

## Kill Will ?

Free will, it has been maintained, is killed by a dilemma neatly expressed by A. J. Ayer : for volitions, as for everything else, there are only two possible ways to be brought about, either by causation by something else, with which they are, then, deterministically enchained ; or by chance, i.e. by the ‘spontaneous’ – in fact random – production of a volition. No matter whether one thinks that the latter is a genuine possibility or not, the fact remains that, in principle, determinism has no other alternative than that. So : Determinism or Randomness – while free will is incompatible with either horn.

Determinism as to volitions, as well as the general thesis of determinism, is conceived of, here, as springing directly from grounding : providing sufficient grounds for something would be as necessary for explaining it as sufficient for establishing its deterministic enchaining. Be determinism full-blown, i.e. embracing the whole universe, or moderate, i.e. relative to some lines of events in the universe ; be this as it may be, explaining an event is equated with construing it as a ring in a deterministic chain. Explanation is therefore claimed to be strictly tied to determinism : to drop the latter would make us loose the former. No indeterminism could be less than the admission of random events ; the latter, in turn, is an abdication from understanding.

One can still wonder whether moderate determinism is a coherent position : is the admission of events having sufficient grounds compatible with the admission of events lacking sufficient grounds? Can determinism be less than full-blown? We shall not touch this issue, however : since our only concern are volitions, we shall ignore all those doubts and contrast Determinism, as a universal thesis about acts of will, with Randomness, stating that (at least some) volitions do lack sufficient grounds *and are therefore simply random, i.e. inexplicable*. The dilemma Determinism or Randomness (henceforth D/R), i.e. the alleged killing-blow purported to eliminate free will, far from consisting in the mere opposition of contradictory theses, supposes therefore one assumption, namely that the only way to explain a volition is to provide a sufficient ground for it. And therefore to construe it as something being necessitated in its happening.

My argument is as a priori as is the dilemma I am trying to refute; i.e. is simply a priori. Nowadays one can easily feel bored with a priori arguments in philosophy of mind, most of all because of the luxurious flowering of mental experiments they often stimulate, which slippery slide from high sophisticatedness into heavy scholasticism. Not daring to defy the danger of such a fall, I do not propose any mental experiment; my line of argument is nonetheless a priori, for my primary intent is to displace the burden of the proof back on the tenant of D/R. However, I do not content myself with *claiming* the existence of a third possibility neglected by him, namely of an indeterministic way to explain (vs. Randomness) volitions. In a somehow Kantian vein, I do not merely mention the *formal* possibility of a third way for volitions of being brought about: I also try to justify the *real* possibility of motivational explanations – and, thereby, of indeterministic motivated volitions. I try to perform such a Kantian task by using – and also modifying for use – Davidsonian tools.

The grounding relation between events that is appealed to is one which does require covering laws (that’s Davidson’s lesson), but *is not ontologically tied* with such a nomic explanation *on a modal level*; in other words, it doesn’t warrant any ontological consequences one may be tempted to draw from nomic explanations in a modal concern. So, volition is free – is not necessitated – even though it does need that the event described as a volition can be also described otherwise and then explained nomologically. In my view, nomic necessity is itself a property of descriptions, and not barely of the event which bears different descriptions. In this version of Anomalous Monism motivational explanations are allowed to have not merely epistemological legitimacy, but also (weak) ontological significance. For now ontological (namely, modal) significance is equally distributed over different descriptions. The least involvement for ontology with the event for the most ontological significance of the descriptions of the latter. Modal neutrality of the event for ontological commitment of each description.