# Rule ($\beta$) entails fatalism

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# Outline

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# Context

In order to show that determinism and free will are incompatible, Inwagen (1983) presents **the consequence argument** with, among others, the following characteristics:

- Modal operator '$N$'
- Rule ($\beta$)

# Modal operator '$N$'

Following Inwagen (1983, 93), the meaning of the operator '$N$' is given by the following stipulation:

**Modal operator '$N$'**

$NP =_{df} P$ and no one has, or ever had, any choice about whether $P$.

We will use *"it is not up to us that P"* with the same meaning described above.

# Rule ($\beta$)

Moreover, according to Inwagen (1983), the consequence argument employs, among others, the following rule of inference:

**Rule ($\beta$)**

$NP, N(P \rightarrow Q) \vdash NQ$

If you have no choice about whether a proposition is true and you have no choice whether the proposition is true only if some other proposition is true, then you have no choice about whether the other proposition is true.

# Rule ($\beta$) entails fatalism

**A problem**: rule ($\beta$) entails fatalism.[1]

- But it should be possible to be committed to incompatibilism (between determinism and free will) without being committed to fatalism.
- In other words, the rule ($\beta$), if it were plausible, could not automatically imply fatalism by itself.

What is the argument to show that rule ($\beta$) entails fatalism?

[1] Fatalism is the thesis that it is a logical or conceptual truth that no one is able to act otherwise than he in fact does. (See Inwagen (1983, 23)).

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# Argument

This is an argument based on Blum (2003). Before formulation, two fundamental steps must be presented:

- We analyze '$N$' in terms of a second modal operator '$R$' (where '$RP$' abbreviates 'it is realizable that $P$').
- We accept the plausibility of 'the principle of conjunction'.

# First step: modal operator '$R$'

While '$N$' expresses some lack of power, '$R$' expresses the possession of some power, namely:

**Modal operator '$R$'**

$RP =_{df}$ someone has (or had) a choice about whether $\neg P$.

According to Blum (2003, 423), between operators '$N$' and '$R$', the following equivalence holds:

**Interdefinability of '$N$' and '$R$'**

$NP \leftrightarrow (P \wedge \neg R \neg P)$

# Second step: principle of conjunction

The following *principle of conjunction* seems plausible:

**Principle of Conjunction**

$R(P \wedge Q) \vdash RP \wedge RQ$

If it is realizable that $P$ and $Q$, then it is realizable that $P$ and it is realizable that $Q$.

# Proof: ($\beta$) entails fatalism

Let '$P$' be a necessary truth (e.g. '$2 + 2 = 4$') that is not up to us and is not realizable; and let '$Q$' be an arbitrary and contingent truth (e.g. 'Joseph proposed marriage to Mary tonight'); the proof is as follows:

1. $P \wedge Q$ [premise]
2. $NP$ [premise]
3. $\neg RP$ [premise]
4. $\neg R(P \wedge \neg Q)$ [from 3, principle of conjunction][2]
5. $\neg R \neg (P \rightarrow Q)$ [from 4, logical equivalence]
6. $P \wedge (P \rightarrow Q)$ [from 1, logical equivalence]
7. $P \rightarrow Q$ [from 6, elimination $\wedge$]
8. $(P \rightarrow Q) \wedge \neg R \neg (P \rightarrow Q)$ [from 5 and 7, introduction $\wedge$]
9. $N(P \rightarrow Q)$ [from 8, interdefinability of '$N$' and '$R$']
10. $NQ$ [from 2 and 9, rule ($\beta$)]

[2] For, suppose '$P \wedge \neg Q$' would be realizable. It would follow, given the principle of conjunction, that '$P$' is realizable (which is obviously false).

# Conclusion

Therefore, for any arbitrary and contingent truth $Q$, both $Q$ and $NQ$ are equivalent.

- In other words, if rule ($\beta$) is valid, then every contingent truth is not up to us (and this is true even if the thesis of determinism is false).
- So, ($\beta$) entails fatalism.

However, it seems wrong to suppose that *every truth is not up to us* only on the basis of this rule ($\beta$).

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# References

Blum, Alex. 2003. "The Core of the Consequence Argument." *Dialectica* 57 (4): 423–29.

Inwagen, Peter van. 1983. *An Essay on Free Will*. Oxford University Press.