism-diminishing momentary influence upon Betty. If they exert a momentary egoism-enhancing influence, then Betty will decide to press the left button. If they exert a momentary egoism-diminishing influence, then Betty will decide to press the right button. Betty does not know which decision the neuroscientists have made.

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Notice that in case 1 Betty satisfies the epistemic openness and deliberative efficacy conditions:

She does not yet know which decision the neuroscientists have made, and hence which decision she will make (though she does believe this is already settled).

She believes that the neuroscientists will determine her decision *by determining how her deliberation goes*, so her decision does depend on her deliberation.

Extension: Manipulation Arguments for DI

Case 2:

Betty believes the following. Long ago, a team of neuroscientists decided arbitrarily (on the basis of a coin toss) which button Betty is to press (and decide to press). As a result, these neuroscientists have programmed Betty at the beginning of her life in such a manner that she will press (and decide to press) one of the buttons, though Betty has no belief about which button the neuroscientists want her to press.

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Case 3:

Betty believes the following. The training practices of Betty's community (which were completed before she developed the ability to prevent or alter these practices) causally determined the nature of her deliberative reasoning processes such that, in conjunction with certain background conditions, Betty is causally determined to press (and decide to press) one of the buttons. Though, Betty has no belief about which button she will in fact press

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Case 4:

Betty believes the following. Everything that happens in the universe is causally determined by its past states together with the laws of nature. Betty is an ordinary human being raised in normal circumstances. As a result, Betty's deliberative reasoning processes, in conjunction with certain background conditions, will causally determine Betty to press (and decide to press) one of the buttons. Though, Betty has no belief about which button she will in fact press.

Question: can anyone suggest a *relevant* difference between any of these cases?

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Question: what about any other objections to the manipulation argument?

Extension: Varieties of Epistemic Openness

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Question: can anyone see a problem with this suggestion.

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The problem is that there are acts which we don't seem to consider options in deliberation, but which we are not certain we will not perform.

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An example from Nelkin: I can't deliberate about whether to jump out the window and float on a sequence of wind gusts, but I'm not certain I can't do this (I just think it is extremely unlikely).

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The problem is that there are acts which we don't seem to consider options in deliberation, but which we are not certain we will not perform.

But it does seem that I cannot deliberate about what I am certain I will not do.

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A second pass: In order to deliberate about an option A, performing A must be consistent with everything the agent knows.

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Question: can anyone see an issue with this suggestion?

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For example: my performing some experiment might be incompatible with a law of nature that I know, but I might not realise. Perhaps, for example, producing a quantum computer of a certain kind is incompatible with Schrodinger's law but I might not notice this.

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But we do want to require that I can't deliberate about what I know is inconsistent with what I know.

Extension: Varieties of Epistemic Openness

Pereboom (2014) again provides a well developed statement of the requirement which satisfies both these requirements:

In order to deliberate rationally among distinct actions $A_1 \dots A_n$, for each A_i , S cannot be certain of the proposition that she will do A_i , nor of the proposition that she will not do A_i ; and either (a) the proposition that she will do A_i is consistent with every proposition that, in the present context, is settled for her, or (b) if it is inconsistent with some such proposition, she cannot believe that it is.

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Question: can anyone see any objections to this version of the epistemic openness condition.

Tutorial Questions

1. Deliberation-incompatibilists are worried about inconsistency, but what is wrong with being inconsistent? Are there any ways that a deliberation-incompatibilist might make inconsistency sound less worrying?
2. So far we have been focusing on determinism, can you make an argument to extend deliberation-incompatibilism to *believing that all future contingents have truth values*?
3. An issue we have not considered is how we would *tell* which sense of possibility is relevant to deliberation. Can you think of any considerations relevant to this question? How might you use these considerations to argue either way about the sense of possibility.
4. How might deliberation-compatibilists respond to the consequence argument? What about the four case manipulation argument?

References

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