

The luck objection to event-causal libertarianism: it is here to stay

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Franklin's ("Farewell to the luck (and *Mind*) argument", 2011, p.201) preliminary formulation:

- (i) If an action (or choice) is undetermined, then it is a matter of luck.
- (ii) If an action (or choice) is a matter of luck, then it is not free.

This poses a serious problem for libertarianism: if sound, the luck objection seems to show that libertarianism is incoherent.

Qualifications and clarifications:

- The fact that an event or action is undetermined does not entail that it is merely a matter of luck. In other words, the event or action may only be *partly* a matter of luck.
- There is an intuitive connection between luck and control (especially in (ii)).
- There appears to be an *inverse* relation between luck and control.
- There is a parallel or analogous problem of control.
- The problem is (essentially) about *contrasts*: choosing to do this *rather than* that.

I propose the following **general formulation** of the luck (and control) argument:

(LA) Suppose that S decided to A (for any agent S and act-type A):

- (1) If S's decision to A was undetermined, then
 - (a) S might have decided to do otherwise (including not to do anything), and
 - (b) What S decided to do was at least partly a matter of luck—it was at least partly a matter of luck that S decided to do A (and not otherwise).
- (2) If it was partly a matter of luck which action S decided to perform, then S's choice was not made with free will.

(CA) Suppose that S decided to A (for any agent S and act-type A):

- (1) If S's decision to A was undetermined, then
 - (a) S might have decided to do otherwise (including not to do anything), and
 - (b) Nothing and no one could have had the required degree or kind of control over what S decided to do. In particular, S did not have the required degree or kind of control over whether or not to decide to do A (and not otherwise).
- (2) If S did not have the required degree or kind of control over which action to perform, then S's choice was not made with free will.

Specific formulation 1: Ensurance

Core idea: If an agent performs an undetermined action A (at t), then she could not have ensured or guaranteed that she A-ed *rather than* B-ed (at t). (p.209)

Two premises for an argument (p.210):

- (1) Undetermined actions are not ensured.
- (2) If actions are not ensured, then the action is a matter of luck.

Haji's proposal: An agent can *ensure* that she performs an action A only if she has *antecedent control* over A: control "to see to it" that she performs A rather than something else.

Franklin's reconstruction (p.210): An agent S has antecedent control over an action A* at t₂ just in case S has the power at t₁ to A and if S A-ed at t₁ then A would deterministically bring about A* at t₂.

Specific formulation 2: The rollback argument

Example: Alice's choice (van Inwagen 2000)

- (1) If an action is undetermined, then it is a matter of luck ("ground-floor chance").
- (2) If the occurrence of an event E (at t) was a matter of luck, then no one was able to bring about or prevent E (at t).

Franklin's account of abilities:

Roughly, an agent S is able to A (at t) if there is a sufficiently large set of close possible worlds in which S performs A (at t). (p.218)

According to this account, Alice has the ability (to choose) to tell the truth and the ability (to choose) to tell a lie. "What is undetermined is Alice's *exercising* her ability to choose to tell the truth." (p.218)

Specific formulation 3: Contrastive explanation

Core idea: "luck" consists in the unavailability of a certain kind of explanation. Roughly, an undetermined choice to A is partly a matter of luck in the sense that there is no *contrastive* explanation of why the agent chooses to A rather than otherwise.

Franklin's reconstruction of Mele's (2006) argument:

- (1) If S performs an undetermined action A at t in the world W and there is some possible world W* that shares the same laws and past as W up to t, but in which S B-s, then there is nothing that accounts for the difference between world W in which S A-ed and W* in which S B-ed.
- (2) If nothing accounts for the difference, then the difference is just a matter of luck.
- (3) If the difference is just a matter of luck, then it is partly a matter of luck that S A-ed in W and partly a matter of luck that S B-ed in W*.
- (4) If an action is partly a matter of luck, then the action is not free.
- (5) Therefore, if an action is undetermined, then it is not free.

"It is hard to believe that an action that is partly a matter of luck could also be free and thus one for which an agent is morally responsible." (pp.221)

- Franklin: luck arguments exploit the intuition that the presence of luck undermines or diminishes control.
- In this argument, however, Mele defines "luck" as the absence of contrastive explanation.
- But lack of explanation "does not tightly track lack of control" (p.221).
- Hence, the chain of inference from 2 to 4 is dubious.

An alternative route:

- (2*) If nothing accounts for the difference, then it is partly a matter of luck that she A-ed in W and partly a matter of luck that she B-ed in W*.
- (4) If an action is partly a matter of luck, then the action is not free.
- (5) Therefore, if an action is undetermined, then it is not free.

- Franklin's objection to (1). Hitchcock has argued, convincingly, that undetermined events can have contrastive explanations. In cases of free choice, the relevant contrastive explanations are provided by facts about the agent's reason: there is a contrastive explanation, if the reason-states that caused the choice raised the probability of the agent's making that choice.
- Franklin's objection to (2*). The same argument as against 2: lack of contrastive explanation does not entail (track or indicate) lack of control.