

# Freedom and Belief

*Revised Edition*

GALEN STRAWSON

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# *Contents*

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. 'Free'—a ruling	1
1.2. 'Determinism'—a ruling	4
1.3. Dramatis personae	5
1.4. The unimportance of determinism	7
1.5. Theories and theorists	8
1.6. A sketch of the argument	15

## PART I METAPHYSICS AND COMMITMENT

2. LIBERTARIANISM, ACTION, AND SELF-DETERMINATION	21
2.1. Introduction; the argument summarized	21
2.2. Libertarianism; a constraint	27
2.3. The explanation of action	29
2.4. Libertarianism: the constraint applied	35
2.5. Locating indeterminism	37
2.6. Can indeterminism help?	38
2.7. Evasion: the notion of choice	38
2.8. The impossibility of self-determination as to desire	41
2.9. Relocating indeterminism	43
2.10. A 'Leibnizian' view	45
2.11. Restatement and conclusion	48
3. KANT AND COMMITMENT	52
3.1. Commitment theories: their structure	52
3.2. 'Neutral' and 'Rational' freedom	54
3.3. Non-moral freedom	55
3.4. 'Will' and 'desire'	57
3.5. Kant's commitment theory	58
3.6. The inescapability of belief in freedom	60
3.7. Another approach	61
3.8. A subjectivist conclusion	62
4. COMMITMENT, ILLUSION, AND TRUTH	64
4.1. Double standards	64
4.2. Experiential facts	65
4.3. Appearances and their reality	66
4.4. Reality and its appearances	69

<b>5. NON-RATIONAL COMMITMENT: A VIEW OF FREEDOM</b>	<b>72</b>
5.1. Introduction	72
5.2. Feelings, attitudes, practices, concepts, and beliefs	73
5.3. Commitment and rationality	76
<b>6. PHENOMENOLOGY, COMMITMENT, AND WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN</b>	<b>80</b>
6.1. Feelings and the causality of reason; doings and happenings	80
6.2. Determinism, action, and the self; a thought-experiment	82
6.3. What might happen	86
6.4. Natural compatibilism	90
6.5. The true centre of commitment	94
6.6. <i>Satkāyadṛṣi</i>	101

## PART II THE OBJECTIVIST BASIS

<b>7. OBJECTIVISM: PRELIMINARIES</b>	<b>107</b>
7.1. How things stand; determinism dismissed	107
7.2. Free agents	109
7.3. A provisional definition	112
<b>8. CHOICE</b>	<b>115</b>
8.1. Introduction	115
8.2. Ability to choose	116
8.3. Fido's choice	122
8.4. Conclusion	124
<b>9. SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS</b>	<b>126</b>
9.1. Mental reflexivity and full self-consciousness	126
9.2. An attempt at demystification	130
9.3. The idea of mental singleness	133
9.4. Self-consciousness, someonehood, and freedom	139
9.5. Who is to blame?	143
9.6. Self-consciousness and choice	144
9.7. Conclusion and anticipation	146

## PART III THE SUBJECTIVIST CHALLENGE

<b>10. EVIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE</b>	<b>151</b>
10.1. The principal claim	151
10.2. Explicit <sup>o</sup> belief	151
10.3. The principle of independence	152
10.4. Evident propositions	154
10.5. Fully self-conscious belief	154

10.6.	Evidentness—a natural picture	155
10.7.	'Causally evident'	156
10.8.	Generalization; evident properties	157
10.9.	The problem restated—non-causally evident properties	158
10.10.	Causation and constitution; C-statements	162
10.11.	Options and questions	167
10.12.	Constitution relations—complications	168
10.13.	Summary; a compatibilist way out	170
10.14.	Transitional	172
<b>11.</b>	<b>CONTRAVENTION AND CONVENTION</b>	<b>175</b>
11.1.	Introductory	175
11.2.	Contracts	176
11.3.	The attribution of belief	178
11.4.	The mystery draw	181
11.5.	Natural and conventional properties	184
11.6.	Omniscience	185
11.7.	Immorality	186
11.8.	Pain	194
11.9.	'E'	196
11.10.	Conclusion	198
11.11.	Anticipation	200
<b>12.</b>	<b>THE SPECTATOR SUBJECT AND INTEGRATION</b>	<b>203</b>
12.1.	Introductory	203
12.2.	<i>Une Étrangère</i>	204
12.3.	The normal and the spectatorial	206
12.4.	A race of spectators	207
12.5.	Restatement	208
12.6.	The spectator and belief in freedom	209
12.7.	An initial conclusion	211
12.8.	The Integration condition	212
12.9.	An Attitudinal-theoretic position	214
12.10.	Determinists—life and theory	215
<b>13.</b>	<b>THE NATURAL EPICTETANS</b>	<b>218</b>
13.1.	An initial description	218
13.2.	Elaboration	220
13.3.	Hindrances and indecision	224
<b>14.</b>	<b>THE EXPERIENCE OF ABILITY TO CHOOSE</b>	<b>227</b>
14.1.	Preliminaries	227
14.2.	Experience of indecision	231
14.3.	Backtracking	233
14.4.	The Ability Suggestion and the Ability Account	234
14.5.	An alternative approach?	237
14.6.	The Ability Account, the Basic Structural Account, and a quasi-Kantian view	238

14.7. Counter-attack	241
14.8. The rejection of the Ability Suggestion	242
14.9. The Indecision Suggestion	249
14.10. Objection: the concept of choice	250
14.11. Objectivist options	252
14.12. Conclusion	254
<b>15. SUBJECTIVISM AND EXPERIENCE OF FREEDOM</b>	<b>257</b>
15.1. The espousal of Subjectivism	257
15.2. Subjectivism: prospects for a positive theory of freedom	258
15.3. Contravention: the options	260
15.4. Conclusion	267
<b>16. ANTINOMY AND TRUTH</b>	<b>269</b>
16.1. What do we want?	269
16.2. What should we believe?	273
<b>Appendix A Problem about experience</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>Appendix B Free choices and objective branching points</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Appendix C The brain in the vat as free agent</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>Appendix D A strange god</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>Appendix E The sense of self</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>Appendix F The Objectivists' last ditch</b>	<b>288</b>
<b>Appendix G Free agents</b>	<b>291</b>
<i>Bibliography</i>	317
<i>Index</i>	321