

Pereboom's argument against source compatibilism

Source compatibilism: even if DET is T, humans can still be enough of a source to be MR

Pereboom uses the 4-case argument (Prof. Plum) against the source compatibilist view

Background of the 4-case argument:

Compatibilists agree with libertarians and everyone else that SOME human behavior is caused by things that undermine the agency of the individuals who perform the behavior, and render the individual not MR in virtue of that behavior

Examples:

Clinically obsessive/compulsive behavior

Behavior from folks who are grossly out of touch with reality (read *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*)

Sleepwalking

Involuntarily drugged behavior (in some cases)

Cases of extreme manipulation, such as Stockholm Syndrome

BUT, compatibilists MUST claim that NOT ALL possible causal explanations of human behavior destroy MR by undermining agency.

SO, compatibilism needs to explain what is the difference between the cases in which causation undermines agency and cases in which it does not.

This is what Fischer's theory tries to do, with the long list of conditions that, if met, make the agent MR.

Similarly, Strawson, who gives a partial list of excusing conditions that "we" generally accept, and who essentially says that our social practices determine where to draw the line between the cases of MR and the cases of exemption from MR.

The 4-case argument (the 4 versions of Prof. Plum, who murders Mrs. White in each case)

What is the point?

To convince us that the compatibilist cannot successfully draw the line between the cases in which we exempt people from MR and the cases in which we do not.

If we are convinced, then we should say that if DET is T, then there is no relevant difference between the cases.

Implication: if DET is T, and we exempt some behavior, we should exempt all behavior.

Since we are obviously right to exempt some behavior, if DET is T, we should exempt all behavior.

One way to summarize:

The very reasons a compatibilist gives for exempting some people from MR on some occasions can be used to exempt everyone on all occasions.

How do source compatibilists respond to this?

They apply their theories about what conditions need to be met in order for a causally-determined agent to be MR. That says how to draw the relevant distinctions between the MR cases and the other cases.

E.g., Fischer says Plum is MR in all the 4 cases, because Plum acted in a reasons-responsive way, had an appreciation for moral reasons, etc., etc.

McKenna agrees with Fischer: he puts it this way: Plum in case #1 is just an ordinary person who was created in a very odd way. (How can a person whose values are hard-wired be "ordinary"? Well, once an ordinary person gets to be about 25 years of age, their basic values tend to be pretty much hard-wired.)

This leaves Pereboom insisting that it is unintuitive to believe that Plum is MR in Case 1.

What would Strawson say?

Observation

If Pereboom can't establish that source compatibilism is false, his overall program is severely damaged. He is trying to rule out all possible ways that MR could make sense. If source compatibilism works, MR does make sense even if DET is T.

Pereboom goes after the libertarians

Intro

Now that Pereboom thinks he has ruled out source compatibilism, he thinks he has thereby ruled out MR if DET is T. So, now what if DET is F? He wants to rule out MR then as well. So, he has to show that libertarianism is F.

If he is successful, he will be left with “hard incompatibilism”: source incompatibilism and no MR.

Objection to Kane’s version of libertarianism: the luck objection

In an SFA, the choice emerges by chance from a person without being caused by the person’s values, beliefs, desires, etc.. [p 102:] “Nothing about her” explains Anne’s choice. So, Anne isn’t the SOURCE of the choice in the way that is needed for MR.

Pereboom doesn’t tell us more about what is needed to be a proper SOURCE.

But he does list [p. 105] all the features of an SFA choice that Kane mentions [in Kane’s book] as being relevant to making the choice count as the agent’s choice.

Look at the list.

Pereboom points out that this very same list of features would fit a compatibilist account of determined choice. !!! Very interesting move!!! I think he’s right.

But what conclusion follows? Does this show Kane is wrong? Maybe it just shows that Kane and the compatibilists both have a pretty clear understanding of the features a choice must have in order to be linked properly to an agent who is MR in virtue of it.

That doesn’t help settle the dispute between libertarians and compatibilists, but it also doesn’t help Pereboom show that Kane is wrong.

Maybe the list will help the compatibilist distinguish between cases of MR and cases of exemption.

Objection to O’Connor’s version of libertarianism: lack of empirical evidence