

LIBERTARIANISM

Ted Sider, Metaphysics

1. CHISHOLM'S DEFENSE OF INCOMPATIBILISM

- i) If I'm responsible for the shooting, then I could have refrained from doing the shooting
- ii) If determinism is true, then I couldn't have refrained from the shooting
- iii) Therefore, if determinism is true then I'm not responsible for the shooting

(a) The character objection

One may object: But surely if there were such a thing as a man who is really *good*, then he would be responsible for things that he would do; yet he would be unable to do anything other than just what it is that he does do, since, being good, he will always choose to do what is best. The answer, I think, is suggested by a comment that Thomas Reid makes upon an ancient author. The author had said of Cato, 'He was good because he could not be otherwise', and Reid observes: 'This saying, if understood literally and strictly, is not the praise of Cato, but of his constitution, which was no more the work of Cato than his existence'. (Chisholm, pp. 25-26)

(b) The conditional analysis objection

Conditional Analysis: The following sentence forms mean the same:

- (a) Person S did act *a*, but could have done otherwise
- (b) Person S did act *a*, and if S had chosen not to do *a* then S wouldn't have done *a*

2. INDETERMINISM

Extreme indeterminism: An act is free iff it has no cause

Moderate indeterminism: An act is free iff it is caused by some act of willing and desiring, which in turn has no cause

3. CHISHOLM'S LIBERTARIANISM

... at least one of the events that are involved in the act is caused, not by any other events, but by something else instead. And this something else can only be the agent — the man. (Chisholm, 28)

Transeunt causation: *event* causation – occurs between events

Immanent causation: agent causation – an agent causes some event to occur

Chisholm's Libertarianism: The free will thesis is true; incompatibilism is true; and: a person S commits act *a* freely iff there is some cerebral event *ce* such that i) *ce* is not caused by any other event, ii) *ce* is immanently caused by S, and iii) there is a chain of events, e_1, e_2, \dots, e_n , such that *ce* transeuntly causes e_1 , e_1 transeuntly causes e_2 ... , and e_n transeuntly causes *a*

4. HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SCIENCE

...in one very strict sense of the terms, there can be no science of man. If we think of science as a matter of finding out what laws happen to hold, and if the statement of a law tells us what kinds of events are caused by what other kinds of events, then there will be human actions which we cannot explain by subsuming them under any laws. We cannot say, 'It is causally necessary that, given such and such desires and beliefs, and being subject to such and such stimuli, the agent will do so and so'. For at times the agent, if he chooses, may rise above his desires and do something else instead. (Chisholm, 33)

A law of immanent causation: If at some time t , person S is in conditions x , y , and z , then S will (immanently) cause an event of type E

The argument from neuroscience

- i) If Chisholm's libertarianism is true, then there can be no complete science of human behavior which states laws covering all human action (including human neural activity)
 - ii) There *can* be a complete science of human behavior which states laws covering all human action (including human neural activity)
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- iii) Therefore, Chisholm's Libertarianism is not true

For any neural event e , we can form the concept of an event which is the *total neural predecessor* of e . To build such an event, we'll go back in time a tiny bit (say, a second), and wrap together the states of all the particles in the universe that, according to physics, could be causally relevant to the state of the brain at the time of e 's occurrence.

The argument from physics

- i) Physics of some kind not terribly unlike actual (deterministic) physics is true
 - ii) If i) is true, then every neural event is caused by some other event, namely, its neural predecessor
 - iii) If every neural event is caused by some other event, then Chisholm's Libertarianism is false
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- iv) Therefore, Chisholm's Libertarianism is false