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REPLY TO GALLOIS

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Andre Gallois's paper¹ makes many interesting points, but few of them are relevant to IFD. Gallois's paper is not so much a criticism of what I said as of what he thinks I ought to have said. That is, he thinks that what I said is obviously in need of improvement, makes certain changes in it that he regards as improvements, and then proceeds to raise difficulties for the 'improved' version of my argument.

I am not convinced, however, that Gallois has shown that my original argument is in need of any tinkering.

Early on in his paper, he makes the following statement: "I take it that the 'if-then' in premise (5) is intended to have the force of 'entails'." (p. 100) Well, no. It's intended to have the force of 'if-then'. The antecedent of (5) does not entail its consequent. If the antecedent of (5) entails the consequent of (5), then there is no possible world in which the antecedent of (5) is true and the consequent false. But there obviously is such a world. Consider any possible world having the same laws of nature as the actual world and such that, in it, P_0 is false. (That is, a world whose laws are the actual laws, but whose past is not the actual past.) In any such world in which J exists, the antecedent of (5) is true, since the conjunction of P_0 and L is false (see IFD, note 5); but the consequent of (5) is false (as is shown by the defense in IFD of premise (6)). Nor is it necessary to the argument of IFD that premise (5) – or any other premise – of the Main Argument be a necessary truth. We may put the matter this way. Consider the story about J that prefaced the Main Argument. (This story, of course, was a fiction; but I meant the reader, when evaluating the Main Argument, to *pretend* it was true. This was merely a convenience: I could have used an actual case if I had been willing to take the trouble to find one that suited my purpose.) This story, though true [we pretend], is obviously not necessarily true: J might have acted otherwise; in fact, he might not have existed at all. Call those worlds in which the story is true *J-worlds*. Then I make this claim for the premises of the Main Argument:

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they are true in all *J*-worlds. That is to say, the story told about *J* entails each of (1)–(6), and, therefore, entails (7). As I said in IFD when introducing the story about *J*:

I shall now imagine a case in which a certain man, after due deliberation, refrained from performing a certain contemplated act. I shall then argue that, if determinism is true, then that man *could not have* performed that act. Because this argument will not depend on any features peculiar to our imagined case, the incompatibility of free will and determinism *in general* will be established, since, as will be evident, a parallel argument could easily be constructed for the case of any agent and any unperformed act. (p. 190)

So (5) is not a necessary truth. Gallois also reaches this conclusion (which he mistakenly thinks necessitates a revision of the Main Argument), but his reasoning is curious. He argues that (5) is contingent (or, what is the same thing, that the antecedent of (5) does not entail its consequent) since (the universal closure of) the principle

The proposition that *S* can render the conjunction of *P* and *Q* false entails the proposition that *S* can render *Q* false

is false.² Though I agree with Gallois's conclusion and accept his premise, it is important that I point out why this argument does not work. For if it *did* work, a similar argument could be used to show that the consequent of (5) is not entailed by the conjunction of my story about *J* with the antecedent of (5). And that *this* entailment holds *is* essential to my argument. Gallois's reasoning is an instance of the following fallacy: False universal propositions have only false instances. Here is a second instance of this fallacy, also involving entailment: The universal closure of

The disjunction of *P* and *Q* entails *Q*

is false. Therefore, the proposition that either there are round squares or snow is white does not entail the proposition that snow is white.

All one needs to do to defend premise (5) is this: one needs to find *some* analytically true³ universal proposition of which (5) is (given the additional information contained in my story about *J*) an instance. (It is quite irrelevant that there will also be false universal propositions of which (5) is an instance.) In IFD, I did just this. I defended (5) as an instance of the following principle, which I claimed was analytic

(h) If *Q* is a true proposition that concerns only states of affairs that

obtained before *S*'s birth, and if *S* can render the conjunction of *Q* and *R* false, then *S* can render *R* false. (p. 192)

Obviously, if (h) is analytic, then (5) is true in all *J*-worlds (since in all *J*-worlds, P_0 is a true proposition that concerns only states of affairs that obtained before *J*'s birth). Gallois quotes this principle in a footnote, but does not otherwise explicitly discuss it. There is, however, a passage in Gallois's paper that can be construed as containing two arguments against the analyticity of (h). Let us first note that (h) would seem to be analytic if and only if

- (i) If *Q* is a true proposition that concerns only states of affairs that obtained before *S*'s birth, then *S* cannot render *Q* false

is analytic. Gallois says

Suppose that *J*, the judge in van Inwagen's example, had raised his hand at Time *T*. Then, since the conjunction of P_0 with a set of natural laws entails that *J* refrained from raising his hand at *T*, P_0 would be false. Moreover, if *J* had raised his hand at *T*, then, given the truth of determinism, some proposition (let us call it P'_0) would have been true, where P'_0 in conjunction with *L* entails that *J* raised his hand at *T* and P'_0 expresses a state of the world at a time prior to *J*'s birth. Consequently, in refraining from raising his hand at *T*, *J* rendered P'_0 false. That is, *J* could have and in fact did refrain from performing an action, where refraining from performing that action was a sufficient condition for P'_0 being false. So we cannot argue that simply because a proposition expresses a state that the world was in prior to an individual's birth, that individual could not have rendered that proposition false, if all that is meant by having the capacity to render a proposition false is having the capacity to perform an action whose performance would be sufficient to insure its falsity. (p. 103)

Since P_0 is a true proposition that concerns only states of affairs that obtained before *J*'s birth, the first two sentences of this passage may be construed as an argument for the conclusion that (i) is not analytic. But an incomplete argument, since they would need to be conjoined with some argument for the conclusion that it is possible that determinism be true *and* it be the case that *J* could have raised his hand at *T*. (The 'determinism be true' conjunct is needed because 'The conjunction of P_0 with a set of natural laws entails that *J* refrained from raising his hand at *T*' is true only if determinism is true. The '*J* could have raised his hand' conjunct is needed because it does not follow from the assertion that there is an act *A* such that *if J* had performed *A* then P_0 would have been false, that *J* could have rendered P_0 false; obviously to get this consequence we must also suppose that *J* could have performed *A*.) That is to say, *if* the first two sentences of the quoted

passage were supplemented with an argument for compatibilism, then we should have an argument for the conclusion that (i) is not analytic. Perhaps this is the case; perhaps it is the case that the considerations Gallois raises show that *if* the Main Argument is unsound, then the argument I used to defend (5) is unsound. If this is true, it does not greatly trouble me. I should hardly want to deny that *if* the Main Argument is unsound, then at least one of the arguments I used to defend its various premises is unsound, for this is a trivial consequence of the fact that the Main Argument is valid.

The remainder of this passage can be read as a second argument against the analyticity of (i). But, so read, it is an *ignoratio elenchi*. It is an argument not against the analyticity of (i) but of

If Q is a proposition that concerns only states of affairs that obtained before S 's birth, then S cannot render Q false.

(Note that Gallois's P'_0 is a *false* proposition.) I did not employ this principle in IFD and I am quite willing to admit that its universal closure is false. In fact, given my characterization of 'can render false', its falsity is trivial. (See note 5 to IFD.)

I conclude, first, that Gallois has not shown that premise (5) of the Main Argument needs to be supplemented or revised, and, second, that nothing he says casts any doubt on the analyticity of (h), of which (5) is an instance.

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NOTES

¹ 'Van Inwagen on Free Will and Determinism', *Philosophical Studies*, this issue. Gallois's article is a criticism of my 'The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism' *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975) pp. 185–199, hereinafter cited as IFD. In the sequel I shall presuppose familiarity with IFD. The propositions referred to as '(5)' and '(6)' are the propositions so numbered in IFD.

² Or so I interpret his argument. His actual words are "... since the proposition that S can render the conjunction of P and Q false does not entail the proposition that S can render Q false." (p. 101)

³ Of course, to show that (5) is *true*, we need only find a true universal proposition of which (5) is an instance. But we wish to show not only that (5) is true, but that it is true in all J -worlds. Therefore, the universal proposition we come up with must be not only true but true in all J -worlds. Moreover, since we wish to be able to extend the type of reasoning embodied in the Main Argument more or less automatically to the case of just "any agent and any unperformed act" (see the passage from IFD quoted in the text) we should choose as our ancillary universal proposition one that is true in any possible

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world in which some agent does not perform some act. So, strictly speaking, our ancillary universal proposition need not be analytically true, but it should entail no contingent propositions other than those entailed by the proposition that some agent does not perform some act.