

FREE WILL III

Nozick's Account of Knowledge

- A knows p iff
- (i) p is true
 - (ii) A believes p
 - (iii) A would not have believed p if p were not true
 - (iv) A would have believed p if p were true.

So A can know that she is in Cambridge, (since if she weren't in Cambridge, she'd be in Boston or Somerville, and she would register that difference); but A will fail to know that she is not a brain in a vat on Mars being fed with illusions of being in Cambridge (since if she were not a brain in a vat, she would be a brain in a vat, and that is a difference she wouldn't register). Equally she knows that being in Cambridge entails not being a brain in a vat on Mars. So

A knows that she is in Cambridge

A knows that if she is in Cambridge she is not a brain in a vat on Mars

A doesn't know that she is not a brain in a vat on Mars.

Thus closure under known entailment fails for knowledge.

Slote's Account of Unavoidability

- P1 Necessarily, a given set of laws, L, is true
- P2 Necessarily, a given state of affairs, S, obtained well before you were born
- P3 Necessarily, (if S and L, then you will do F)
- C Necessarily, you will do F

Is this argument valid? It assumes two modal principles:

Agglomeration: From Necessarily P, and Necessarily Q, infer Necessarily (P and Q)

Closure under logical implication: If one proposition P logically implies another proposition Q, then from Necessarily P, infer that Necessarily Q

(Note: it requires the first of these because closure is defined in terms of implications between an individual proposition and another; if closure were instead defined in terms of a *class* of propositions and another:

Class closure under logical implication: If a set of propositions P, Q ... logically implies another proposition S, then from Necessarily P, Necessarily Q ... , infer that Necessarily S

then we wouldn't need agglomeration.)

Slote argues that various deontic operators do not meet these conditions: obligation fails agglomeration because it is relative, and it fails closure:

I can be obliged to come to your party because I promised, coming to your party implies not dying, yet I am not obliged not to die.

But does the failure of the principles for deontic operators suggest that it will fail for alethic ones? And the modal operator in the consequence argument seems to be alethic.

Slote holds that non-accidentality fails both principles:

Non-accidentally I went to the bank at time t , and it was not an accident that you went to the bank at time t , but it was an accident that we both went to the bank at time t

It was not an accident that I went to the bank, and going to the bank required that I be alive, but it was an accident that I was alive.

Non-accidentality is relative to a plan.

Slote goes on to argue that *necessity*, understood as *unavoidability*, is in the same boat. He claims that to say that something is unavoidable for a given individual at a given time is to say that the explanation of why that thing happens makes no mention of "the desires, etc., the agent has around that time". (p. 19)

So it can be true that

Unavoidably for X (the world was in State A before X was born)

Unavoidably for X (if the world was in State A before X was born, then X will perform action G)

It is not the case that unavoidably for X (X will perform action G)

Worries:

- (i) Slote's account of non-accidentality had it that something was accidental iff it was not contained in the plan. But now his account of unavoidability has it that something is avoidable iff it is not contained in the history *minus* the desires etc. Is it legitimate to simply remove something from the admissible class in this way?
- (ii) Where exactly does the unavoidability stop? Is it unavoidable that I have the desires I have?
- (iii) is it good enough to show that there is one sense in which the action is unavoidable? Don't we need to show that there is no sense in which it is not unavoidable? (Fischer makes this point in his *The Metaphysics of Free Will*, Chapter Two.)