

Lecture 3: Incompatibilism

Incompatibilism: free will &/or moral responsibility are incompatible with determinism.

Two kinds of incompatibilism:

- 1) Libertarianism: free will & determinism are incompatible, but we have free will.
- 2) Hard incompatibilism: free will & determinism are incompatible & we lack free will.

Robert Kane's Libertarianism

- Certain factors (beliefs, motives, desires, etc.) cause our decisions.
 - But just because a decision-event was *caused*, doesn't mean it was *determined*. A decision could involve non-deterministic or probabilistic causation.
 - I.e. causes might make a certain decision-outcome more *likely* but not *necessary*.
- Thus, decisions could be caused by beliefs, motives, desires, etc. but the decision-outcome could nevertheless be indeterminate.
- Certain important 'self-forming' decisions are indeterministic in this way.
- These indeterministic self-forming decisions are the source of our free will.

Kane faces two big hurdles:

1) Do Kane's indeterministic self-forming decisions fit with modern brain science?

Kane: Stress & tension of making a self-forming decision amplifies & makes salient the quantum indeterminacy that always exists in your neural networks.

You 'overcome' chaotic 'noise of indeterminacy' by making a choice.

But... Manuel Vargas: "*there are no widely accepted indeterministic models of brain activity, nor, for that matter, even an influential but contested model of indeterministic brain activity.*"¹

2) The 'intelligibility problem': how do indeterministic self-forming decisions instantiate free will rather than just luck or chance?

Indeterminism seems to pose as big a problem for free will as determinism does:

- If choice was undetermined, you could have chosen differently given exactly same past until moment of choice - same exact deliberation, beliefs, desires etc.
- But if same exact process of deliberation about same beliefs, desires etc. could result in a different choice, choice outcome seems like chance, not free will.

¹ Vargas, p.144.

Derk Pereboom's Hard Incompatibilism

If determinism is true, we lack the free will required for moral responsibility.

If indeterminism is true, we lack the free will required for moral responsibility.

1. Pereboom's argument for hard incompatibilism – Plum cases

Professor Plum murders Ms White. He acts in character, not under compulsion, in line with second order desires, etc. – i.e. he fulfils all normal compatibilist requirements for free will & moral responsibility.

Case	Plum's background	Responsible for murder?
1	Created and controlled by scientists.	No.
2	Like an ordinary person except programmed at birth.	No.
3	Ordinary person but programmed through youth training.	No – generalises from cases 1 & 2.
4	Ordinary person in a deterministic world.	No – how relevantly different from case 3?

Thus, if we *consistently* apply our practices of excluding people from moral responsibility, we must exclude everyone from moral responsibility in a deterministic world.

2. Meaningful lives without free will & moral responsibility?

Pereboom: We *can* give up free will & responsibility and still have human relationships.

- Instead of moral praise & blame, let's turn to moral admonition & encouragement.
 - Moral admonition & encouragement presuppose only that offender has done wrong, not that they're to blame for doing so.
- We'd be better off in some ways by giving up on free will and moral responsibility:
 - Sometimes fairer & more humane to use moral admonition/encouragement approach rather than moral praise/blame approach. E.g. Quarantine wrongdoers where necessary, rather than punish them.

3. Two worries about Pereboom's hard incompatibilism:

1. Too quick to conclude that there's no pertinent differences between cases 1-3 & case 4?
2. Really that simple to replace moral praise & blame with moral encouragement & admonition? (Think Strawson on the reactive stance.)

References:

Manuel Vargas, 'Revisionism', in Fischer et al, *Four Views on Free Will* (2007), pp.126-165.

Derk Pereboom, 'Hard Incompatibilism' in Fischer et al, *Four Views on Free Will* (2007), pp.85-125.