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## Causes, Laws, and Free Will: Why Determinism Doesn't Matter.

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Vihvelin, Kadri. *Causes, Laws, and Free Will: Why Determinism Doesn't Matter*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 284. \$69.00 (cloth).

Kadri Vihvelin's *Causes, Laws, and Free Will* is a thorough and rigorous discussion of free will as a metaphysical issue. While she counts moral responsibility among the reasons to value free will, her focus is elsewhere—defending the idea that determinism is compatible with the ability to do otherwise than what one actually does. Vihvelin distinguishes and clarifies several perceived threats to the idea that we have free will, zeroing in on the challenge to free will posed by a certain conception of determinism. She meets this challenge by showing that commonsense views about ourselves as agents do not commit us to a libertarian Agent Causation theory and arguing that known arguments for incompatibilism fail. While she claims that refuting incompatibilist arguments is sufficient support for compati-

bilism, she does go on to offer a compatibilist dispositional account of free will as a bundle of abilities.

Vihvelin does a nice job clarifying issues, making careful distinctions, and laying out arguments in ways that elucidate the dialectic. The first two chapters which largely lay the foundation for arguments to follow are among the most illuminating in that regard, in placing the free will debates in a certain context. Despite the title, the book says very little about the nature of causes or laws. No particular accounts of causation or laws of nature are given, nor are they considered to be relevant to the free will debate.

In chapter 1, Vihvelin introduces the question that is the focus of her book: Would determinism rob us of free will? An affirmative answer is defended by the Basic Argument:

1. If determinism is true, then we are never able to do otherwise.
2. If we are never able to do otherwise, we have no free will.
3. Therefore, if determinism is true, we have no free will. (2)

Incompatibilist arguments, such as van Inwagen's Consequence Argument, defend the first premise. Vihvelin says that the main purpose of her book is to refute that premise.

Vihvelin adopts van Inwagen's understanding of determinism as a claim about entailment that holds between statements of law plus statements of particular fact at one time and statements of particular fact at other times. More specifically, determinism is said to be the view that "the laws of nature, together with the state of the universe at any time, entail the state of the universe at all later times" (1). Determinism is distinguished from other theses with which it is sometimes confused, including any view about the laws of nature; the view that past necessitates or fixes the future; ontological theses, such as physicalism or naturalism; principles of universal causation; and fatalism. The worry that we don't have free will because we are physical systems whose future states are causally necessitated by our present states is not one that Vihvelin addresses—unless that circumstance entails determinism which, according to Vihvelin, it does not.

Vihvelin goes on to consider variations on the Basic Argument, she calls Extended Basic Arguments. One version is as follows:

1. If determinism is true, then we are never able to do otherwise.
2. If we are not able to do otherwise, then we are never morally responsible.
3. Therefore, if determinism is true, then we are never morally responsible. (18)

Vihvelin identifies the first premise as the Metaphysical Premise, and the second as the Moral Premise. She notes that most recent compatibilists, those she labels "moral compatibilists," have been interested in refuting the Moral Premise and do not dispute the Metaphysical Premise. By denying the Metaphysical Premise, Vihvelin places herself in a different category, that of "metaphysical compatibilist" (18). Consequently, recent conceptions of compatibilism which exclude metaphysical compatibilism as an option are inadequate.

In chapter 2, Vihvelin distinguishes three questions: the Possibility Question (Is free will possible?), the Determinism Question (Are free will and determinism compossible?), and the Existential Question (Do we have free will?). Beyond distinguishing these questions, she aims to show that we have no good reason to answer no to the Possibility Question. Vihvelin introduces a somewhat unorthodox taxonomy for proponents of various answers to these questions. Those who answer no to the Possibility Question are called ‘impossibilists’, and those who answer yes are called ‘possibilists’. Among the possibilists, those who answer no to the Determinism Question are incompatibilists, and those who answer yes are compatibilists. According to Vihvelin, the Determinism Question only arises for the possibilist. (As is standard, the incompatibilists who answer no to the existence question are hard determinists, while those who answer yes are libertarians.) Impossibilism is said to be more restrictive than incompatibilism, which is more restrictive than compatibilism. In other words, where the impossibilist says that there are no free will worlds, and the incompatibilist says that there are no free will and determinism worlds, the compatibilist allows for both of these kinds of worlds and more. Impossibilism, incompatibilism, and compatibilism are said to exhaust the possible positions. (I would add that libertarians and hard determinists are incompatibilists who disagree about whether the actual world is deterministic, and soft determinists are compatibilist who believe that the actual world is deterministic).

A counterintuitive result of Vihvelin’s taxonomy is that believing free will is incompatible with determinism is insufficient for being an incompatibilist. A position like Pereboom’s “hard incompatibilism,” according to which free will is incompatible with both determinism and indeterminism, is not incompatibilism after all (Derk Pereboom, “Defending Hard Incompatibilism,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29 [2005]: 228–47). In order to be an incompatibilist rather than an impossibilist, one must also believe that the claim ‘someone has free will’ is (a) not self-contradictory, (b) consistent with all necessary truths, and (c) consistent with indeterminism. Also note that Vihvelin’s taxonomy does not distinguish compatibilists like Hobart who think that free will is compatible with determinism but incompatible with indeterminism (R. E. Hobart, “Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable without It,” *Mind* 43 [1934]: 1–27) from compatibilists like Vihvelin who say that the truth of determinism is irrelevant to free will. It is not clear that claims of relative restrictiveness would still hold if such distinctions were also drawn.

Vihvelin goes on to consider fatalist arguments for impossibilism—arguments which assume that there are true propositions about the future. For example, suppose it is true that I will  $\phi$  tomorrow. Necessarily, if it is true that I will  $\phi$  tomorrow, then I will  $\phi$  tomorrow. It seems to follow that, necessarily, I will  $\phi$  tomorrow. Then, it seems that I have no choice about  $\phi$ -ing. However, to reason from the necessity of a conditional to a claim of unconditional necessity is to commit “the fatalist fallacy” (36). Vihvelin goes on to dispute other fatalist arguments which have more subtle flaws.

Another noteworthy contribution of this chapter is Vihvelin’s discussion of the Darrow Argument, which she succinctly encapsulates as follows:

1. We have free will only if we make ourselves.

2. We don't make ourselves.
3. Therefore, we have no free will. (50)

Vihvelin addresses this argument by considering what it could mean to “make yourself” and the impact of each interpretation on the Darrow Argument. According to Garden Variety Self-Making, our actions have some causal impact on our future selves. This is a plausible understanding of “self-making”; however, such an interpretation renders premise 2 false. According to Complete Control Self-Making, we have complete control over the kind of persons we are or will be, and according to Ultimate Control Self-Making we have ultimate control over the kind of person we are or will be. Vihvelin's comment on the resulting versions of the Darrow Argument is that they are arguments for impossibilism. For those who accept such arguments, Vihvelin says “it is unlikely that anything I have to say in this book will convince you” (51). By leaving such arguments unchallenged, it is not clear that this chapter ultimately achieves Vihvelin's earlier-stated goal to show us that we have “no good reason” to be impossibilists (35). She goes on to consider First Cause Self-Making, according to which we are first causes of the acts that help make our later selves. Vihvelin says that since we don't know whether it is metaphysically possible to be first causes, we don't know whether this is an argument for hard determinism or impossibilism.

It is not clear why we would not know what an argument is an argument for, as long as the meaning of the conclusion is not unclear. The conclusion of the argument on all considered interpretations of the Darrow Argument is “we have no free will”—a statement the meaning of which is never questioned. Overall, the question of whether the Darrow Argument is an argument for impossibilism or hard determinism is puzzling. In Vihvelin's terms, the conclusion is an answer to the Existence Question, not an answer to either the Possibility Question or the Determinism Question. Perhaps the argument uses impossibilist premises or reasoning to reach the negative existential conclusion, but that does not make it an argument for impossibilism.

Chapter 3 takes on arguments for Agent Causation—the view that an agent's free actions are not caused by any previous events or states of affairs but by the agent herself. Vihvelin argues that common sense does not support Agent Causation, by elaborating on what she takes to be commonsense beliefs about abilities and choices and showing that nothing about them commits one to indeterminism or Agent Causation. She considers transcendental arguments for Agent Causation and shows them to be unconvincing. Vihvelin goes on to assess a potential problem for Agent Causation—the principle of universal event causation, according to which all events are caused by other events. As a counterexample to this principle, Vihvelin entertains the possibility of a magic wand that causes effects, not because of anything that happens or any properties it acquires. She reasons that, if it is theoretically possible that an object can be a cause, then it is theoretically possible that agents could be causes. However, as Vihvelin points out, it is not clear whether Agent Causation is consistent with the idea that agents act for reasons and that those reasons are causes of their actions.

Another worry about Agent Causation is that it would violate the Independence Condition, according to which a cause and its effect are distinct entities. Arguably, an agent acting is not distinct from the agent herself, so an agent cannot

be a cause of her acting for the same reason that ‘John saying hello’ cannot be a cause of ‘John saying hello loudly’. However, if Vihvelin ultimately wants to support a dispositional account of free action, she should proceed with caution before embracing this argument. Arguably, a disposition is not independent from its manifestation, and that is a reason to think, for example, that solubility is not a cause of dissolving. Perhaps the Independence Condition should be rejected at any rate. The same reasoning used against Agent Causation should lead one to think that the mass of an astronomical body does not causally contribute to the nature of its orbit, since the massive body is not independent of the planetary system it is part of. Vihvelin acknowledges that she has not provided sufficient reasons to think that it is impossible for an agent to be a cause. However, she notes that the Agent-Causal Libertarian has not shown that Agent Causation is empirically plausible, that it is possible only if determinism is false, or that it is required for free will.

While Vihvelin’s primary goal is to defend metaphysical compatibilism, in chapter 4, she takes up a debate about moral compatibilism—in particular Frankfurt’s argument, which is effectively against the Moral Premise of the Extended Basic Argument. Recall that the Moral Premise says that if no one is ever able to do otherwise, then no one is ever morally responsible. This is tantamount to the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP) according to which moral responsibility for some action requires the availability of possible alternatives. Vihvelin argues that Frankfurt’s argument against PAP fails, and consequently he does not succeed at undermining the traditional debate, which, according to Vihvelin, is between the metaphysical compatibilist and the metaphysical incompatibilist over the Metaphysical Premise.

This chapter marks a shift in tone from chapter 1, according to which moral compatibilists and metaphysical compatibilists were described as two kinds of compatibilists, and the mistake of recent free will literature is to neglect the metaphysical-compatibilist option. In fact, Vihvelin says at the outset that “someone can be a metaphysical compatibilist while *also* defending the claims defended by the moral compatibilist” (19). Now in chapter 4, it appears as though the only viable form of compatibilism is metaphysical compatibilism. She suggests that there is no good argument against the Moral Premise of the Extended Basic Argument, and consequently, disputing the Metaphysical Premise is “unavoidable” in the debate over compatibilism. As Vihvelin puts it here “there are no shortcuts to the defense of the claim that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism” (122). So, it seems that a metaphysical compatibilist cannot defend all of the claims defended by the moral compatibilist, although perhaps she can defend his conclusion. Note that Vihvelin also seems to rule out “semi-compatibilism”—the view championed by Fischer that determinism is incompatible with free will but compatible with moral responsibility (John Martin Fischer, *My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006]).

So, why think that Frankfurt’s argument against PAP fails? Frankfurt’s argument involves a counterexample to PAP in which, intuitively, someone could not have done otherwise but is nevertheless morally responsible for his actions. Frankfurt’s familiar story is one in which a Mr. Black is ready to secretly manipulate Jones’s brain to make him kill Smith, but that turns out to be unnecessary, since Jones kills Smith without Black’s intervention (Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate

Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” *Journal of Philosophy* 66 [1969]: 823–39). While Vihvelin’s discussion of this case is complex and subtle, the kernel of her argument is that the intuition that Jones could not have done otherwise is a product of the fatalist fallacy. According to Vihvelin, Frankfurt and a generation of philosophers who followed have made a fallacious inference from the truth of ‘Jones will kill Smith’ to the modal conclusion that Jones cannot do other than kill Smith. Free will theorists have been on “a philosophical dead end” because they have been “taken in by a bad argument” (93).

In chapter 5, Vihvelin aptly presents and responds to several arguments for incompatibilism, including No Forking Paths (if determinism is true, there are no forking paths in life’s journey), No Present Causes (if determinism is true, agents have no causal powers), No Agent Causes (if determinism is true, we are never Agent Causes), No Inner Commander (if determinism is true, agents are not “inner commanders”), and Manipulation Arguments (if determinism is true, we are like manipulated pawns). Perhaps the most challenging incompatibilist argument Vihvelin considers is van Inwagen’s Consequence Argument (Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1983], 56). Vihvelin’s simplified presentation of the argument is as follows:

1. Necessarily, if the laws and the remote past are what they are, then my present actions occur.
2. Necessarily, the laws are what they are.
3. Necessarily, the remote past is what it is.
4. Therefore, necessarily the laws and the remote past are what they are.
5. Therefore, necessarily, my present actions occur. (156)

After considering various formulations and debating the relevant modal inference rules, Vihvelin follows Lewis in construing van Inwagen’s argument as an attempted *reductio* of soft determinism (David Lewis, “Are We Free to Break the Laws?” *Theoria* 47 [1981]: 113–21). If an agent has ordinary abilities, such as an unexercised ability to raise her hand, the argument seems to show that she has extraordinary abilities as well—to change the past or the laws of nature. However, one must distinguish between the counterfactual ‘if I had raised my hand, the past or the laws would have been different’ from ‘if I had raised my hand, I would have thereby caused the past or the laws to be different’ (165). A determinist is committed to the first but can reject the second. Vihvelin’s favored way of accepting the first counterfactual is to keep the past fixed and allow that the closest possible world in which I raise my hand is a world with slightly different laws, or a “local miracle.” In effect, she denies premise 2 of the above formulation: the actual laws of nature are not true in all possible worlds; in fact, they are slightly different in the closest possible world in which I do otherwise (an idea which she expounds in chap. 7).

While Vihvelin claims that chapter 5 completes her defense of compatibilism, in chapter 6, she strengthens her case by presenting her dispositional account of free will. She follows in a tradition of saying that having free will is a matter of having certain abilities but adds that to have an ability is to have a bundle of dispositions. More specifically, these abilities are “narrow abilities,” where a nar-

row ability to do x is an intrinsic disposition to do x in response to the stimulus of trying to do x (175). The bundle is said to include dispositions to form and revise beliefs in response to evidence and argument, to form intentions to act as the causal upshots of one's desires and beliefs about how to achieve those desires, and to deliberate for the purpose of deciding what to do in response to one's intention to make a rational decision about what to do. Vihvelin also adds a particular understanding of dispositions (LCA-PROP), which is a hybrid of Lewis's Revised Conditional Analysis (David Lewis, "Finkish Dispositions," *Philosophical Quarterly* 47 [1997]: 143–58) and Manley and Wasserman's proportionality account of dispositions (David Manley and Ryan Wasserman, "On Linking Dispositions and Conditionals," *Mind* 117 [2008]: 59–84). The balance of the chapter is spent considering and defending against various objections to the dispositional account.

Overall, *Causes, Laws, and Free Will: Why Determinism Doesn't Matter* is a valuable contribution to the free will literature, for at least three reasons. First, it explains and clarifies a number of key positions, arguments, and debates. Second, it illustrates the relevance of metaphysics to these debates. And third, it offers a distinctive dispositional account of free will that improves on earlier ability accounts.

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