INTRODUCTION: RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION
AND BELIEF

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Research on moral responsibility and the related problem of free will is among the liveliest areas in contemporary philosophy. Traditionally, these problems have been dealt with in connection with actions and decisions. More recently, they have been also extended to beliefs, and this extension has thrown some light over the more traditional concerns. These problems were the central subject of a recent philosophical meeting, the *International Workshop on Belief, Responsibility, and Action*, which took place in Valencia in November 2008. The meeting is in the origin of this special issue of *Philosophical Explorations*. It was a complementary activity of the research project "Belief, responsibility, and action" (HUM2006-04907), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (in collaboration with the FEDER fund of the European Community), the Autonomous Government of the Valencian Community and the University of Valencia. Some of the papers included in this special issue were actually held and discussed during that meeting, while others have been especially written for the occasion. All of their authors, however, were invited speakers to that meeting, and vice versa, with the only exception of S. Cuypers, whose paper does not appear here owing to the deontological code of this journal.

The main contenders in the debate on free action, free will and moral responsibility in contemporary philosophy are the following. Compatibilism is the view that free will, free action and moral responsibility are compatible with determinism. Incompatibilism is the denial of compatibilism. Libertarians are incompatibilists who believe that at least some of us, at times, perform free decisions and actions for which we are responsible. Therefore they deny determinism. Hard determinists are incompatibilists who accept determinism and so hold that there are no free decisions or actions, and no moral responsibility, either. Incompatibilists may also remain agnostic about determinism, though they hold that, if it is true, then hard determinists are right in denying free will and moral responsibility. Hard incompatibilists concur with hard determinists in the contention that free will and moral responsibility are incompatible with determinism, but add that they are also incompatible with indeterminism. They are, then, sceptical about the reality of these properties.

These are the basic positions. In order to have a more complete map, some additional distinctions are needed. Tradition and common sense seem to support the view that an agent decides and acts freely only if she is able to avoid such a decision or action. According to this perspective, freedom involves essentially the availability of alternative possibilities: we are free to do something only if we are also free not to do it, and we did something freely only if we could have avoided doing it. Tradition has it also that freedom, understood this way, namely as the ability to do otherwise, is a requirement on moral responsibility for one's decisions and actions. This contention is known as the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP). In Frankfurt's terms, the principle states that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if she could have done otherwise (cf. Frankfurt 1969). In spite of its apparent plausibility, both views have been questioned, owing especially to the work of Frankfurt's. The basic intuition underlying this questioning can also be found at least as early as in Locke's example of a person who willingly stays within a room while, unbeknownst to her, the exit door is blocked. It seems true to say that she remains in the room freely, even though she could not get out of it. So-called Frankfurt cases, or Frankfurt-like examples, exploit and refine this basic intuition. In their classical form, which includes Frankfurt's own examples, they are conceptually possible situations in which an agent decides to perform, and actually performs, willingly and on the basis of her own reasons, an act that, unbeknownst to her, she would have been caused to perform anyway by a certain factor had she shown some sign that she was not going to decide and perform it on her own. Though the lurking factor ensures that the agent cannot decide or do otherwise, it neither causes nor influences in any way the actual process through which the agent deliberates, decides and acts. She deliberates, decides and acts fully on her own.

Examples of this sort seem to undermine the indicated traditional views of freedom and moral responsibility. It seems true to say that the agent, in such circumstances, decided and acted freely, so that alternative possibilities would not be essential to free decision and action. And, on the other hand, it also seems correct to say that the agent is morally responsible for what she has done, even though she could not have avoided doing it, so that PAP would be false as well.

The dialectics around PAP and Frankfurt cases has become highly complex and subtle (cf. Widerker and McKenna, eds, 2003). Many philosophers (including some of the authors of this issue) nowadays think that PAP is actually false, but it seems fair to say that the question remains widely open. Acceptance of PAP is also supported by

important intuitions. It seems right to think that, if an agent is blameworthy for doing something, she ought not to have done it. And when we say that she ought not to have done that, we imply that she was able not to do it. The assumption that underlies this train of thought is called the "ought implies can" principle. This principle and PAP stand or fall together, but both have strong intuitive support.

An important turning point in the debate about the truth of PAP has been the so-called "dilemma defence" of this principle (Widerker 1995, Ginet 1996). Roughly stated, the dilemma is the following: either determinism is assumed to hold in the actual sequence of Frankfurt cases or it is not. If it is, then alternative possibilities are ruled out, but, understandably enough, incompatibilists will not agree that the agent is morally responsible. If it is not, then the agent may be morally responsible, but then there is no clear reason to think that alternative decisions were not available to her. On either horn, PAP is not refuted.

Frankfurt cases that can escape the dilemma defence have to meet two conditions, namely not to assume determinism in the actual sequence, and not to leave any morally significant alternatives open to the agent. Moreover, the case should raise a clear intuition that the agent is morally responsible for her decision or action. Two authors included in the present issue, David Widerker (2006) and Derk Pereboom (2001, 2003), have famously designed cases that allegedly satisfy these conditions. In their contributions, they defend their examples against recent criticisms.

Rejection of PAP has usually been taken to favour compatibilism about determinism and moral responsibility, for even if determinism were to exclude alternative possibilities, it would not thereby exclude moral responsibility, provided that PAP is false and alternative possibilities are not necessary for moral responsibility. However, rejection (and, of course, acceptance) of PAP is also consistent with incompatibilism. In effect, whereas compatibilism and incompatibilism relate moral responsibility and determinism, PAP relates moral responsibility and alternative possibilities. It does not say anything about determinism. So, it is open to both compatibilists and incompatibilists to reject or to accept PAP. Compatibilists about moral responsibility and determinism who accept PAP are committed to showing how determinism is compatible with alternative possibilities. A traditional way to show this is to hold a conditional analysis of what the ability to do otherwise amounts to. According to this analysis, to say that someone could have done something different from what she did is (roughly) equivalent to saying that she would have done it if she

had decided (wanted, willed) to do so. However, owing to such important criticisms as Chisholm's (1964), conditional analyses do not enjoy a good reputation nowadays. More common for compatibilists about moral responsibility and determinism is to bypass the question whether determinism allows for alternative possibilities by embracing Frankfurt's rejection of PAP. Nevertheless, if one rejects PAP, accepts that free will implies alternative possibilities and also holds that determinism excludes alternative possibilities, then one may embrace semicompatibilism, the position according to which determinism is incompatible with free will, but not with moral responsibility, for free will, understood as freedom to decide and do otherwise, is not required for moral responsibility. This is the official position of John Fischer's (1998), but it can arguably be also attributed to Frankfurt himself. Semicompatibilists may insist, however, that moral responsibility implies freedom in a less demanding sense, namely as the freedom with which agents in Frankfurt situations decide and act. Fischer has called freedom of this sort "guidance control", as opposed to "regulative control", which implies alternative possibilities. For him, moral responsibility requires guidance control, but not regulative control.

Incompatibilists, and especially libertarians, have traditionally been PAP defenders. In fact, it has been acceptance of PAP, together with the rather natural assumption that determinism rules out alternative possibilities, that often has fuelled incompatibilism. Incompatibilists who base their case on these contentions are often called "leeway incompatibilists". But, as we anticipated, incompatibilism about moral responsibility and determinism is consistent with rejection of PAP, for it may be held that determinism rules out moral responsibility by ruling out a condition, different from alternative possibilities, that is also necessary for moral responsibility. This additional condition is usually taken to be a requirement of origination-cum-control and has been called "ultimate responsibility" (Kane), "true self-determination" (G. Strawson), "autonomy" (Wolf), "ultimate origination" or "ultimate control". This condition seems to reflect an assumption of moral responsibility ascriptions, namely that the agent is the (ultimate, true) origin or cause of the action or consequence thereof for which responsibility is ascribed. The requirement can be expressed in the form of an Origination Principle (OP), as follows: If an agent is morally responsible for her deciding to perform an action, then the production of this decision must be something over which the agent has control, and an agent is not morally responsible for the

decision if it is produced by a source over which she has no control. (cf. Pereboom 2001, pp. 4, 47, 54)

Incompatibilists who base their position on this principle are usually known as "source incompatibilists". (Of course, one can be both a leeway and a source incompatibilist). All source incompatibilists accept OP and hold that the condition of origination that OP states cannot be met if determinism is true. However, some of them (we may call them "source libertarians") think that the condition can be met if determinism is not true, whereas others ("hard source incompatibilists", as they might be labelled) reject this possibility as well. Among the authors in this issue, Widerker and O'Connor may be said to belong to the first group, whereas Pereboom belongs to the second. A very strong construal of, and commitment to, OP may underlie agent-causal libertarianism as represented by O'Connor (2000).

How does compatibilism fare with respect to OP? Again, OP relates origination-cum-control with moral responsibility. It says nothing about determinism. So, compatibilists may accept OP and contend that, in spite of appearances, determinism is consistent with ultimate origination and control. A recent work of Haji's (2009) exemplifies this position. Alternatively, and more commonly, a compatibilist may reject OP on the basis that it raises an incoherent demand (Watson 2004, Wolf 1990, et al.) and go for attainable and more modest forms of control and origination. In this issue, Nelkin may be interpreted as occupying this place. Typically, incompatibilists will find these alternative forms proposed by compatibilists simply too weak to justify attributions of moral responsibility. Libertarian incompatibilists, however, are justifiably challenged by compatibilists to discharge the burden of showing how indeterminism can enhance, or simply be compatible with, the strong form of control that OP assumes. A common objection to libertarianism is, in fact, that indeterminism seems to diminish, rather than increase, control over one's decisions by raising the weight of luck in the processes leading to decisions and actions. In this issue, Steward sets herself the task of meeting this traditional objection to libertarianism.

As we indicated at the beginning, traditional concerns about responsibility and related notions, such as agency and freedom, have recently been extended from decisions and actions to beliefs. Some branches of epistemology investigate the employment of ethical notions in the epistemic field, in order to better understand traditional epistemological issues, such as justification. This extension corresponds to our actual everyday practice, for, in fact, we tend to hold people responsible, not only

for what they decide and do, but also for what they believe. For example, we are inclined to consider racist people blameworthy for their racist beliefs, even if they do not bring them into practice. We criticize people for being too credulous or, alternatively, too hypercritical in forming their beliefs. And questions of authorship and merit are no less pressing concerning hypotheses and theories than they are concerning actions. How are we to understand these facts?

Beliefs are in many cases the result of inquiry, which is an array of activities that, as many others, can be performed rightly or wrongly. And agents are subject to criticism, even of an ethical nature, on account of how they perform these activities. Recent cases in the field of experimental biological research are clear examples of this fact. Responsibility and freedom, as well as deontological predicates, seem to be justifiably applicable to inquiry, in that it clearly is intentional behaviour. Hookway's contribution to this issue can be understood in this wide context of what might be called the ethics of inquiry.

It is not clear, however, that attributions of responsibility for beliefs themselves can be understood on the same basis as responsibility for the activity conducive to them. They could be if beliefs were subject to our direct voluntary control. But even doxastic voluntarists, who hold that it is possible to form a belief as a direct result of our deciding to, admit that the cases in which this can be done are the exception rather than the rule. And there are important objections to interpreting even these special cases as ones in which belief is produced at will (Hieronymi 2006, Setiya 2008). So is it actually justified to attribute responsibility for beliefs, as distinct from responsibility for inquiry? Engel's contribution deals with these problems, whereas Alvarez's and Pink's contend with wider questions that surround the more specific topics.

Research in responsibility for beliefs could have interesting consequences in our understanding of responsibility for actions. Suppose that doxastic voluntarism is false, so that beliefs are never subject to our voluntary control, and suppose also that it is justified to hold (some) people responsible for (some of) her beliefs. This would show, against a widespread and almost unquestioned assumption, that there is a basis for responsibility ascriptions that does not involve essentially decisions, or the will. And if this is true, then this basis might also operate in the field of responsibility for actions and decisions and lead to modify our view of this traditional field. This looks like a fascinating subject for further research.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the concepts of responsibility and freedom could be transferred without changes from practical to epistemic matters and vice versa. Pink prevents us against a related and extended tendency to handle moral responsibility in the practical domain in too intellectualistic terms. Alvarez, in turn, puts forward an interesting, unified, and unorthodox approach to reasons.

We are confident that anyone interested in the philosophy of action and the theory of responsibility and freedom will find this special issue of *Philosophical Explorations* particularly attractive.

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