



A kantian conception of causality from Freedom

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“A KANTIAN CONCEPTION OF CAUSALITY FROM FREEDOM ”

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April 1998

Abstract: Everything in nature works either according to laws or according to the representation of laws. In the first case the effect is made to happen, independently of will; it pertains to the context of natural causality. In the second case the effect occurs if and only if the cause wants it to happen; it pertains to the context of causality from freedom.

In this context the laws by which one lets oneself be determined to act are self-chosen so that one acts *sua sponte*. There are two versions of this kind of spontaneity: either one lets oneself be determined to act by a moral law or by something else. Acts which are cases of causality from positive freedom are derived from a moral law. Every other act could be called a causal act from natural causality, if this weren't highly misleading. For if every act is a result of freedom, so is an act which is performed because we let ourselves be determined by sensory stimuli. Therefore, classifying this kind of act as an act from natural causality would be as misleading as the case appears to be clear: Causality from freedom does not occur because what one does is derived from a practical law, but because one lets oneself be determined to act.

English version of the paper presented to the Seminar of the University Torcuato Di Tella Law School on March 24, 1997. The paper was previously addressed in German to the VII Encontro Nacional de Filosofia, which was held in Aguas de Lindóia/SP, Brazil, from October 19 to October 24, 1996.

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1. Introduction

“Causality” and “freedom” are the key terms of my lecture whence they figure in its title. So, the first thing you might want me to do is to explain what's meant by them. This I'll do by way of examples. It's an every day experience that fire causes smoke. Light a match and you will find that it's true. Sun causes heat as every one may observe when, on a sunny spring day, the sun hides temporarily behind a cloud. Now, some might object that the sun, being an object, can't cause anything; the thing that's doing the causing must be an event; therefore it's the radiation coming from the sun that's causing heat. I'm not so sure that things can't be causes, at least if they are persons; but I am getting ahead. Quite uncontroversial examples of causal episodes are immersing litmus paper into an acid whereby the acid turns red or immersing a dry sponge into water, which causes the sponge to become wet.

From these examples we obtain the following schema of the temporal structure of causation:

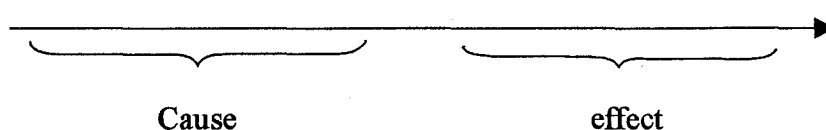


Figure 1: Temporal structure of causation

The first thing I'd like to note is the trivial fact that cause and effect take time to occur. The next thing to note is that the cause precedes its effect. However, these two features are not sufficient for something to be a cause. Not every event that takes time and precedes another event that takes time can be considered the cause of the second event. To think otherwise would be to commit the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Thus, my utterances follow each other without any one utterance causing the next one to follow. Or lightning may precede the lighting of a match without causing it. What's needed for a causal relation to hold between two events that take time and succeed one another is that every event which is of the same type as the earlier one be succeeded by an event which is of the same type as the later one.

David Hume who probably has contributed more to the analysis of causality than any other philosopher called this feature of causally related terms “constant conjunction”. It's not easy to say what the lighting of a match is in constant conjunction with, but it seems obvious what's in constant conjunction with my uttering these words. It's me. I am the one who is uttering them.

In the connection between me and my actions we have a good illustration of what it means to call persons causes. Adding to it the idea that it is of my own accord that my utterances come out of my mouth, we arrive at the very idea of causality from freedom. Causality from freedom is the idea that persons are the causes of their actions.

My topic, *causality from freedom*, is very important –not only for philosophers, but for lawyers as well, and even for us personally insofar as we are interested in understanding what kind of things we are.

Kant maintained the position that there is something like causality from freedom.¹ And I am convinced that he was right.

In this paper, I want to set out the reasons in favor of my conviction. In doing this, I will rely heavily on ideas and concepts from both tense logic and event logic. For they provide a unitary as well as completely general framework for the discussion of any question pertaining to temporal phenomena, and it is here that the questions of causality belong.

Although I take Kant's moral philosophy as my point of departure, I am not so much interested in what he taught, or might have taught, or might have taught, or almost taught, or didn't teach at all. Although, of course, I intend to do justice to Kant's texts, I do not intend to deal with the question of what is in them, but with a question as to what is in the world. What I want to do is "to explain the possibility of autonomous action in a world of causality"² as Donald Davidson once put it so aptly. So I feel justified in putting the framework of Kant's philosophical assumptions aside. I want to forewarn you that I take it that freedom doesn't exist in the field of morals alone, but in other practical fields as well. Even in those fields which Kant circumscribed with the concepts of skill and prudence. The reason is simply that there are practical laws in any field of action.

If, for instance, only the two kings and a single rook are left on the chessboard, the player with the rook must use the law "Whoever wants to checkmate in an endgame king against rook should push the king to the margin" in order to checkmate the other one. Perhaps the best description of this means-ends-connection is this: Whoever wants to win an endgame king against rook must derive his actions from the law in question. Analogously one could say in relation to moral contexts: Whoever wants to act morally must derive his actions from practical laws. The expression "to derive one's action from a law" is the key to the clarification of what causality from freedom might be. For an action which is derived from a law stands in a causal connection to something, and the practical nature of such a law guarantees that it is a connection of freedom.

So much by way of introductory remarks. My lecture has a tripartite division. The three sections could be characterized by the following theses: (T1) Actions stand in derivation relations to practical laws. (T2) Practical derivations exhibit a causal structure. (T3) All actions that are derived from the representation of a practical law are instances of causality from freedom.

Let me begin, then, with the question "What's the connection between an action and a practical law?" My answer consists in the first thesis above:

2. **Actions stand in derivation relations to practical laws**

In order to expound my thesis I want to bring in a much discussed passage from Kant's *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*:

Everything in nature works according to laws. Only a rational being has the capacity of acting

¹ See, for instance, his *kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 532/B 560 (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 464), or his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA V, 16 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 19).

² Davidson, *Intending*, p. 88.

according to the conception of laws, i. e., according to principles. This capacity is will. Since reason is required for the derivation of actions from laws, will is nothing else than practical reason.³

In this passage Kant introduces an important distinction, the distinction between 'working according to laws' and 'working according to the representation of laws.' What he has in mind has been, and still is, controversially discussed among Kant scholars.⁴ Unfortunately, I have no time to review and critically assess this debate. Thus I'll immediately proceed to my own proposal.

In the first sentence of the passage quoted, Kant reminds us of the fact that every natural object satisfies the natural laws or, as he himself puts it, 'works according to' them. For instance, if I take a piece of chalk, raise it above my head, and then drop it, it will fall to the ground. If I raise it 2 meters high it will hit the ground after .6 seconds. This results from the law of free fall " $s = \frac{1}{2}gt$ " which governs the behavior of my piece of chalk.

The fact that every natural object satisfies the laws of nature bestows upon these laws the appearance of influencing behavior of natural objects always and everywhere. In contradistinction, practical laws aren't influential at every time and in every place. This has to do with their not losing their validity, if violated. The imperative "You must not kill" won't become invalid by the fact that in Northern Ireland a sniper killed a passer-by or by the fact that in Spain a member of the ETA blew up a packed bus. And the inverse also holds: the fact that a certain sentence is satisfied by everyone doesn't confer any normative validity upon it. There is a German proverb which conveys this idea very nicely: "*Dass viele unrecht gehen, macht den Weg nicht recht*---The fact that many people tread the wrong path doesn't make it right." In short, while the validity of a natural law can be identified with its satisfaction, the validity of a practical law is completely independent of both its satisfaction and its violation. That's my explanation of the fact that practical laws need not be effective or influential at every moment and in every place.

If they are influential, though, that comes from our decision to comply with them. Before we can take such a decision we have to call to mind the practical law to be decided upon. And in order for our action to count as satisfaction of that law, we must relate the action and the mental representation of the law. It's this very relation which Kant has in mind when he talks about working according to the representation of laws.

So far, there is no problem in understanding the passage from Kant's *Foundations*. This changes when we find him characterizing working according to the representation of laws as "derivation of actions from laws." For, with this move he is apparently taking up the Aristotelian tradition of the so-called practical syllogism.⁵ A syllogism in general starts from (a connection of) two beliefs. But as Aristotle conceives of a practical syllogism, it does not lead to a belief but, in contradistinction to a theoretical syllogism, to an action.⁶ Analogously, Kant lets a practical derivation of an action from a law flow into an action and not into a belief.

For many Kant scholars this is a logical howler. Rüdiger Bittner, for instance, has objected that it is only sentences, assertions and perhaps imperatives, but not actions which can be derived in the

³ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 412 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 72).

⁴ Cf. Laberge, *La définition de la volonté comme faculté d'agir selon la représentation des lois* (GMS: 412).

⁵ Cf. Bittner, *Handlungen und Wirkungen*, p. 21f. Cf. as well Willascheck, *Praktische Vernunft*, p. 87f.

⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, VII 5, 1147 a 26ff.

sense of “logically deduced.”⁷ I have no qualms at all with this, if Bittner allows his sentences to be interpreted relative to a context. But the verb “to derive” or, rather, the German “*ableiten*” can be used not only in the logical sense of “to deduce.” It is also used in physical or, if you like, technical contexts as well; for instance, when physicians perform an electrocardiogram (ECG) part of the currents “derive” from the beating heart. Why shouldn't we try to understand the practical derivation Kant has in mind according to this physical model? This would enable us to say: a practical derivation leads to an action which is based on a mental activity much as the physical derivation in an ECG leads to a diagram which is based on cardiac activities.

But doesn't the parallel I draw between practical and physical derivations raise more problems than it solves? For, on the one hand, the example I used in establishing it is completely anachronistic; and, on the other hand, if followed to its ultimate consequences, it amounts to an identification of mental and physical activities.

As it stands the charge of anachronism is not justified. For I didn't claim that Kant conceived, or could have conceived, of a practical derivation according to the ECG model. But one could reinterpret this objection as the misgiving that my parallel between practical and physical derivation is utterly alien to Kant's frame of mind so that it must be rejected as totally arbitrary. However, physical models of derivation are not alien to Kant at all. If he didn't intend to construe practical derivations in a logical sense, he could have construed them according to the physical model of lightning-conductors. He was even an expert in this field, so much so that he was asked his opinion in connection with the installation of a lightning-conductor on the church of Haberberg.⁸

There is another argument against my “arbitrarily distorting” Kant's world of ideas. It draws upon the fact that his notion of action is founded in the physical concept of *actio*.⁹ And the other term of a practical derivation possesses a physical aspect as well, the reason being that Kant himself identified the derivation from a moral law with its motivational role.¹⁰ The concept of a motive, of a spring of action, though, is explained by him with the term “*elater animi*”¹¹ which is composed of a Greek and a Latin word, the Greek word meaning “driver” in the sense of “horse, or car, driver.” Let me quote what Stephen Brush says in his history of *statistical physics and the atomic theory of matter*:

⁷ Cf. Bittner, *Handlungen und Wirkungen*, p. 20.

⁸ Cf. Gulyga, *Immanuel Kant*, p. 205f. Kant used the word “derivation” (or, rather, the German original “*Ableitung*”) in its physical sense as a technical term in his letter of March 29, 1784 to C.D. Reusch---cf. Kant, *Briefwechsel*, AA X, 373f. But as early as 1755, although in a context which by the use of the word “*veluti*” he marked as metaphorical, we find Kant characterizing both physical events and free actions as *derived* from something in much the same way as a river is derived from its fountain by the gradient of its bed: *Cum eventuum omnium tam physicorum quam actionum liberum determinata sit certitudo, consequentia in antecedentibus, antecedentia in ulterius praecedentibus et ita nexu concatenato in ceterioribus semper rationibus, donec primus mundi status, qui immediate Deum auctorem arguit, sit veluti fons et scaturigo, ex quo omnia fallere nescia necessitate prono alveo derivantur [...]* (*Nova dilucidatio*, AA I, 403)

⁹ Cf. Gerhardt, *Handlung als Verhältnis von Ursache und Wirkung*, p. 125.

¹⁰ Cf. Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, AA VI, 37 (*Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*), where he says about the “bad heart” that it comes from “the frailty of human nature to be not strong enough to comply with its self-adopted principles [...] and that it eventually cares at most for its correspondence to the law and not for the derivation from it, i.e. for it as the only spring” (Italics mine)

¹¹ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA V, 72 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 180).

Giles Persone de Roberval performed an [...] experiment about [...] (1647) which was frequently quoted and repeated: he removed part of the swim-bladder from a carp, squeezed as much air out of it as possible and tied up the opening, and then inserted it in a Torricellian vacuum [...]. The bladder could be seen to inflate, convincing most observers that the small amount of residual air, previously compressed into a small space by atmospheric pressure, would expand to a greater volume when that pressure was removed. Jean Pecquet publicized Roberval's carp-bladder experiment in his book on physiology (1651, English translation 1653), and introduced the term *elater* (Greek, "that which or one who drives") for the tendency of air to expand. (This was later modified to "elasticity.")¹²

So much for the objection of anachronism. Now for the charge of materialism. I think that I don't really have to deal with it. For the only thing that matters in the parallel I draw is the temporality both of practical and physical derivations, i. e., the fact that both sorts of derivations are extended in time, start out from a temporally extended activity, and end in a temporally extended activity. If you construed practical derivations as logical deductions, you couldn't construe them as occurring in time. And I can't see that, or how, their temporal construction would imply the materiality of their terms.

So far, so good. But what has the temporal derivation of an action from a practical law got to do with the will? Now, "everything in nature works according to laws." Of course, I am no exception to that, because I, too, am a natural object. Therefore, I satisfy the law of free fall when, hanging from a parachute, I sink to earth. Having jumped, I can't help falling, whether I like it or not. Behavior determined by natural laws is invariant under my will. Behavior that varies with my will belongs to the realm of practical laws.

As we have already seen, practical laws can only influence our behavior if they are represented in practical consciousness. It does not suffice to represent them in theoretical consciousness. For no other demand is connected with theoretical representations save giving them up if they fail to correspond to reality. In particular, it is not required that they be translated into action in case of failure. This requirement is solely characteristic of practical consciousness. For it cannot be called "practical" unless, in case of reality's discrepancy, it demands that reality be changed in order to get rid of the discrepancy. Therefore, it is only practical representations which can influence our behavior at will.

So, if Kant is correct in claiming that recognition of duties is a merely theoretical affair¹³, it can't have any practical consequences. Only its acceptance into practical consciousness can change this situation. However, to recognize it in practical consciousness is to intend to satisfy, or to comply with it; and this, in turn, is to be prepared to change a discrepant reality according to the accepted recognition.

¹² Brush, *Statistical Physics and the Atomic Theory of Matter From Boyle and Newton To Landau and Onsager*, p. 13.

¹³ Cf. Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA VI, 218 (*Metaphysics of Morals*); cf. Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 410 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 70). Sometimes he characterizes this recognition as a matter of the understanding---cf. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA V, 27 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 138), *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, AA VI, 186 (*Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*), *Metaphysik der Sitten* AA VI, 401 (*Metaphysics of Morals*), *Zum ewigen Frieden*, AA VIII, 366 (*Perpetual Peace*, p. 327).

Thus, the representation from which one derives an action must have been accepted into practical consciousness at some time. Whence we obtain the result that to fail to kill someone can only be an action if, by failing to do so, one intended to comply with, say, the imperative "You must not kill." But an intention is neither a mere representation nor is it the action intended. It's not even determined to result in this action. For the satisfaction of a practical law presupposes luck. That Kant recognized this as may be gathered from a famous passage in his *Foundations*:

Even if it should happen that, by a particularly unfortunate fate or by the niggardly provision of a stepmotherly nature, this will should be wholly lacking in power to accomplish its purpose, and if even the greatest effort should not avail it to achieve anything of its end, and if there remained only the good will (not as a mere wish but as the summoning of all the means in our power), it would sparkle like a jewel with its own light, as something that had its full worth in itself.¹⁴

Whoever intends to satisfy a practical law performs an activity which combines the practical representation of the law with the summoning of all the means in his power which are necessary for its satisfaction, "even if merely by having undergone a re-arrangement of the causal powers within oneself in the direction of the action one intends to do."¹⁵

As long as we don't consider a particular law, we can hardly say more about the intention to satisfy it but that the intention comprises, among other things, that one not lose sight of the moment at which the satisfaction is supposed to occur.

Let me briefly summarize. My initial question was: What is the connection between an action and a practical law? My answer is: They stand in a derivation relation. A practical derivation is not a logical affair, but a temporal one. It doesn't connect two propositions but two activities which are extended in time: a mental activity and an action.

Thus, practical derivations have the following temporal structure:

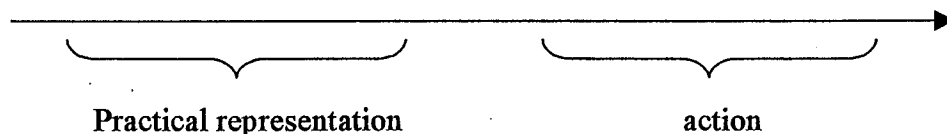


Figure 2: Temporal structure of a practical derivation

In answering my initial question, I took the first step towards a clarification of what causality of freedom is like. Now for the second step; it consists in elucidating and justifying the following claim:

¹⁴ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 394 (Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, p. 56).

¹⁵ Castañeda, *Thinking and Doing*, p. 41, cf. p. 276.}

3. Practical derivations exhibit a causal structure

To begin with, let us assume that this claim is correct. Then, of course, the action derived has the role of an effect. But what about the role of cause?

The temporal structure of a practical derivation suggests attributing this role to the representation of the law from which it starts. Of course, the representation can't be theoretical. For theoretical representations simply require us to give them up if they are not satisfied. Hence we seem forced to conclude that the role of cause is played by a practical representation. However, this conclusion is overhasty. For, where does this practical representation come from? From theoretical consciousness? But then there must be additional demands connected with theoretical representations other than dropping them if they don't correspond to reality. From practical consciousness? But then we are on the way to an infinite regress. For where does this practical representation come from?

Fortunately, there is still one more candidate for the role of cause in a practical derivation. For a derivation has more components than just an action, a law, and its representation; beyond these it involves someone who is doing the representing, carrying out the derivation, and performing the action. So we are led to fill the role of cause with the agent.¹⁶

So far we are only entitled to the following claim: *if* practical derivations exhibit a causal structure, *then* the agent is to be cast in the role of cause. But are we entitled to the *if*-clause so that, by *modus ponens*, we may infer the *then*-clause?

In order to answer this question, let me return to Kant's *Foundations*. In the third section he contends that "the concept of causality entails that of laws according to which something, i.e., the effect, must be established through something else which we call cause [...]."¹⁷ What Kant is saying here is that the regularity conception applies to causality in any of its varieties. If we were entitled, therefore, to construe the law which is involved in a practical derivation as a causal law, we might construe the entire derivational complex as causal. But are we entitled to do so?

In order to find out whether a practical law is causal or not, I'd like to consider a special case of such a law. I want to consider the natural law version of the categorical imperative. To my mind, this is an ideal starting point in order to solve our actual problem. For Kant introduces this version while characterizing the function of causal laws.

The universality of law according to which effects are produced constitutes what is properly called nature in the most general sense (as to form), i.e., the existence of things so far as it is determined by universal laws. (By analogy), then, the universal imperative of duty can be expressed as follows: Act as though the maxim of your action were by your will to become a universal law of nature.¹⁸

¹⁶ This ontological construal of the role of cause in a practical derivation, although not Kant's official position, can be found, for example, in: Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 450, 453, 458 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 105, 108, 112).

¹⁷ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 446 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 102).

¹⁸ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 421 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 80).

Since a “law according to which effects are produced” is a causal law, we may conclude that every causal law, whether it be theoretical or moral, determines the existence of things. In this respect there is no difference between these kinds of laws.

In the Second Analogy Kant tells us how to construe the determination effected by a theoretical causal law:

When [...] I perceive that something happens, this representation first of all contains (the consciousness) that there is *something preceding*, because only by reference to what precedes does the appearance acquire its time-relation, namely, that of existing after a preceding time in which it itself was not. But it can acquire *this determinate position* in this relation of time only in so far as something is presupposed in the preceding state upon which it follows invariably, that is, in accordance with a rule.¹⁹

Here Kant is making two points: (1) a theoretical causal law enables us to decide whether one of two appearances which we *perceive* consecutively is *objectively earlier* than the other one and if so, which one; (2) furthermore, it enables us *to compute the objective position* which one of these appearances has in time, provided we are given the objective position of the other one. The first point has to do with the comparative notion of earlier and later, the second point with the metric notion of distance between positions in time, but both points have to do with objectivity.

So much for the determination of the existence of things by theoretical causal laws, now for this kind of determination in the practical case. Let me first state the thesis I am trying to prove:

A practical law prescribes an action to one or more addressees. Actions as well as addressees are appearances which are put into an objective temporal order by a practical law.

I want to argue my case by way of three examples.

Example no. 1 Consider the imperative “You must not kill.”

From a logical point of view it consists of the following three components:

- the singular term “you,”
- the complex action predicate “not kill,”
- the practical copula (or, rather, a variant of it) “must.”

Example no. 2 Consider next the natural law version of the categorical imperative “Act as though the maxim of your action were by your will to become a universal law of nature.”

This version exhibits the logical, or grammatical peculiarity, of not containing a separate singular term for the norm addressee. Such a term lies hidden in the finite form of the verb “act.”

¹⁹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A, 198/B, 243 (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 225). (Italics mine.)

Example no. 3 Much the same holds with respect to the law of chess "Whoever wants to checkmate in the endgame *king against rook* should push the king to the margin."

Its action predicate is complex, too. The term for the addressee is to be found not only in the finite verb form "should push" but in the relative clause "whoever wants to checkmate in the endgame *king against rook*" as well.

So much for the logical analysis of our three examples, now for some ontological considerations. First of all, I want to adopt Kant's conception of actions as appearances²⁰ (To forestall a question you might have, I want to state right now that the entity appearing is the agent himself.²¹) Such actions are individual entities. They should be carefully distinguished from action types which are sometimes called generic actions thus giving rise to the erroneous belief that these types are actions as well, on the same ontological footing with individual acts. Since a practical law prescribes an individual action or, if you like, the performance of an action type, its action predicate refers to an appearance.

The second appearance mentioned in a practical law is the referent of the singular term for its addressee. If this term didn't refer to an appearance, we wouldn't be able to apply the law to ourselves. For we can't help living as spatio-temporal appearances.

Now, due to the practical copula which connects the term for the addressee with the action predicate, a law prescribes him to perform the action it mentions. But does the temporal structure of an addressee fit into the role of cause? Intuitively, causes are supposed to---completely---precede their effects. But if so and if the agent is to be the cause of his actions, then he seems doomed to cease to exist before the action takes place. But isn't it utterly impossible that an action be attributed to the agent as *his* action if he ceases to exist before its very performance? Isn't it necessary that he coexist with his action? We seem to be at an impasse: Being the cause of an action, the agent must precede it, and, being the performer, he must coexist with it.

Kant's position is not subject to this simultaneity dilemma. For he considers the origin of an action to belong to reason and reason, for him, "is not itself an appearance, and is not subject to any conditions of sensibility"²². On this issue, which is absolutely crucial for his critical philosophy, I disagree. An action does not originate in reason, but in the agent himself. Disagreeing with Kant over this point, I must present a solution for the simultaneity dilemma which does not bring in the difference between a temporal and an atemporal world, the one sensible and the other intellectual.

In order to solve the dilemma I suggest that from a temporal point of view we take persons to be events with the following property: Each of her temporal segments from her very beginning up until any moment of her existence is a person as well.²³

²⁰ Cf. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA V, 67, 98--100, 102 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 175, 203--205, 208), as well as Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* A 543/B 571 (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 470).

²¹ Cf. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 553/B 581 (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 476).

²² Cf. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 553/B 581 (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 476).

²³ In the jargon of event logic, persons are "atelic" events, that is, events whose occurring implies that they have occurred-cf. § 3 of my article *Ereignislogische Variationen über ein Thema von David Hume*, especially p. 183.

If we consider temporal segments to be appearances, we are rid of the simultaneity dilemma. For, first, causes and effects are temporal individuals, i.e., appearances in time. Second, the appearance which I am until a definite moment of my existence is *a different appearance* from the one I am until another moment of my existence. Third, the appearance which I am until a definite moment of my existence is *the same person* as the appearance I am until another moment of my existence. Fourth, since I always exist as an appearance, I do so both while deriving an action from the representation of a practical law, and while executing this action; thus, being an appearance in time, I must exist in adjacent moments as different appearances and thus can't even help ceasing to appear as a cause before beginning to act. But, since existing in adjacent moments doesn't prevent me from existing in these very moments as one and the same person, I can precede any action of which I am the cause and nevertheless coexist with it afterwards.

Seen from this point of view, there is no ontological problem in taking a person to be a cause.

What we have established so far is that a practical law refers to two appearances. But I not only claimed this. I claimed furthermore that it determines the objective temporal relation between them. In order to argue this further claim, I want to bring in another example. Let's assume that some time ago I lent some money to a friend and he promised to pay it back by Easter. Why is my perception that he has not paid it back by Ash Wednesday (the day after Carnival) not the perception of an objective breach of his word? What a silly question! Because he promised to pay it back by Easter. Therefore, he is entitled to appear on Ash Wednesday as a person who hasn't paid the money back to me; indeed, he must appear that way if he really intends to pay it back by Easter. Without the law about keeping one's promises and without his having promised to pay the money to me by Easter, we couldn't *objectively* tell who's appearing or what's happening on Ash Wednesday when my friend appears not to pay the money back. We couldn't distinguish him as someone who's breaking his word from someone who isn't, nor could we recognize a deliberate omission to act from the unintended absence of a simple event. By the same token we couldn't predict whose appearance or which happening we are confronted with on Easter when my friend pays the money back. Is it the appearance of a faithful or of a generous friend? Is it an act of keeping a promise or of giving me an Easter present?

As may be gathered from this example, practical laws determine indeed who has got to appear how and when and where; insofar they can be said to determine the *objective* temporal relation between the appearances which they refer to. Since the point of theoretical causal laws is to fix the objective temporal relation of appearances which we perceive in an consecutive order, we may summarize our considerations concerning the temporal aspect of practical laws into the thesis: Practical laws are practical causal laws.²⁴

Let's briefly review what we have found out so far about the causal structure of practical derivations. A practical derivation is a causal nexus composed of an agent, an action, and a practical law. The agent plays the role of cause, the action the role of effect, and the third component the role of the causal law connecting cause and effect. In general, a practical derivation consists in re-arranging the causal powers within the agent in the direction of fulfilling the law from which he derives his action. This law can be construed as prescribing that a certain appearance is to

²⁴ No wonder, therefore, that in the natural law version of the categorical imperative Kant identified the functional roles of the moral-practical and the theoretical-causal determination of being.

cause the occurrence of another appearance thereby fixing the objective time relation between the two appearances.

Thus, practical derivations have the following causal structure:

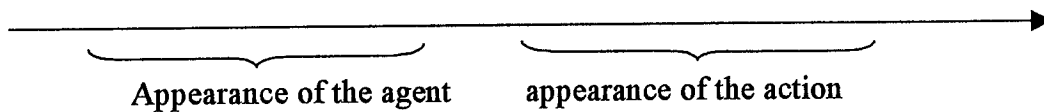


Figure 3: Causal structure of a practical derivation

Having analyzed the causal structure of practical derivations, what remains to be done is to show how they can be said to pertain to the realm of freedom. I shall do this by arguing for the last of my three theses:

4. All actions that are derived from the representation of a practical law are instances of causality from freedom

As we have already seen, you must accept a practical law into your practical consciousness, that is, you must intend to comply with it, before you can derive an action from it; and, I hasten to add, you must identify yourself with its addressee in order to be able to comply with it. Now, no one can accept the imperative "You must not kill" into his *practical* consciousness and identify himself with its addressee without letting himself be determined by it not to kill; and no one can accept the chess law "Whoever wants to checkmate in the endgame *king against rook* should push the king to the margin" into his *practical* consciousness and identify himself with its addressee without letting himself be determined by it to push the opponent's king to the margin. But if you let yourself be determined by a practical law you act from self-determination. That's why an action which is derived from it is an instance of causality from freedom. Let's call such an instance "a causal act of freedom."

In the remainder of my paper I want to locate the very place in the structural constitution of self-determination which is responsible for the practical derivation of an action's issuing in a causal act from freedom. Since self-determination is a matter of who lets himself be determined by what to (do) what, I want to distinguish between the "who" of self-determination (the person who determines herself), the "to what" of self-determination (the action derived), and the "by what" of self-determination (the motive behind the derivation).

Having discussed the "who" and the "to what" in the proceeding sections, let's have a closer look at the "by what" of self-determination. Whoever lets himself be determined to do something can do so for very different motives. Kant recognizes two classes of such motives: those that originate from the lower faculty of desire and those that originate from the higher faculty of desire. Let's consider the second class first. That I let myself be determined by a motive from the higher faculty of desire is tantamount to my letting myself be determined by moral law. Since moral laws are self-given, any act whose motive is such a law is autonomous. Now, for Kant autonomy and positive freedom

are one and the same thing.²⁵ Thus, if someone doesn't let himself be determined to act by anything but the moral law he is executing a causal act from positive freedom.

Consider now the other class of motives. Let's assume that someone acts from a motive from the lower faculty of desire. According to Kant, he is acting from an inclination. But inclinations are rooted in sensibility. Therefore, someone who acts from a motive that belongs to the lower faculty of desire doesn't act from a self-given law. What he acts from is, as Kant puts it, "directions for a reasonable obedience to pathological laws."²⁶ According to Kant, any action which springs from the lower faculty of desire does not testify to the agent's being autonomously determined, but to his being heteronomously determined.

To be sure, someone whose motive originates from the lower faculty of desire is not performing a causal act from positive freedom. But may we conclude from this fact that he doesn't perform a causal act from freedom at all? If we remember that Kant usually opposes what he calls negative freedom to positive freedom²⁷, our present problem seems to amount to the question whether an action originating from the lower faculty of desire may be classified as a causal act from negative freedom.

Any orthodox reader of Kant, I suppose, will answer this question in the negative. And he may adduce the fact that by negative freedom Kant understands independence from "all material of the law (i.e., a desired object)"²⁸ or from "foreign causes determining it [*scil. causality*]"²⁹ or from "any empirical conditions (anything sensible in general)"³⁰. This is evidence enough to make our orthodox reader of Kant conclude his argument by saying: Whoever lets himself be determined by a motive which originates from the lower faculty of desire does not act independently of "anything sensible in general" and, therefore, cannot possibly be negatively free.

That's a tempting argument, isn't it? But anyone who adopts it has to face the notorious difficulty that he won't be able to explain why an action whose motive is rooted in sensibility can be attributed to the agent as his own---fault or merit as the case may be. In order to avoid this difficulty, you have to pay attention to the fact that self-determination is reflexive. Its reflexive nature can be adequately expressed by the following formula:

(F) x lets himself be determined by y to (do) z.

Our orthodox reader of Kant seems to take the following schema to be fundamental:

(S) x is determined by y to (do) z.

²⁵ Cf. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA V, 33 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 144). Cf. moreover his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 446f. (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 102) as well as his *Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA VI, 213f., 221 (*Metaphysics of Morals*). Cf. finally Kant's reflexion no. 6076 (ψ^3 : 1785-88), AA XVIII, 443, where he says laconically: "The negative concept of freedom is independence, the positive concept [is] autonomy by reason."

²⁶ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA V, 33 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 145)

²⁷ Cf., for instance, the passages referred to in footnote no. 25.

²⁸ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, AA V, 33 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 144).

²⁹ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA IV, 446 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 101).

³⁰ Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA VI, 221 (*Metaphysics of Morals*); cf. moreover Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 553/B 581 (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 476).

If he sets out from this schema, he will arrive at a twofold division of the actions of person x depending upon the value assigned to the variable "y." If this value is a motive which is rooted in the higher faculty of desire, then action z is derived from a moral law and person x is acting from positive freedom; moreover, since her motive is independent of "anything sensible in general" she is acting from negative freedom at that. If, on the other hand, the value assigned to the variable "y" is a motive which originates from the lower faculty of desire, then action z is derived from something sensible and person x is not acting from freedom at all, neither from positive freedom nor from negative freedom.

That's the way our orthodox reader of Kant, starting from his schema (S), might construe causality from freedom. Now, I don't want to contest that schema (S) from which he started is entailed by formula (F) which I favor. But I do contest that his schema is true to the reflexive nature of self-determination. Because sticking to his schema, he can't help rendering its reflexivity by identifying y , *i.e.* that which is determining, with x , *i.e.* that which is determined. So he ends up with the following schema for the reflexivity of self-determination:

(R) x is determined by x to (do) z .

But this schema distorts the structure of self-determination in making x , *i.e.* the agent, appear to be the "what by" of self-determination. Now, the role of "what by" is played by the motive the agent acts from, not by the agent himself, who is, as we already saw, the cause of the action.

In order to be able to distinguish between the cause of an action and the "by what" of self-determination, we'd better characterize the fundamental reflexive structure of self-determination by an explicitly reflexive formula. That's why I prefer formula (F) to schema (S) as an explication.

Let me explain what I have in mind by one more example. Let's compare a situation in which I am given something with a situation in which I let myself be given something. Both situations involve the same components: a recipient (myself), something given to me, and, of course, a giver. So the two situations don't differ as to their components. The difference rather has to do with the consciousness involved. If I am given something I cannot help being given it; it is given to me whether I like it or not. If I could avoid its being given to me, the situation would not be described by "I am given something" but by "I am offered something." But having no option to accept or to refuse the gift, I receive something *tout court*. Now for the other case. If I let myself be given something, I cannot do so without being aware of what's going on. For, if I let myself be given something, I had the option of refusing the gift. In this situation you could describe my involvement by the sentence "He accepts something," thereby testifying to the fact that I'm participating in the act of giving. Of course, whoever accepts something in this sense is given it, but given it according to his own will.

Connecting what I said about something's being given, and letting it be given with the structure of self-determination, we may conclude: The schema (S) of our orthodox reader of Kant corresponds to the situation in which I am given something, to wit, the motive of my action, without having had the option to refuse the gift. By contradistinction, my formula (F) corresponds to the situation in which I am given something, but could have refused it had I chosen to. Thus, self-determination and letting oneself be given a motive while having had another option have the same structure.

Our clarification of the reflexive structure of self-determination enables us to cope with our former question: Is it possible to classify actions which spring from the lower faculty of desire as causal acts from freedom?

First I want to point out that, in contradistinction to our orthodox reader of Kant, I don't consider the motive, but the cause of an action to be the adequate criterion for deciding whether the action belongs to the realm of freedom or to the realm of nature. But since I take the agent to be the cause of any of his actions, there is every reason to believe that all actions belong to one and the same realm. Well, but to which realm do they belong? To the realm of freedom or to the realm of nature?

The key to answering this question lies, as we've already seen, in the reflexive structure of self-determination. Self-determination, to repeat the main point once more, consists in letting oneself be determined (by something to (do) something). Therefore, whoever acts from self-determination is not driven (by something to (do) something) whether he wants it or not, but lets himself be driven (by something to (do) something). It's he himself who chooses his springs of action. He acts of his own accord, as we usually say---or, to use a latin phrase: he acts *sua sponte*. This holds good even in those cases when one lets oneself be determined by an inclination.³¹ Although one doesn't act from a self-given law in these cases, one acts from self-given "directions for a reasonable obedience to pathological laws" to quote Kant once more.³²

So, in the end it turns out that there is just one type of freedom which belongs to any action, no matter whether its motive originates from the higher or from the lower faculty of desire. And this type of freedom is spontaneity.

How well this consequence of our conception of self-determination matches Kant's own concept of spontaneity may be gathered from a passage in the chapter on the Antinomy of Pure Reason from his *First Critique* where he writes:

[...] reason creates for itself the idea of a spontaneity which can begin to act of itself, without requiring to be determined to action by an antecedent cause in accordance with the law of causality.³³

On the very same page of his *First Critique* Kant characterizes this kind of reason-based spontaneity as "freedom in the cosmological sense."³⁴ Hence we may even use Kant's own terminology in order to characterize actions which are performed from inclinations as causal acts from freedom.

By way of conclusion, I want to summarize what I said concerning the freedom of the action derived from a practical law. Everything in nature works either according to laws or according to the representation of laws. In the first case the effect is made to happen, independently of will; it pertains to the context of natural causality. In the second case the effect occurs if and only if the cause wants it to happen; it pertains to the context of causality from freedom.

³¹ In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* Kant acknowledged this point by classifying inclinations as "habitual sensible appetites" and by defining an appetite as a "self-determination [*nota bene!*] of a subject's force by representing something future as one of his effects." (*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, AA VII, 251.)

³² Cf. above no. 26.

³³ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 533/B 561 (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 465).

³⁴ For the topic of spontaneity cf. now Kawamura, *Spontaneität und Willkür* (*Spontaneity and Arbitrariness*).

In this context the laws by which one lets oneself be determined to act are self-chosen so that one acts *sua sponte*. There are two versions of this kind of spontaneity: either one lets oneself be determined to act by a moral law or by something else. Acts which are cases of causality from positive freedom are derived from a moral law. Every other act could be called a causal act from natural causality, if this weren't highly misleading. For if every act is a result of freedom, so is an act which is performed because we let ourselves be determined by sensory stimuli. Therefore, classifying this kind of act as an act from natural causality would be as misleading as the case appears to be clear: Causality from freedom does not occur because what one does is derived from a practical law, but because one lets oneself be determined to act.

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