

Review of: "Beyond the Luck Problem: Addressing Discrimination in Event-Causal Libertarianism"

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In this paper, Maria Sekatskaya provides a discrimination problem with event causal libertarian free will. She imagines Carol, whose decisions have always been realized by deterministic brain processes, so she is not responsible for them. She then imagines Linda, whose decisions are realized by indeterministic brain processes, so she is responsible for them. Carol and Linda are phenomenologically indistinguishable, so both are equally praised/blamed by themselves and others for their actions, but only Linda is actually responsible. Fortunately, portable neural scanners are invented to discern who is actually responsible. Sekatskaya argues that this thought experiment leads to two unpalatable options. First, we can treat Linda and Carol unequally, by holding Linda responsible but not Carol. But it seems unjust to discriminate on the basis of whether their history contains deterministic brain processes or indeterministic brain processes. Alternatively, we can acknowledge there are no morally relevant differences between Carol and Linda, but this undermines the view that libertarianism delivers responsibility whereas compatibilism does not.

If the only difference between Linda and Carol is that Carol's decisions are completely caused by deterministic brain processes over which Carol has no control, while Linda's decisions are completely caused by indeterministic brain processes over which Linda has no control, then I agree with Sekatskaya that there would be no morally relevant differences between Carol and Linda, and libertarianism would be jeopardized. Sekatskaya seems to have this 'no control' intuition in mind, for she says (when discussing slightly different fictional characters): "An agent cannot control her neural processes on the level of individual neurons. There was nothing that Carol* could have done differently in order to be more like Rachel*. She did the same thing as Rachel*: she deliberated whether to jump or not and decided to jump. It just so happened that her deliberation process was deterministic and not indeterministic, and it would be unfair to treat her differently for a difference that was not her fault. Microlevel differences in how one's neural processes are realized is not something that the agent can control" (13). If our decisions are completely caused by factors over which we have no control, we are not responsible for those decisions and actions, regardless of whether those causal factors are deterministic brain processes or indeterministic brain processes.

This 'no control' intuition is similar to the intuition guiding the manipulation argument against compatibilism. A manipulative neuroscientist controls Plum's brain such that he reasons, and then decides, to kill White. Even though it is his own reasons causing his own decision to kill White, Plum is not responsible for White's death, since Plum's reasons and decisions are completely caused by factors he lacks control over, namely, the manipulative neuroscientist. Similarly, Sekatskaya is correct that Linda is not responsible if, though her reasons cause her decisions, those reasons and

decisions are themselves completely caused (deterministically or indeterministically) by neural processes over which she has no control. I agree with Sekatskaya that the libertarians she considers (Kane, Lemos, Balaguer, and Franklin) face this problem.

Libertarians can avoid Sekatskaya's objection, however. Libertarians can argue that Linda's decision, unlike Carol's decision, is not completely caused by neural processes in her brain over which she lacks control. For Carol, it is granted that determinism holds, as all the decisions in her life are determined by brain processes over which she lacks control, so she is clearly not responsible. However, if Linda's indeterministic brain processing opens up a window for Linda's distinct reasons and decisions to make their own causal contributions, then Linda can be held responsible. After all, it is no longer the case that Linda's decisions are completely caused by neural processes in her brain over which she lacks control. Rather, Linda's decisions are caused in part by her neural processing, and also caused by her distinct reasoning process. This scenario can be achieved within a naturalistic worldview by endorsing a nonreductive physicalist model of libertarian free will, where indeterministic brain processes subvene Linda's distinct reasoning processes, which jointly cause her decision. This can also be done via agent-causal libertarian models, where indeterministic brain processes (along with Linda's reasoning) fix the probabilities involved in Linda's decision, but Linda herself makes the final decision. It is beyond the scope of this review to flesh out these possibilities in any more detail. Suffice it to say, while Sekatskaya poses an important challenge to several libertarian models, avenues remain open for libertarians to avoid Sekatskaya's objection.