

## Philosophy of Psychology Week 12

- ⇒ Last week's team exercise
- ⇒ About the final exam
- ⇒ Pereboom, "Determinism al Dente"

## Last week's team exercise

- ⇒ Do you think that addictions can be exculpating ("don't blame him for what he did, he's addicted")?
- ⇒ Make sure to give examples (fictitious or real) and to compare different kinds of addictions if relevant (e.g., physical vs psychological addictions).

## Pereboom on Free Will

- ⇒ Pereboom defends hard determinism.



## Hard determinism

- ⇒ Rows: Is determinism true?
- ⇒ Columns: is determinism compatible with free will?

	Yes	No
Yes	soft determinism (Dennett, Churchland)	hard determinism (Pereboom)
No	?	libertarianism (Libet)
	(Compatibilism)	(Incompatibilism)

## Pereboom on compatibilism

- ⇒ Pereboom makes his point against compatibilism using four different versions of the story of Mr Green's murder of Ms. Peacock.
  - What goes on in Green's head and what happens as a result is exactly the same in each version of story.
  - In particular, in each case Green's act is fully motivated by his beliefs and desires (he acts rationally, in that he really wants to kill Ms Peacock).
  - The differences are in what happens before Green makes up his mind and kills Ms Peacock.



## Case 1

- ⇒ A mad scientist implanted a device in Green's brain. Later, he induced in Green desires and reasons to kill Ms Peacock, including the desire to have these desires and reasons.



### Case 2

- ⇒ Mad scientists created Mr Green as a baby, making sure (by “programming” his nervous system in the right way) that he would have the right egoistic mentality to kill Ms Peacock one day. However, they do not control him directly like in case #1.



### Case 3

- ⇒ Mr. Green's parents and culture trained him from an early age to become an egoistic killer—to have the motivations and way of thinking which led him to kill Ms Peacock.



### Case 4

- ⇒ Mr Green is a normal human being raised in normal circumstances. How he got his strong desire to kill Ms Peacock, is not specified, but it was determined by the laws of physics.

### Pereboom against compatibilism

- ⇒ Two main points:
  - All of the main compatibilist accounts get these cases wrong: they predict freedom and responsibility where there is not in all cases.
    - This is most obvious with case #2.
  - Incompatibilism offers the best overall explanation of the moral status of these cases.

### Three compatibilist views

- ⇒ Compatibilists views on free will Pereboom considers:
  - A Humean view:
    - an action is free if and only if it is what the agent really want to do (the agent has the power to do what he really wants when performing it).
  - Frankfurt's view:
    - an action is free if and only if it is caused in the right way by one's mental states, and one wanted to have those mental states.
  - Fischer's view:
    - an action is free if and only if it is the result of the agent's rational deliberation.

### The first point

- ⇒ The main compatibilist views count case #2 (for example) as one were Green is morally responsible, but he is not.
  - Case #2 is a *counterexample* to these views.

### ***The Humean view***

- ⇒ The Humean view:
  - an action is free if and only if it is what the agent really want to do (one had the power to do what one wanted when one performed it).
- ⇒ In case #2, Mr Green is not in any way coerced, so he is free and responsible according to the Humean view.
- ⇒ But, Pereboom claims, case #2 is not one were we would hold Mr. Green responsible.

### ***Frankfurt's view***

- ⇒ Frankfurt's view:
  - an action is free if and only if it is caused in the right way by one's mental states, and one wanted to have those mental states.
- ⇒ In case #2 (and even in case #1), Mr. Green's action was caused in the right way by his mental states and he really wanted to be an egoistic killer, so he is free according to Frankfurt.
- ⇒ Again, Pereboom claims, Mr is in fact not responsible in case #2, so Frankfurt's view is wrong.

### ***Fischer's view***

- ⇒ Fischer's view:
  - an action is free if and only if it is the result of the agent's rational deliberation.
- ⇒ In case #2 (but maybe not in case #1), Mr Green's action is the result of his rational deliberation, so he is free and morally responsible on Fischer's view.
- ⇒ Again, Pereboom claims, Mr is in fact not responsible in case #2, so Fischer's view is wrong.

### ***The second point***

- ⇒ Pereboom also has a more systematic argument for incompatibilism:
  1. There is no significant difference between the four cases. We should say one of two things:
    - a) Green is morally responsible in all four cases
    - b) Green is not morally responsible in any of the cases.
  2. Green is not responsible in cases 1 and 2 at least, so (a) is ruled out.
  3. An incompatibilist view offers the best explanation of why (b) is true.
  4. So we should accept incompatibilism.

### ***Pereboom's incompatibilism***

- ⇒ According to Pereboom, an action is free if and only if it was not determined by factors beyond one's control.
  - (Pereboom rejects the kind of incompatibilism formulated in terms of "having the ability to do otherwise". This is in section II)
- ⇒ This view predicts that Green is not free in any of the cases.
- ⇒ According to Pereboom, it is this view which best explains why (b) is true.

### ***An objection to premise 1***

- ⇒ Maybe there is a significant difference between the cases: in cases 1-3, others people influence Mr. Green more or less directly. Maybe Mr. Green is not responsible in those cases (but responsible in case 4) because *they* bear the responsibility.
- ⇒ Pereboom responds that the cases can be changed to involve machines without altering our judgements about them.

### **Criticism**

- ⇒ The compatibilist accounts of free will Pereboom considers might not be the best ones. What about this account, which we considered as an improvement on Churchland's view?
  - A free act is an event such that all the main factors which contributed to its coming about were within one's control at some point.
  - Note how similar this is to Pereboom's own view. The difference is that only the *main* factors (the important ones) need to be under one's control.

### **Criticism**

- ⇒ This view seems to get the cases right:
  - In cases 1 and 2, important factors were not under Green's control at any point (the actions of the mad scientists controlling or programming him).
  - In case 3, it is not completely clear whether Green should be held responsible or not. Correspondingly, it is not completely clear whether the important causal factors were under his control.
  - In case 4, for all we know, the important factors were under his control, so he was probably free and is probably responsible.

### **Criticism**

- ⇒ Furthermore, the proposed view seems to mark an important difference between the cases, which contradicts premise 1 of Pereboom's argument.

### **Pereboom on libertarianism**

- ⇒ Libertarians maintain that free will is incompatible with determinism, but that we have free will (hence that determinism is false).
- ⇒ On their views, our decisions are not determined by anything.

### **Pereboom on libertarianism**

- ⇒ Pereboom against libertarianism:
  1. *Physical* determinism is well supported by physical science.
  2. If physical determinism is true, then decisions without physical causes would have to always *coincide* with physical causes for our actions.
  3. It is not plausible that such coincidences happen whenever we act.
  4. Therefore, our decisions have physical causes.
- ⇒ Note the similarity between this argument and the argument from causal closure for epiphenomenalism.

### **Pereboom on libertarianism**

- ⇒ Pereboom also offers a version of this argument based on the statistical physical determinism (SPD) uncovered by quantum mechanics (QM):
  1. SPD is well supported by physical science.
  2. If SPD is true, then the *distribution* of decisions without physical causes would have to always coincide with the distribution of physical causes predicted by QM.
  3. This would be too big a coincidence in the long run.
  4. Therefore, our decisions have physical causes.

### **First criticism of hard determinism**

- ⇒ Criticism: If hard determinism were true, we would have no reason to attempt to accomplish anything, because our deliberations and choices could make no difference.
- Without free will, there is no point trying to figure out what we want to do, it's already determined.

### **Pereboom's response**

- ⇒ "As long as one's actions are determined by deliberation and choice, and one does not know beforehand what the result of one's deliberation will be, there will be no interference with the deliberative process."

### **Determinism vs Fatalism**

- ⇒ The main point: it's not true that your deliberations make no difference.
- Your deliberation makes a difference if it is true that *had you not deliberated or had you deliberated differently, you would have acted differently*.
- This is compatible with determinism.
- ⇒ Put differently, the objector conflates determinism with *fatalism*, roughly the view that:
  - Whatever you do, the same thing will happen.

### **Second criticism of hard determinism**

- ⇒ Another common criticism of hard determinism is that, if it were true and accepted by everyone, then it would be the end of society as we know it, because society is based on responsibility.
- ⇒ The point is not so much that hard determinism is false, but that it would be very bad news if true.

### **Pereboom's response**

- ⇒ According to Pereboom, hard determinism is not bad news and could be accepted without changing our moral practices much.
- We could no longer rationally blame or praise other people, or hold others responsible for their actions, but our systems of morals wouldn't collapse because of this.
- ⇒ He considers several examples of practices that might have to change, and argue that whatever change would have to take place would be for the better.

### **What to do with perpetrators of immoral acts?**

- ⇒ Take Mr Green again, and suppose scenario #4 occurs—he kills Ms Peacock for egoistic reasons, and there is nothing special in his history to excuse him.
- ⇒ If hard determinism is true, Mr Green cannot be blamed or held morally responsible. He is excused.
- ⇒ Wouldn't recognition of hard determinism lead us to *encourage* behaviour like Mr Green's?



### **Mr Green again**

- ⇒ Pereboom argues that not:
  - We can still recognize that what Mr Green did was in some sense wrong (if only in the sense of undesirable).
  - As a result, we have good reason to take some measures to prevent behaviour like this:
    - We are still perfectly justified in dissuading behaviour like Mr Green's using threats of punishment.
    - We are still perfectly justified in teaching children not to act like Mr Green.
    - Most emotional reactions to what happens are still justified (one's sadness at what happened to Ms Peacock is justified).
    - etc.

### **Mr Green again**

- ⇒ The only thing we can't do rationally, if we believe hard determinism, is blame Mr Green, or let ourselves fall prey to emotional reactions fuelled by his supposed blameworthiness (e.g., anger).
- ⇒ Pereboom argues that this is a good thing.
  - According to him, anger based on ascription of blame is never a good thing anyway. The *good* social and moral practices are still justified if hard determinism is true.

### **Module summary in 5 slides**

### **Module summary**

- ⇒ The main question: do we have the kind of free will required for moral responsibility?
- ⇒ Four sub-questions:
  - What is this free will?
  - How does determinism bear on the existence of free will?
  - Is determinism true?
  - Do psychology and neuroscience tell us anything relevant?

### **Module summary**

- ⇒ What is free will? Some suggestions:
  - The power to do what one really wants (Hume, Hobbes)
  - Being in control (Churchland)
  - Actions not determined by causal factors beyond one's control (Pereboom)
  - Actions whose important determining factors were under one's control (me)
  - The ability to do otherwise than one does
  - ... other views discussed by Churchland and Pereboom (inner causes, actions that feel right, etc)

### **Module summary**

- ⇒ The relevance of determinism
  - Some accounts of free will make it compatible with determinism
    - Hume's and Hobbes'
    - Churchland's
    - Dennett's
  - Others make it incompatible:
    - Pereboom's
    - "ability to do otherwise", on some interpretations

### ***Module summary***

- ⇒ Is determinism true?
  - Unqualified determinism seems false because of quantum mechanics.
  - But statistical determinism seems true.
  - There is disagreement as to whether they have the same implications.
    - Libet suggests statistical determinism leaves room for a kind of free will incompatible with unqualified determinism.
    - Most authors (e.g. Churchland and Pereboom) find that the implications of statistical determinism for free will are the same as the implications of unqualified determinism.

### ***Module summary***

- ⇒ The relevance of psychology and neuroscience
  - Libet thinks his experiment provides evidence of limitations on free will (which he thinks of as incompatible with determinism).
  - Dennett disagrees for many reasons, one of which is that Libet's experiment bears only on consciousness of will, which has no relevant connection to freedom of will.
  - Churchland thinks neuroscience can tell us what being free really is.
    - She is probably wrong: she assumes (roughly) that being free is having a normally functioning nervous system, which is false.

***The End.***