

Compatibilism

1. First and Second Order Desires and the Will

“A wants to X” doesn’t have much content apart from context because it is consistent with (p.7):

- (a) The prospect of doing X elicits no sensation or emotional response in A
- (b) A believes he does not want to do X
- (c) A believes that he does not want to X
- (d) A wants to refrain from X-ing
- (e) A wants to do Y and believes it is impossible to do both X and Y
- (f) A does not “really” want to do X
- (g) A would rather die than X

So you can’t predict much about what a person will do just from knowing they want X.

Frankfurt thinks we should distinguish between:

First order desire to X – X refers to an action

Second order desire to X – X refers to a first order desire

The will – the desire or desires which motivate the agent in some action, or those by which the agent will or would be motivated

(The will is identical with one or more first order desires – it is an *effective* desire).

2. Second Order Desires

Two kinds of situation in which A has a second order desire:

- (1) A has the desire to desire to X, but also the desire to refrain from X-ing – the desire they want to have is a desire they want to be unsatisfied. Example: a doctor wants to understand what it’s like to strongly desire an addictive substance. He forms the desire to have that desire (perhaps temporarily) but he doesn’t want such a desire to be satisfied. He doesn’t want the desire to take the drug *to be his will*
- (2) A has the desire to desire to X, *and* he wants the desire to X to be effective. This entails that A already has the desire to X. Example: I want to want to concentrate on my work. This kind of 2nd order desire is called a *second order volition*

Frankfurt thinks that 2nd order volitions are essential to personhood. Wantons have 2nd order desires but no 2nd order volitions. Wantons do not care about their will. Their desires move them to do things but they neither want to be moved by those desires nor prefer to be moved by others. *A wanton is not concerned with the desirability of his desires.*

Example: unwilling addict – has 2 conflicting first order desires – the desire to take the drug and the desire not to take it, but it is the desire *not to take the drug* that she desires to be her will.

Wanton addict – also has conflicting first order desires, but no preference between them.

3. Free Will

Frankfurt thinks that 2nd order volitions are the key to free will.

On one view: an agent acts freely if she does what she wants to do. But Frankfurt thinks, even if there's something right about this as an account of what it is to *act* freely, it doesn't capture the idea that *the will* is free. The freedom to act as one wants to act isn't sufficient for free will.

If freedom of action is roughly the *freedom to do what one wants*, then freedom of will is roughly the *freedom to will what one wants*. This means that with respect to any first order desires, the person is free to make that desire her will, or to make some other desire her will instead.

Free will is exercised when an agent brings her will into conformity with her second order volitions.

Consequence: The unwilling addict's will is not free. Whichever way the unwilling addict acts, she acts according to her *desires*. But her will is not what she wants it to be.

- There can be conflicts among 2nd order desires. If someone fails to identify himself with any of his conflicting first order desires then he is not a person.
- There can be 3rd order desires, etc. Still, when a person identifies herself *decisively* with one of the first order desires that identification "resounds" through all the levels that there are.
- Someone who is free to do what he wants to do and to will what he wants to will has all the freedom it is possible to desire or conceive. All the freedom we could want is compatible with determinism.

4. Frankfurt on Moral Responsibility

Frankfurt denies any straightforward connection between free will and moral responsibility. Being morally responsible, Frankfurt thinks, doesn't entail that you could have had whatever will you wanted to have.

- Example: the willing addict – the willing addict wants to be an addict. In this case, we can imagine, his will is not free because the desire for the drug would be effective even if he didn't want that desire to constitute his will. But when he takes the drug, he takes it freely. Furthermore, even though his will is outside of his control "by his second order desire that his desire for the drug should be effective he has made his will his own." (20).
 - Question: what about the unwilling addict? Frankfurt's view opens the possibility for an account of moral responsibility according to which an agent is morally responsible when she acts freely *and* her first order desires conforms to her higher order desires – in other words she has "made her will her own."

Frankfurt (in other work) also denies the claim that a person is morally responsible for what she does do only if she can do otherwise.

From the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

“Here is a close approximation to the example Frankfurt presented in his original paper:

Jones has resolved to shoot Smith. Black has learned of Jones's plan and wants Jones to shoot Smith. But Black would prefer that Jones shoot Smith on his own. However, concerned that Jones might waver in his resolve to shoot Smith, Black secretly arranges things so that, if Jones should show any sign at all that he will not shoot Smith (something Black has the resources to detect), Black will be able to manipulate Jones in such a way that Jones will shoot Smith. As things transpire, Jones follows through with his plans and shoots Smith for his own reasons. No one else in any way threatened or coerced Jones, offered Jones a bribe, or even suggested that he shoot Smith. Jones shot Smith under his own steam. Black never intervened.

In this example, Jones shot Smith on his own, and did so unencumbered — did so freely. But, given Black's presence in the scenario, Jones could not have done otherwise than shoot Smith.”

So in response to van Inwagen, it's possible to agree that: “If determinism is true, the agent could not have acted otherwise” while still claiming that:

- (a) The agent acted freely (in the sense that she did what she wanted to do)
- (b) The agent acted of her own will (in the sense that the will by which the agent was moved was the will she *wanted* to have, first and second order desires coincide).
- (c) The agent is morally responsible (perhaps because of (a) and (b)).

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