

Study guide for the Ross reading.

Note that this article is about “free will” (without any particular definition), and not about MR. And, the author makes an interesting observation about the meaning of the word “determinism” as it occurs in today’s discussions of free will versus determinism (on the second page of the reading).

Then the author notes that it might SEEM that “naturalized” libertarian views might be undermined if the standard interpretation of quantum mechanics were in fact wrong, but then he says that SOME “naturalized” libertarian views would not be affected adversely, since they don’t rely on quantum indeterminacy.

What is “naturalized” libertarianism? Presumably, libertarianism that tries to picture humans as natural beings that can be investigated scientifically. It might bother you then that he counts O’Connor’s views as naturalized. We should talk about this.

Then, on page 130, just before the heading that mentions Kane, the author tells you what he intends to argue for. This is worth noting and using as you read on. Some of you will like the author’s conclusion that Kane’s reliance on quantum theory doesn’t really solve anything for the libertarian.

There are some other issues, though, that come up a bit later and these are also worth noting and remembering for future discussions this semester. Here are some that I noticed:

Is introspection reliable?

People may claim that when they introspect while making a choice, they can tell that they are free. But does introspection really provide any evidence for freedom of the will? Is it true that introspection fits O’Connor’s theory better than Kane’s? (It presumably doesn’t fit Kane’s view because Kane says that unless we are torn over a decision, our choice will be determined by causal factors, and yet we *supposedly* don’t introspect those causes at work in us.)

Wegner’s empirical results (and similar results from other psychologists)

Pay attention to the details given about Wegner’s study. It has been claimed (for example, by Wegner) that his results show that our actions are caused by unconscious brain processes and that our conscious deliberation or reasoning has nothing to do with guiding our choices. This, if true, would undermine many libertarian views.

Libet’s empirical results (in the Appendix). Unfortunately, the author summarizes these results so briefly that you may not get what’s involved. Basically, Libet showed that something goes on in the brain shortly before an agent decides to voluntarily flick his/her wrist at a time of his/her own choosing. Some have claimed that this shows that the brain has already “decided” (without benefit of any conscious thought) to flick the wrist, prior to the agent’s conscious decision to do it.