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How to make indeterministic action comprehensible?

Most people in our everyday life believe that they could sometimes freely choose from genuine alternative possibilities for action. Nevertheless, it is rather difficult to explain how they could possibly do something like that. The aim of my research is to render indeterministic action comprehensible so that an agent could have full-blooded control and moral responsibility for it.

First, I need to explain what genuine alternative possibilities are: "The agent has alternative possibilities (or can do otherwise) with respect to A at t in the sense that, at t, the agent can (has the power or ability to) do A and can (has the power or ability to) do otherwise." (Kane 1996, p. 33). For indeterministic universe, it means that the laws of nature and all facts about the world before the action were not enough to predict which alternative possibility the agent will choose. Some philosophers believe that without indeterminism we could not be free and responsible, at least in some sense of freedom or responsibility.

However, there is a number of arguments showing that a genuine indeterminism would rather diminish our responsibility then empower it. One of these arguments, the rollback argument of Peter van Inwagen goes as follows: "Consider an agent, Alice, who is deciding whether to lie. Let us assume her choice is undetermined by the state of the world at t1 and the laws of physics. And let us say she lies at t2. Can this have been a free act? To show that it cannot have been, van Inwagen asks us to consider what would have to be true if, hypothetically, God were to reset the universe to t1 and let events transpire as they may; and if God were to do this many times over. Since Alice's lying is not determined, it would have to be the case that she would lie in some replays and not lie in others. Now, if God were to replay the event enough times, the proportion of replays in which Alice lies to replays in which she tells the truth would almost certainly converge to some definite number. For example, let's say that after 100 replays, she has lied 35 times; after 1000 replays, she has lied 326 times, and after 10000 replays she has lied 3076 times. We would then be confident that the proportion of lies to total cases would settle out to 0.3: she lies in 30% of the cases. But to say that she lies in 30% of the cases is just to say that there is a 30% chance of her lying in any particular case, including some hypothetical next case. And including, indeed, the actual case at hand. Furthermore, if there is a definite objective probability to her lying, then whether she lies in the case at hand is a mere matter of chance: it is as if whether she lies is determined by the flip of a biased coin which has a 30% chance of landing heads. Finally, notice that to reach this conclusion we did not rely on a particular assumption about the source of the indeterminism or the source of its resolution between t1 and t2: regardless of the mechanics of choice, says the argument, an undetermined choice is relevantly like flipping a coin." (Buchak 2013)

This argument vividly illustrates the main problem with indeterministic theories of action, the problem of Luck. I would not argue about the problems of this argument and included it just to make the problem more explicit: If our actions are, in fact, indetermined, why it is not just a matter of luck which alternative possibility we choose? There are three main types of indeterministic theories of action: 1) non-causal (Ginet 1990); 2) event-causal (Kane 1996); 3) agent-causal (O'Connor 2000). All of them have some conceptual resources to deal with the problem of luck, but I think they are not enough because of lacking specific concept of indeterminism appropriate to explain the action. In what follows, I will sketch my "dysfunctional" agent-causal account of free action that I think could escape the problem of luck.

1) There are two basic types of action a) "automatic" (**Type A**); 2) "problematic" (**Type B**);
2) **Type A** happens without deliberation and sometimes even without conscious intention; Examples: crossing legs while sitting without thinking of it, dodging something thrown at your head, all kinds of simple everyday actions we are doing without deliberation or some process of choosing to do them.
3) **Type B** is always preceded by some kind of *uncertainty*, deliberation when the agent is not sure whether and how she should act;
4) **Type A** is **causally determined** by prior events (mental states, character of agent, personality, outer stimulus etc.); The sufficient cause for **Type A** action is formed by prior events which directly produce it without any "delay";
5) **Type B** needs the specific type of causes to exist.
6) All my desires, beliefs, intentions(!), in fact, all possible mental states are not sufficient causes to **Type B** action.
7) **Argument 1** for 6 (short vers.): If there were a sufficient cause I would act in a **Type A** way (by definition of sufficient cause).
8) **Argument 2** for 6 (short vers.): a) There are no mental states always preceding action (both **Type B** and **Type A**). OR b) We could imagine both **Type A** and **Type B** action without any possible prior X, where X is the specific type of mental states (intentions, desires, beliefs etc.)
9) **Wittgenstein's argument**: "When I raise my arm 'voluntarily' I do not use any instrument to bring the movement about. My wish is not such an instrument either." (FI 614) ("Wenn ich meinen Arm "willkürlich" bewege, so bediene ich mich nicht eines Mittels, die Bewegung herbeizuführen. Auch mein Wunsch ist nicht ein solches Mittel"). I think Wittgenstein's argument could work in **Type B** situations because all I need to stop deliberating and act is just to act.
10) If outer stimulus during the deliberation process is immediately followed by action it is **Type A** action;
11) Both **Type A** and **Type B** could be illustrated (to some extent) by the concept of function;
12) **Type A action** function: Input is X (mental states, character of agent, personality, outer stimulus etc.). Output is **Type A** action.
13) **Type B** action is always preceded by something like "multivalued" function case when: Input is X. Output are alternative possibilities showing different courses of action (and motives to follow them) which are expressed by mental states but not by action; This a "problematic" situation when we need to choose something;
14) The core characteristic of **Type B** actions is that they would not happen "by themselves", immediately; I call this specific relation between the agent and **Type B** action "**direct control**".
15) Agent A has **direct control** of some possible **Type B** action X iff all mental states and outer stimulus could not causally produce X;
16) Why is it **direct control**? Because **Type B** action would not happen without some cause directly produced by the agent (problematic situation could not resolve in action by itself);
17) This direct cause could be labeled **"the will"**;
18) **The will** is a direct cause because it has no prior causes but the agent;
19) To act in **Type B** situations an agent always need to will to do what he is doing, because without this cause an agent could not produce **Type B** action;
20) "To will" in 18 means to directly produce **Type B** action by **"the will"**;
21) **The will** produces the **Type B** action directly, not by something else;
22) **The will** is not given phenomenally;

23) **The will** is not an event it doesn't happen;
24) That is why to express **the will** to do **Type B** action is just do to that action (Wittgenstein's argument);
25) The propositional content of **the will** is one of the alternative possibilities, or the aim of chosen action;
26) The propositional content is what distinguish the one **will** from the other **will**;
27) Agent is not caused by something to will (to express **the will**);
28) Basic structure of **Type B** action: Agent **wills** to do X (content of the will) and **the will** cause the **Type B** action;

Actually, in **Type A** situations, agent is directly caused in a functional machine way. In **Type B** situations, agent simply has not enough causes to act. She is undetermined (the past and laws of nature are not enough to cause her to act) so she should and could determine herself "manually" and not by virtue of some already given reasons or motives. In that sense to ask for reasons or for further causes is just to ask for **Type A** situation.

Going back to the problem of luck my guess is that when some action is **Type B** action it is not a problem that the agent could have chosen or acted differently because the causal chain which has led to action contains his will which is directly produced by him and the action could not happen without it. So in Alice case her lying or telling the truth is fully responsible not because of indeterminism, but because of the specific determination which was preceded by indeterminism.

References

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