

## **The Problem of Luck and the Contradictory Nature of Moral Responsibility in the Libertarian Accounts of Free Will\***

*A.S. Mishura*

*National Research University Higher School of Economics,  
Moscow, Russia*

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to reveal the structural problem of libertarian accounts of free will. It is divided into three parts. In the first part, I formulate the main principles of libertarian accounts from the perspective of their values. I argue that there are two main understandings of autonomy that motivate libertarian project: causal-autonomy and substance-autonomy. Causal-autonomy refers to independency from the factors that are beyond the control of the agent. Substance-autonomy concerns the existence of the substance of self, which is self-sufficient and exercises control over a person's behavior. I show that different strands of metaphysical libertarianism could be understood within the context of this distinction. Agent-causal theories emphasize the value of substance-autonomy as a necessary condition for causal-autonomy. Event-causal libertarianism considers causal-autonomy to be sufficient for genuine freedom of will. In the second part, I discuss different formulations of the problem of luck. I show the respective advantages of compatibilist position in the context of the problem of luck and sketch the main strategies of libertarian responses to this problem. Four versions of the problem of luck are discussed: rollback argument, promise argument, the problem of contrastive explanation of action and Hume's statement of the problem of luck. In the third part, I develop Hume's criticism of libertarianism making this criticism independent from Hume's denial of the possibility of causal indeterminism. I argue that causal account of action both in event-causal theories and in agent-causal theories leads to contradictory intuitions about agent's responsibility in indeterministic universe. My argument purports to show that attributions of moral responsibility for indetermined actions are not grounded because person is intuitively both responsible and not responsible for these actions.

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**Keywords:** luck, free will, libertarianism, indeterminism, free action, compatibilism, moral responsibility.

**Aleksandr S. Mishura** – Ph.D. in Philosophy, Research Fellow of the International Laboratory for Logic, Linguistics and Formal Philosophy, Senior Lecturer of the School of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, National Research University Higher School of Economics.

amishura@hse.ru

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5831-8896>

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## **Проблема удачи и противоречивость моральной ответственности в либертарианских теориях свободы воли\***

*А.С. Мишура*

*Национальный исследовательский университет*

*«Высшая школа экономики», Москва, Россия*

### **Аннотация**

Цель данной статьи – обнаружить противоречие, которое ведет к возникновению проблемы удачи в либертарианских теориях свободы воли. Статья разделена на три части. В первой части кратко формулируются основные принципы либертарианского подхода к пониманию свободы воли, выделяются ценности, мотивирующие сторонников данного подхода. Разделяются два понимания ценности автономного агента: причинная автономия и субстанциальная автономия, каждая из которых представляется значимой для либертарианского понимания свободы воли. В контексте данных ценностей осмысливается различие между ключевыми направлениями метафизического либертарианства в современной философии. Во второй части анализируются основные версии аргументов от удачи, а также защитные стратегии либертарианцев в отношении данных аргументов. Кроме того, демонстриру-

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ется, какие преимущества имеет позиция компатибилизма в контексте проблемы удачи. В третьей части эксплицируется противоречие, которое обуславливает возникновение проблемы удачи в либертарианских теориях. Демонстрируется, что приписывание моральной ответственности либертарианскому агенту приводит к противоречиям, поскольку индетерминизм исключает возможность с необходимостью переходить от суждения о поступке, к суждению о моральной ответственности личности, которая его совершила.

**Ключевые слова:** проблема удачи, свобода воли, индетерминизм, либертарианство, свобода действия, компатибилизм, моральная ответственность.

**Мишура Александр Сергеевич** – кандидат философских наук, научный сотрудник Международной лаборатории логики, лингвистики и формальной философии, старший преподаватель Школы философии, факультета гуманитарных наук Национального исследовательского университета «Высшая школа экономики».

amishura@hse.ru

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5831-8896>

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## Introduction

Do we have free will if everything in the world is *indeterminate*? Usually the question is not posed in this way. On the contrary, traditionally the problem of freedom was associated with a real or imaginary threat of a total determination of actions<sup>1</sup>. How could indeterminism that is supposed to provide genuine alternative possibilities to the agent become a threat for freedom of will? The problem of luck, which will be discussed in this article, clearly illustrates that indeterminism is a threat to freedom. The purpose of this article is to discover a contradiction leading, in our opinion, to the problem of luck in libertarian theories. The article is divided into three parts. In the first part, we briefly formulate the basic principles of the libertarian approach to the question of free will from the point of

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<sup>1</sup> An appropriate formulation of the problem of free will is already presented in ancient [Frede 2011; Stolyarov 2011], medieval [Stolyarov 1999; Hasker 2011], modern philosophy, including the disputation between T. Hobbes with Bishop Bramhol, and until today [Kane 2011].

view of those values that motivate the proponents of this approach. In the second part, we will examine the main versions of the arguments from luck as well as the defensive strategies of libertarians with respect to these arguments. In the third part, we explicate the basic contradiction that leads to the emergence of the problem of luck in libertarian theories.

Before proceeding to the main part, a few methodological observations should be made. Firstly, in this article we proceed from the fact that the problem of free will is closely connected with the problem of moral responsibility. This is especially true of the libertarian understanding of free will, which is designed to give a person *more*<sup>2</sup> responsibility for action than is possible in the case of the truth of the doctrine of causal determinism. This assumption is significant for our work since we will develop the problem of luck, precisely on the basis of the question of the moral responsibility of the agent for an indeterminate action<sup>3</sup>. Secondly, since the purpose of the article is to explicate a contradiction in the foundations of libertarianism, we restrict ourselves to a brief description of the defensive strategies that libertarians apply to specific versions of the luck arguments. If the contradiction in question does occur, then the existing defensive strategies will not be able to solve the problem of luck.

Thirdly, the variant of explication of the luck problem proposed in the article does not pretend to be unique. Therefore, we assume that the basis of libertarianism may involve a number of contradictions and not just one single contradiction that we will discuss<sup>4</sup>. It is important to add that the proposed version of the explication of the problem of luck is largely related to the intuitions expressed by D. Hume. Hume believed that, excluding the necessary connection between the

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<sup>2</sup> This follows from the structure of the libertarian position: since it supports the thesis of the incompatibility of free will and determinism, there must be an understanding of freedom that is incompatible with determinism but compatible with indeterminism. It is this freedom that should become the basis of the moral responsibility of the agent.

<sup>3</sup> This approach is largely due to the fact that our intuitions regarding moral responsibility are usually much clearer than intuitions regarding free will. The reasons for this state of affairs are of particular interest.

<sup>4</sup> As the most interesting examples of criticism of libertarian theories, it is worth mentioning the book of R. Clark, which details the problems of the most influential libertarian theories of our time [Clarke 2003], the book *Hard Luck* by N. Levy [Levy 2011], V.V. Vasilyev's article "Two Dead Ends of Incompatibilism" [Vasilyev 2016] as well as the works of D. Pereboom [Pereboom 2001; Pereboom 2016].

agent's personality and his act, we make a person's act something random [Hume 1888, 407]. We would like to clarify his thesis: adding ontologically real alternative possibilities, we create a contradiction in our intuitions regarding the responsibility of the person for the act. The point is not that an indeterminate act has no causes and not that it is simply random, but that it might not have happened. Modern libertarians can reject Hume's arguments, pointing out that indeterministic causation is conceivable. For example, actions could be indeterministically caused by the reasons of the agent. However, in our opinion, the spirit of Humean criticism can be preserved. Even if indeterministic causality is conceivable, in the case of free action it threatens moral responsibility and does not help to establish it.

### Libertarian Values

The problem of luck arises in indeterministic, that is, libertarian, theories of free will<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, studying this problem, it is necessary to keep in mind the main features of the libertarian approach to free will. In this section, we will not limit ourselves to the standard formula according to which freedom is incompatible with determinism but actually obtains in our world due to the indeterminism. We will rather try to reveal a kind of libertarian dream about freedom of will. Real libertarian theories are deeply problematic, we will talk about their problems in the next section. However, the persistence with which libertarians uphold their problematic theories is difficult to understand without understanding the values behind libertarianism. The values of libertarianism has to be understood in order to provide a correct diagnosis for these theories. Furthermore, compatibilists may try to assimilate these values into their own theories<sup>6</sup>. Hard incompatibilists can make their position even more radical, casting doubt on the very values that motivate libertarians. The idea of autonomy is at the heart of the libertarian approach to freedom. The idea of autonomy, in turn, can be further analyzed by separating two ideas of autonomy: (a) the

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<sup>5</sup> However, it is worth noting that some versions of the luck argument were presented as arguments against compatibilism [Mele 2006; Levy 2011].

<sup>6</sup> In our opinion, this is happening in the most successful compatibilist theories of our time. Thus, the values of autonomy, which we will discuss later, can be expressed in the language of the theory of H. Frankfurt [Frankfurt 1971] as well as the theory of G. Watson [Watson 1975]. In the case of Frankfurt, autonomy will mean relative independence from the desires of the first order and following one's own desires of the second order. In the case of Watson, autonomy can be thematized through the concept of a value system of the agent.

idea of causal autonomy; (b) the idea of substantial autonomy. Both are crucial to the libertarian view of freedom. The idea of causal autonomy is related to a person's freedom from various "external"<sup>7</sup> circumstances: from the past, laws of nature, genetics and social environment. It is this idea that leads libertarians to the adoption of indeterminism. At the same time, indeterminism is conceived not as a negation of causal relationships between events but as a denial of deterministic causality in which causes necessitate the actions they cause<sup>8</sup> [Kane 1999, 223]. An indeterminate event still has causes. However, these causes do not guarantee its occurrence but only make it more probable. In this regard, the meaning of causal *determinism* can be described by a conjunction of two theses: (a) every event has a cause; (b) the cause of any event determines it with probability of 1 [Clarke 2003, 4]. Many libertarians agree with the first position but dispute the second [Kane 1996; O'Connor 2000; Ekstrom 2000]. However, indeterminism itself is not valuable for libertarians. Indeterminism should provide the agent with alternative possibilities, give him the opportunity to act otherwise. If some causes determine their effects with a probability of less than 1, then some effects may not be determined by their causes. If these effects include human actions, then some human actions are *indetermined by their causes*. Finally, if the causes of action are reasons, the motives of the person in favor of the action, then some actions can be caused by the motives of the person but not determined by them. In other words, a person can act because of his beliefs and desires, but desires and beliefs will not determine his actions with necessity, will not make them inevitable. In this case, the agent not only follows the flow of his experience but directs this flow<sup>9</sup>. Finally, the determination of actions by reasons allows a situation in which a person has reason to commit mutually exclusive actions. Each of these actions can be caused by agent's motives, each can happen, but they

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<sup>7</sup> The division into external and internal is deeply problematic in itself; we use it for the sake of illustration. In a discussion of free will, it is more terminologically correct to say "controlled" or "lying beyond the control of an agent." Independence from the "external" means being undetermined by those factors that are beyond the control of the agent.

<sup>8</sup> Here we ignore non-causal approaches [Goetz 1988; Ginet 1990; McCann 1998] because they are based on a fundamental rejection of causal explanations of the action.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that in libertarian approaches that exclude a substantial agent, there is a threat that a person will disappear, as if, "dissolve" itself in the stream of his mental states [Pereboom 2013].

are not determined. Therefore, indeterminism supports a real ability to do otherwise, rooted in the structure of the world. The ability to do otherwise, in libertarian sense, means freedom from determination by the past and the laws of nature, the presence of real alternative possibilities, causal autonomy. On the other hand, indeterminism provides *only* the ability to do otherwise. It does not guarantee the existence of someone *who* can do otherwise. Meanwhile, alternatives are important only if there is the agent who chooses from these alternatives. What are the metaphysical properties of the free agent? This question brings us to the second fundamental idea of libertarianism – the substantiality of the “Self.” A person should not only be independent, he should *exist* as a *self-sufficient* (at least to some extent) *being*. There must be something that can be called a personality, “I,” the selfhood. It is this selfhood that is conceived as an independent subject and a source of free action. Different approaches to the concept of selfhood determine the difference between the most influential contemporary libertarian theories. Two groups of libertarian theories can be distinguished: event-causal libertarians and agent-causal libertarians.

The event-causal theories rely on the idea of the selfness as a character [Kane 1996; Ekstrom 2000; Mele 2006]. It is character that determines the agent selfhood. Character is a product of free action. Such a self can change over time. The main thing is that it maintains independence, i.e., it is not determined by something external. Intuition about some persistent core of the selfness is considered in event approaches as something less significant. It is thought to be a source of problems that complicates the defense of the libertarian position in the naturalistic discourse of contemporary analytic philosophy [Kane 1996, 115–116].

Proponents of the agent-causal theories, on the contrary, rely on the substantial core of the human self, albeit in a somewhat weak version of the macro-level emergent properties of the brain [O'Connor 2000]. From their point of view, there should be something unchanging in a person, something that is preserved in a stream of states, moods, beliefs, opinions. It is this persistent core as the substance of the agent that should determine the free action. This requirement reflects the value of substantial autonomy.

Thinking about the values of causal autonomy and substantial autonomy, one can notice that event-causal libertarianism emphasizes causal autonomy and seeks to explain the independence of a free



subject from the causal factors that are beyond the agent's control. On the contrary, in agent-causal accounts, substantial autonomy prevails, and autonomy of the agent is based on the presence of the substantial core of the selfhood. This difference in values also reveals itself in the basic principles of the two approaches.

The basic principles of event-causal approaches can be described in two theses:

1. The theory of free action should include only those types of entities that can be included in the standard causal theory of action [Kane 1996, 116]. Usually we are talking here about the ontology of events in line with the paradigm formulated by D. Davidson [Davidson 1963; Davidson 1969; Davidson 1970].

2. It is necessary to include an element of indeterminism in the causal theory of action: somewhere in the chain of events leading to the action there should be a moment when some events *indeterministically* (with a probability of less than 1) determine others<sup>10</sup>.

The first thesis, in fact, blocks the possibility of introducing a substantial understanding of selfhood, while the second, via the concept of indeterminism, grounds causal autonomy.

The basic strategy of the proponents of agent-causal accounts is based on the inclusion of two very special entities in the ontology:

1. The substance of the agent, which remains unchanged, is not caused by the mental states of the agent and is not reducible to the totality of these mental states. This agent is a kind of *causa sui*, with the difference that the condition for its occurrence is the presence of a complex physical structure – the human brain. However, after its emergence, the agent is not determined by events occurring in the brain of the agent but can initiate new chains of causes.

2. A special type of causal relationship that is associated with causation by the agent. Since the agent is not an event, agent causation is different from event causation.

The introduction of both entities is due to the primacy of substantial autonomy in agent-causal theories. Independence here is possible insofar as there is something really independent.

By combining the values of causal autonomy and substantial autonomy, we can formulate the central thesis of libertarianism: free will requires the existence of a genuine “Self,” which can be a cause as

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<sup>10</sup> The most important issue for event-causal libertarianism concerns the localization of indeterminism: at what stage in the development of the causal chain leading to action, events must be connected indeterministically.



well as a source of changes in human life, not being itself determined by factors beyond the control of this “Self.”

To substantiate their understanding of free will, libertarians need to solve two problems: normative and positive. The normative task is to justify the value of libertarian freedom, its significance as well as its coherence<sup>11</sup>. The positive task is to justify the empirical possibility of libertarian freedom and, ideally, its actual presence in our world. The problem of luck is a fundamental difficulty in solving the normative problem since it calls into question the coherence of the libertarian view of freedom, demonstrating the threat posed by indeterminism.

### The Luck Arguments

The objective of this part is to demonstrate how the problem of luck questions the coherence of the libertarian understanding of free will. In the third part, we will demonstrate what unites different formulations of the problem of luck, we will also try to explicate the common root of the problem of luck.

The various arguments from luck are intended to illustrate four very similar points: (a) the actions of the libertarian agent are a matter of luck<sup>12</sup>; (b) the libertarian agent has a relatively weak kind of control over his actions; (c) the actions of the libertarian agent are not completely explainable from a rational point of view; (d) the actions of the libertarian agent are relatively weakly connected with his personality. A compatibilist understanding of freedom is taken here as a reference point. Further, we present four versions of the luck argument, each of which emphasizes one of these problems, and also compare the position of the libertarian agent and his causally determined sibling. We begin with the most intuitive version of the argument from luck, namely, the *rollback argument* proposed by P. van Inwagen [van Inwagen 2000, 14–15]. This version invites us to imagine some person, let us call him “Peter,” facing some choice, for example, between options *A* and *B*. Since Peter’s decision is indeterminate, he can really choose *A* or

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<sup>11</sup> The normativity of coherence follows from the normativity of rationality; one of the characteristics of a rationality is consistency.

<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that luck does not mean successfulness or success in performing an action. Luck here is equal to randomness, lack of control over the action, and not to a successful result of the action. Success or failure may equally be a matter of chance. Arguments from luck indicate that the agent does not completely control all indeterminate actions, not just successful ones. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out this ambiguity in the word “luck.”

*B.* For example, Peter chooses *A*. However, let us imagine now, that some evil god “rollbacks” the time and returns Peter to the moment of choice. Peter is indeterminated again, he also has a real choice, let us say he chooses *B*. If one repeats this scenario thousand times, some distribution of choices emerges. For example, 556 events of *A* to 444 events of *B*. If we would watch the “movie” with the history of Peter’s choices, we would feel that his choice between *A* and *B* is completely random. It can be described only through the concept of probability: Peter chooses option *A* with a probability of 0.56, option *B* with a probability of 0.44. Meanwhile, such a probabilistic choice on the material of a thousand repetitions inevitably reveals its *randomness*.

Let us look at the same situation but with a compatibilist agent. Imagine that Peter’s character determines his decision in favor of *A*. In this case, God can endlessly rollback the world, the decision of Peter will remain the same. It will be determined by his personality, character, circumstances of life. In response, libertarians can point out that an indeterminate agent can also choose the same thing a thousand times, and the argument’s error is that it implies the concept of objective probability, which is not suitable in this case [Buchak 2013].

A second version of the argument from luck, the *promise argument*, was also proposed by P. van Inwagen [van Inwagen 2000, 17–18]. Suppose, an indeterministic libertarian agent, Peter, learns from a friend some terrible secret, which a friend asks not to give out. Peter understands that the situation is complicated, and he has some very good reasons in favor of betraying this secret, and, on the other hand, he does not want to do this. In addition, Peter knows for certain (the same omniscient god could inform him of this) that his choice is indeterminate: the probability of revealing a secret is 0.55 and of keeping it is 0.45. Can Peter promise something to a friend with a clear conscience? If Peter’s decision to keep secret was determined, he would not have to worry that he would do otherwise. However, indeterminism always retains some real probability of choosing an alternative, in this case very high, and, therefore, deprives Peter of the moral right to promise something with a clear conscience. After all, if he makes a promise, he will still know that there is a real probability, that is, as modern philosophers would say, “there is a possible world” in which the same Peter fail to keep his word. This world may not only be some possible world but the actual one. This situation shows that agent control in the sense of the ability to *guarantee* a certain decision may decrease due to the presence of indeterminism. *In response*, libertarians can say

that a similar situation exists in the case of a deterministic agent. He also cannot be sure that the past and the laws of nature determine him to follow a promise and not to break it. On the contrary, if a libertarian agent takes risks but still can keep a promise, a determined agent simply does not have the moral right to make promises if he does not know exactly what he is determined for, and he can never know it due to the complexity of the possible justification for this kind of knowledge.

Another version of the argument from luck is related to the alleged absence of a *contrastive explanation* of indeterminate action. Suppose, Peter has the opportunity to choose between alternatives *A* and *B*. His motivational system includes two groups of motives. The group *X* in favor of *A* and the group *Y* in favor of *B*. If agent chooses *A*, we can explain the choice by referring to *X*. Similarly, choice *B* is explained by *Y*. However, how can we explain why a person chose *A* but not *B*? The explanation of this kind is called comparative. It, as some critics of libertarianism suggest, is fundamentally impossible for indetermined actions. On the contrary, a deterministic agent can always say that he did *A*, not *B* because he *was determined* by motives *X* rather than motives *Y*. *In response*, libertarians can say: (a) the absence of an explanation does not mean a lack of control or randomness, it is wrong to conclude that there is no control due to the lack of explanation [Franklin 2011]; (b) there are theories of contrastive explanations of indeterminate events [Hitchcock 1999; Lipton 1990].

The fourth variation of the argument from luck is associated with the name of D. Hume. In *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume writes: "According, to my definitions, necessity makes an essential part of causation; and consequently liberty, by removing necessity, removes also causes, and is the very same thing with chance" [Hume 1888, 407]. *In response*, libertarians may object that indeterministic causation is possible, and necessity is not an essential part of causality [Franklin 2011, 209].

However, from our point of view, the main idea of Humean criticism is not limited to the thesis of the impossibility of indeterministic causality. In the case of the "doctrine of freedom," his thesis can be further narrowed: we must consider our own actions and the actions of other people as *deterministically* following from their nature, so that the concept of moral responsibility can be justifiably applied. In other words, even if indeterminism as such is conceivable, those actions for which we tend to attribute moral responsibility must *necessarily* follow from their character. It is this necessary connection between

the character of a person and his action that allows us to blame people, consider them authors and sources of their actions. In other words, determinism is a condition of a person's responsibility for his act. On the contrary, a person whose behavior is not determined by his character would seem quite irrational because of his unpredictability, which could border on insanity. In this regard, Hume writes: "Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and disposition of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The action itself may be blameable; it may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion: But the person is not responsible for it; and as it proceeded from nothing in him, that is durable or constant, and leaves nothing of that nature behind it, 'tis impossible he can, upon its account, become the object of punishment or vengeance" [Hume 1888, 411].

In response, libertarians can say that the motives that indeterministically determine a person's action are part of his character. We do not know which part of the character will indeterminately cause the action, but each of them is not something external, random, but internal stable element of the agent's personality. In addition, actions change the agent who produce these actions, even if they are completely random.

In addition to setting the ground for the explication of the structural problem of libertarian theories, the aim of this section was to give the reader a general idea of the possible reactions to it from the side of libertarians. Of course, the discussion is much more complicated than our discussion presents it to be<sup>13</sup>. However, in our opinion, even with all the details of the dispute, libertarians fail to overcome the problem of luck. This is due to the basic contradiction within libertarianism, which we will try to explicate further.

### **Contradictory nature of libertarian freedom**

The arguments from luck alone do not allow us to determine the "place" where our thinking about indeterminate action encounters an insurmountable contradiction. The key to discover it lies in the theory of action inherent in most contemporary libertarian accounts. We will try to show that certain attitudes regarding the nature of action, coupled with the adoption of causal indeterminism, generate internal

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<sup>13</sup> Among recent literature on the problem of luck see N. Levy [Levy 2011], K. Franklin [Franklin 2011], L. Buchak [Buchak 2013], M. Schlosser [Schlosser 2014], A. Mele [Mele 2006; Mele 2017].

tension, which arises every time when we try to consistently think about responsibility and freedom of an indeterminate agent.

To begin with, it must be said that the freedom of the libertarian agent is directly related to his responsibility. If the agent is really responsible for some act, then he committed this act freely. If the agent cannot be held responsible for his act, then it was not committed freely. It is the question of moral responsibility that will guide us in finding the underlying problem of the libertarian understanding of freedom.

In general outline, the problem reveals itself when considering how action is understood in most contemporary libertarian theories<sup>14</sup>. An action is considered to be an event. Actions differ from other events by their causal history, that is, by those factors that determine them. The causes of the events that are actions are the motives, the reasons of an agent (in event-causal libertarianism) or the agent itself (in agent-causal theories). Consequently, considering a certain event as an action, we automatically attribute certain causes to this event: either a substance of the agent or the reasons for the action, or both. An action becomes an action *due to* these causes. If an event is not caused by the agent or his motives it is not an action, even if it looks like an action. However, the reasons for the action must be presented *before* the action. Accordingly, the defining features of the action are presented at the moment before the action itself has occurred. Thus, the action in this scheme is only the result of the presence of something else, the presence of which is revealed by the action for those observing the action. In event-causal approaches, an action indirectly reveals motives, something in the agent that caused his action<sup>15</sup>. In agent-causal theories, action reveals that the agent has actualized his agent-causal power, the power to cause actions. Further, there is nothing in the action itself that is not presented in its causes. Here we are talking about a *total* cause, including not only the motives of an agent but also the state of his body as a whole as well as the state of the environment at the time preceding the action. In

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<sup>14</sup> The exception is non-causal approaches [Goetz 1988; Ginet 1990; McCann 1998].

<sup>15</sup> Of course, we often cannot accurately determine the motives of a person, however, as D. Davidson [Davidson 1963] has well demonstrated in his famous work, in most cases we need to have a certain idea of the foundations of the agent, in order that the action itself would appear rational. As, in turn, G.E.M. Anscombe showed [Anscombe 1957], very often human intentions can be generally determined by purely external signs. Thus, recognizing something as a rational action, we automatically think of certain grounds for this, which make it rational, and these bases find themselves in the observed human behavior.

this case, the total cause of the action, including both elements of the agent's personality and impersonal conditions of the action, determines the *entire* content of the event of the action. Now it is easy to notice that the reasons to attribute *moral* responsibility to an individual for an action are in place immediately *before* the action. The action itself only reveals to us the existence of these reasons.

This idea can be illustrated by the following thought experiment. Imagine that Julian aimed his gun at Peter, hesitated for a second, and then *began* to pull the trigger. Next, we present two possible scenarios. In the first scenario, Julian shoots at Peter, and Peter immediately dies. In the second scenario, Julian suddenly breaks paralysis, he cannot "squeeze" the trigger and falls without moving. If the basis of Julian's responsibility is events before the action, then all personality grounds in the first and second scenarios are identical. Paralysis, being something independent of Julian, stopped him, but the personality itself in both scenarios contains *equal* reasons for killing. If it is precisely these reasons that ground the attribution of moral responsibility, then we can argue that in both scenarios Julian should bear *equal* responsibility.

Of course, in real life we do not look at the situation from the perspective of an omniscient being. On the contrary, we see real actions and not the possible ones. However, if we *consistently* adhere to a causal interpretation of an action, then it is the causes of the action that will become sufficient grounds for responsibility, and the action itself will only detect the presence of these causes.

If a person's character determines his actions, our tendency to judge a person looking at his actions is completely justified. If Julian, by virtue of his character, could not have acted otherwise, based the judgment about his action, we can infer the judgment about his character. However, in libertarianism, the necessary connection between personality and action is weakened. One and the same person, having the same character, may or may not commit some act. However, in this case, we cannot reasonably proceed from a judgment about an act to a judgment about a person. After all, this person might not have caused this action, there is no necessary connection between them. Moreover, if the same person on whom we assign responsibility could not commit an act for which responsibility is assigned to him, then with equal success we could consider him completely innocent. Here we are confronted with the desired contradiction: the same person cannot simultaneously be and not be morally responsible for the act.

Let us reproduce once again the course of our reasoning. A causal interpretation of the nature of action transfers all significant for moral responsibility features of the action to the moment before the action. Accordingly, everything in the personality, in character, in the human self<sup>16</sup>, which serves as the basis for responsibility, is already present immediately before the action. The determined action is connected to the agent in a way that makes it necessary for the agent; it is necessarily connected with the self of the agent. Therefore, the “transition” from the action to the person who produced it is justified. However, libertarian theory gives us an agent who could have done otherwise and could have escaped moral responsibility, being the same person with the same motives. Thus, we have no right to infer the judgment about the person from the judgment about his actions. We could consider the same person to be innocent because his personality is completely compatible with the absence of the action in question. Our minds are forced to rush between “guilty” and “innocent,” and both seem fair. The person is guilty because the action is caused by his personality. A person is innocent because the same person is fully compatible with the absence of this action.

It is this problem that manifests itself in all versions of the luck argument. In the case of the rollback argument, it can be formulated as follows: can we hold a person responsible for a certain act knowing that the same person did not commit it in dozens of other scenarios? In the promise argument it goes as follows: how can you make a promise, knowing that the same you in the same circumstances can keep it or not keep it, being the same? In the argument from the absence of contrastive explanation it could be formulated in the following way: how to explain a person’s responsibility for an act, if everything that could be cited as the basis of responsibility would be with him, even if he had not committed this act? Hume’s argument, perhaps, most accurately reveals the problem that we have indicated: if the character of a person does not determine the action for which he is responsible, then the action turns out to be a matter of chance.

As a result, our judgments begin to “fluctuate,” between, on the one hand, the intuition about guilt for the act, and on the other, the

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<sup>16</sup> We use the concepts of personality, selfhood and character here as synonymous, although, of course, a distinction can be made between them. In this context, this difference is not fundamental because we are interested in an agent that determines the action. This agent can be understood as a person, as a selfhood and as a character, the main thing is that he is the cause.



intuition that the same person is innocent. This contradiction, in our opinion, forms the foundation that underlies the whole varieties of the luck argument. It can be summarized as a violation of the principle of non-contradiction: we cannot consider the same person guilty and at the same time not guilty for the act, if we want to reasonably blame her. If inconceivability is always associated with inconsistency, then the inconceivability of libertarian freedom is based precisely on this contradiction.

This reasoning, however, raises a number of objections, which we briefly consider below.

The first objection. Action changes a person; accordingly, we blame the one who has done it and not the one who *could do* it. This objection is quite true. It can be developed by saying that one who did something became one who could not help but do it. However, we can reproduce the same contradiction regarding the concept of “the agent who has already done the action”: one and the same person could become “the agent who has already done the action,” whom we blame, and become “the agent who has not done the action,” whom we do not blame. Why do we blame the person for becoming the one who made *X*, if the same person might not have become the one who made *X*? The line of reasoning presented above can be repeated, recreating the same “split” between attributions and exempting from responsibility.

The second objection. The basis of responsibility for an act is not only motives but also the consequences of the act. This objection also seems fair. However, the reasoning given by us shows that those bases that depend on the character of the agent, on a person’s *individuality*, exist before the action. Accordingly, all other grounds are independent of personality. Responsibility depends on those bases that are related to a person’s character. Therefore, it is unjustified to make the basis of responsibility something independent of the individual’s character. The consequences of the action are either due to the motives of the person, and for them he bears moral responsibility, or independent from these motives, but then they are caused by something else that is not connected with the personality of the agent, therefore it would be a mistake to assign responsibility for these consequences to the person. Note that in the case of determination of an action, even if its “initial” causes are far in the past, it is the character and personality that causes the action, and the chain of causes “flows” through the agent. On the contrary, the consequences of an action can depend on dozens of causal chains in which the agent is not included in any

way, in this sense they can be a random result of the intersection of those events that are dependent from the agent and those that are not dependent from him. Accordingly, it seems implausible to think that moral responsibility depends on these factors, which are not at all dependent on the person.

Third objection. It is impossible to blame a person for what he has not done yet. If there were grounds for liability before the action, we could blame the person who has not yet committed an act, otherwise such an accusation seems morally unjustified. This objection stays in need of clarification. We are not talking about the fact that you can blame a person for what has not yet been done, but that the basis for assigning responsibility for what has been done (with a causal understanding of the action) is the causes of the action in the agent's personality, for example intentions and motives. The act only confirms the existence of this base and its role in the personality of the agent. It is easy to see that one can blame a person even before an act if the "basis" of this act is evident. So a person can be held responsible for a proven intention to perform some action. If we have sufficient reason to believe that *X* intends to commit a terrorist act, we can blame *X* for this intention. Of course, the blame for the reasons that caused the action seems to be greater than for the reasons that did not cause the action. However, this takes place insofar as the action reveals the *sufficiency* of the reasons, i.e., the fact that the agent's personality determines the act with necessity, that his personality is fully compatible with the act. On the contrary, unfulfilled intentions leave hope that the agent will refrain from some act, that he will demonstrate his incompatibility with it.

### Conclusion

The libertarian understanding of free will has a deep value dimension. However, attempts to express these values through the metaphysical concept of indeterminism lead to highly undesirable results in the context of these values. In this article, we tried to demonstrate that attributing an agent with responsibility for an indeterminate action is not justified since a judgment of responsibility implies a necessary connection between a person and an action. If there is no such connection, then the transition from a judgment about the action to a judgment about the personality of the agent is arbitrary and cannot be justified. If the same person could have performed and not performed the same action in the same situation and in the same respect, then we

cannot consistently assign moral responsibility to him for this action since his personality is fully compatible with lack of this action.

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