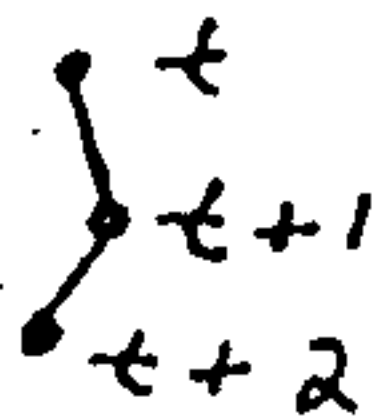


CHOICE AND RISK.

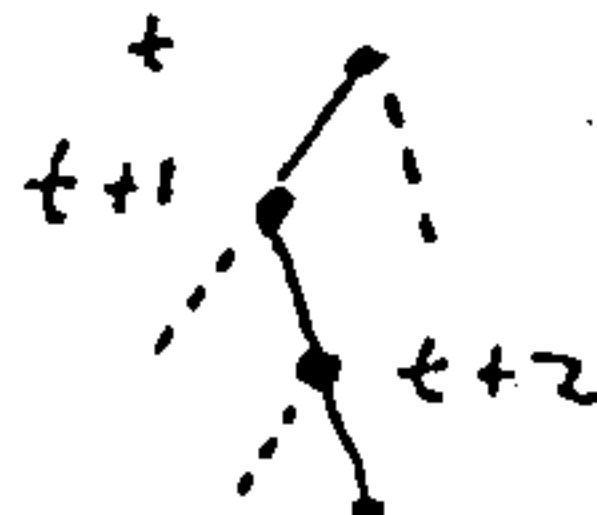
We start by comparing the

"career" of a rock

no branches=  
no choices=  
no alternatives



career of a human



branches=  
choices=  
alternatives

The position of the rock at  $t$ , along with all the forces acting on the rock and the relevant laws of physics, completely determine the position of the rock at  $t+1$ ,  $t+2$ , or any later moment.

The human's position at  $t$ --presumably--does not determine his/her position at later moments. That is because the human's career contains moments of choice, moments at which (at least) two alternatives are really open, really available. That human lives contain moments of choice is generally expressed by saying that human beings are free or have freedom. The concept of freedom can be formalized in what is called the

Metaphysical Freedom Schema (MFS):

$X$  is metaphysically free with respect to an action  $\phi$  at time  $t$  if and only if [if  $X \phi$ 's at  $t$ ,  $X$  had it within his power, or was able, to refrain from  $\phi$ -ing at  $t$ ; and if  $X$  does not  $\phi$  at  $t$ ,  $X$  had it within his power, or was able, to  $\phi$  at  $t$ ].

"if and only if"="just in case"="just when".

" $X$ " stands for the agent, actor, person who does the action.

" $\phi$ " stands for the action.

Note: actions can be described more or less generally: 'reading a book', 'reading a novel', 'reading David Copperfield', 'reading the first Chapter of David Copperfield', etc.

Metaphysical freedom=basic freedom (as contrasted with moral or legal freedom).

I may be metaphysically free to go to a movie at a time when I have an evening class at Baruch, but I am not legally free or morally free to go.

not legally free to  $\phi$  =  $\phi$ -ing is in violation of the law.

not morally free to  $\phi$  =  $\phi$ -ing is in violation of a moral rule.

"Are humans free?" or "Do humans have freedom?" is an imprecise question. As The MFS shows, we have to ask: Which human(s)? When? With respect to what action?

Two ways of not being free:

1. by not doing something you can't do, as not translating a passage from Greek when you know no Greek, or not lifting a table you haven't the strength to lift;

2. by doing something you can't not do, as in the kleptomaniac's case. At the time the kleptomaniac steals kleptomaniacally, he cannot not steal, cannot refrain from stealing.

SAMPLE TEST ITEM:

The kleptomaniac is sometimes not metaphysically free with respect to the action of stealing because he

- (a) is not legally free to steal;
- (b) is not morally free to steal;
- (c) cannot not steal;
- \*(d) cannot not steal when he is stealing kleptomaniacally;
- (e) NONE OF THE ABOVE.

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Not everyone believes we have MF; hence the "presumably" above. People who think that our careers are like the careers of rocks and that our feeling that we make choices is an illusion are called determinists. People who think our lives really do contain moments of choice are called libertarians.

Ordinary experience (how our lives feel to us) and the whole system of responsibility, praise, blame, reward, and punishment support libertarianism. The scientific world view (which assumes that everything that happens is a result--an effect--of causes) supports determinism.

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Three cases of "imperfect" choice:

1. SHEER IGNORANCE. If I am choosing movies and know about A and B, but not C, I obviously cannot choose C; I am not metaphysically free with respect to the action of going to movie C. I could have gone to movie C had I known about it. If I would have gone to C, if only I had known about it, my ignorance has a serious negative effect on my freedom.
2. MISINFORMATION (which comes in degrees). If I reject a movie entitled "Deep Throat" believing it to be about Watergate, and would (or even might) have gone to it had I been correctly informed about it, my misinformation has a serious negative effect on my freedom.
3. IDEOLOGICAL DISTORTION. If I choose to become a nurse rather than a doctor thinking that being a nurse is more appropriate for a woman and might have become a doctor, were I not under the sway of the ideological distortion, my being its victim has a serious negative effect on my freedom.

Ideology = a false or misleading "picture of the world" which distorts my evaluation of outcomes.

Examples: Sexism, Racism.



Samples of distortions

Distortions tend to come in opposing pairs. This supports Aristotle's view that practical wisdom consists in discovering-- and planning a character enabling one to take--a via media (middle way) between opposite extremes.

First Pair

1. "Carpe diem"/"Seize the day" distortions arise when desire is myopic, impatient, opportunistic, when the agent does not (or possibly cannot) wait for better opportunities, when there is too much spending and not enough saving. This distortion rests upon an underestimation of the long run/overestimation of the short run.
2. "Postponement" distortions arise when there is too much waiting for better opportunities, better moments for action, when there is too much saving and not enough spending (gratification, consumption). This distortion rests upon an overestimation of the long run/underestimation of the short run.

Second Pair

3. "Sour grapes" distortions arise when the agent (perhaps in an effort to reduce frustration) deceives himself into thinking that he doesn't want what he can't have. Jon Elster calls this "adaptive preference formation."
4. "Grass is greener" distortions arise when the agent doesn't want what he/she has (just because he/she has it) and wants what he/she doesn't have (just because he/she doesn't have it). Jon Elster calls this "counteradaptive preference formation."

Third Pair

5. "Conformism" distortions arise when the agent wants/doesn't want 0, or to  $\emptyset$ , just because members of his "reference group" want/don't want 0, or to  $\emptyset$ .
6. "Counterconformism"/"Rebelliousness" distortions arise when the agent wants/doesn't want 0, or to  $\emptyset$ , just because members of his "reference group" don't want/want 0, or to  $\emptyset$ .

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As indicated above, these are only samples of distortions; many other pairs (e.g., overoptimism/overpessimism, rashness/cowardice) could be discussed.

To the extent that a person frees himself from these distortions, he/she can be said to have achieved autonomy.