

Modest Libertarianism, Luck, and Control: Reply to Gerald Harrison

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Abstract. Whether indeterminism undermines moral responsibility by subverting one or more of responsibility's requirements is something that has received close attention in the recent literature on free will. In this paper, I take issue with Gerald Harrison's attempt to deflect various considerations for the view that indeterminism threatens responsibility either by threatening the control that responsibility requires or by posing a problem of luck.

Determinism is the thesis that there is at any instant exactly one physically possible future (Van Inwagen, 1983, p. 3). Libertarians maintain that free action and moral responsibility are incompatible with determinism and that some human beings perform at least some actions (mental or otherwise) that are free and for which they are morally responsible. Of the different varieties of libertarian views, it is an action-centered modest event-causal libertarian variant—"Modest Libertarianism"—that is of concern in what follows.

Modest libertarian accounts share important features with the most promising compatibilist views on free action.¹ They require that to choose or to act freely, an agent must have the capacity to engage in practical reasoning and to guide her behavior in light of the reasons that she has. In addition, emulating their compatibilist rivals, such accounts are modest in that they make no appeal to Kantian noumenal selves, Cartesian minds, or other metaphysically exotic agents, and avoid forms of causation with metaphysically demanding commitments such as agent causation. Further, like their compatibilist competitors, they dictate that the choices—the decisions or intentions—for which an agent is morally responsible be the outcomes of causal processes. Specifically, they require that a free decision be made for reasons, and its being made for reasons consists, partially, in its being caused in an appropriate and nondeviant way by the agent's having those reasons.

Standard libertarian views allow that an indirectly free action—an action whose freedom derives from the freedom of other actions

¹ Such accounts have been defended or discussed by Mele (1995), Clarke (2000 and 2002), Kane (1996), Dennett (1978, pp. 286–99), and Fischer (1995).

to which this action is suitably related—may be determined by its immediate causal precursors. A directly free action is not indirectly free. Modest libertarian theories differ from compatibilist ones in that they imply that even the immediate causal antecedents of a directly free action do not determine that action: given these antecedents, and the natural laws, there is some chance that that action not occur.² On action-centered modest libertarian accounts, the event that is directly free and that is nondeterministically caused is the making of a decision, a mental action (Clarke, 2000, p. 23). The recipe for generating a working version of this sort of libertarianism is to start with our best compatibilist view of freedom, and then to add to this “host” the requirement that free decisions themselves are to be nondeterministically caused. The resulting event-causal action-centered libertarianism specifies that an agent’s control—“*proximal*” or “*active*” control—in making a decision consists in apt agent-involving events nondeviantly causing that decision. More fully, such control concerns the direct causal production of agent-involving events, such as the agent’s having certain values, desires, and beliefs, his making a certain evaluative judgment, his forming a certain intention or arriving at a certain decision, his executing an intention, and his performing a non-mental action. The degree of proximal control the agent exercises depends on which agent-involving events actually cause the decision and on their etiologies. On such a libertarian view, the factors that constitute an agent’s proximal control in making a free decision are the very ones shared by this view and its compatibilist host: roughly, deliberative processes with appropriate causal histories nondeviantly causing the decision.

If modest libertarianism does not vary from its best compatibilist rival with respect to proximal control, one may well wonder why some have thought that this sort of libertarianism undermines free action, responsibility, or freedom-relevant *control*, especially on the assumption (that the reader is invited to entertain) that its best compatibilist competitor does not share these faults. Speaking to this concern regarding control, I cite from a previous work:

Suppose Peg is mulling over whether to keep a promise to visit Al. She judges that, all things considered, she ought to keep the promise, though reasons of self-interest tempt her to refrain. She decides to keep the promise, and her having certain reasons to do so, including her making the all things considered judgment that she ought, on this occasion, to keep the promise, nondeterministically causes her to make this decision. On an action-centered libertarian view, since Peg’s decision to keep the promise is nondeterministically caused, there was a chance that her deliberative process would terminate in a decision not to keep the promise.

² A recent defense of this sort of view is to be found in Kane (1996).

Had Peg made this other decision, it would have been nondeterministically caused by her having reasons of self-interest. *Everything* prior to the decision that Peg actually makes, including every feature of Peg, might have been just the same, and yet she could have made the alternative decision instead. To underscore this point, consider the nearest possible world with the same past as the past in Peg's world. This world will have a past in which Peg's prior deliberations have resulted in the best judgment that the promise ought to be honored but Peg (or if we want, one of Peg's counterparts, Peg*) decides not to keep the promise. In so deciding, Peg* acquires an intention not to keep the promise. The acquisition of this intention—the making of the decision to refrain from keeping the promise—is seemingly not explained by anything. At least, Peg*'s prior deliberations do not explain why she makes this decision. This is because these deliberations exactly mirror those of Peg's but Peg's deliberations nondeterministically give rise to the opposed decision to keep the promise. As Alfred Mele has commented, if one agent does one thing and another refrains from doing that thing, “and there is nothing about the agents' powers, capacities, states of mind, moral character, and the like that explains this difference in outcome, then the difference really just is a matter of luck” (1996, p. 280). Luck of this sort seems incompatible with free action or moral responsibility. (2005, pp. 323–24).

If we add what I think need not be accepted but that has a measure of plausibility, that the sort of luck at issue is a matter of something's not being in one's control, then it is not farfetched to suppose that Peg's decision is not free or that she is not morally responsible for it *because* she lacks freedom-level control in making it. But what sort of control, if any, does Peg lack? Not proximal (it seems) but what I have previously referred to as “antecedent proximal control” (2002, pp. 110–11). With fixed pasts, the difference in outcome in Peg's and Peg*'s cases appears to be merely a function of the indeterminacy in actional pathways leading to choice. I have claimed, though, that it would seem that no agent could exert proximal (or any other sort of) control over such indeterminacy to ensure a particular outcome. Amplifying somewhat, if t_1 is the time at which Peg makes whatever decision that she makes then if she is still alive then (it is not indeterministic, for instance, whether Peg will suffer a fatal stroke then), unlike her otherwise similar deterministic counterpart Peggy, Peg does not have the ability or power to ensure that at t_1 she decides in accordance with her decisive best judgment about what to do. She may judge that it is best for her to keep the promise, may muster all the powers of self-control that would ordinarily suffice for her deciding in accordance with this best judgment, but still fail to so decide. In Peg's case, her prior actional antecedents seem not to contribute sufficiently to control.

Recently, Gerald Harrison takes issue with my contention that a modest libertarian account may well erode freedom-relevant control. Harrison initiates his criticism in this way:

On the occasion of a torn decision the agent recognises reasons for two options, and is torn about which way to go, neither set of reasons seem to outweigh the others. ...According to Haji, the relevant, destructive difference between an agent's torn decision being determined to be resolved in a certain way, and it being indeterministic which way it will be resolved, is that in the latter case the agent cannot antecedently ensure the outcome. This is an ability that Haji thinks the agent would have in a deterministic setting ... [A]dopt for the sake of argument a straightforward compatibilist position of the type that Haji and many other contemporary compatibilists endorse ... Now introduce agent external indeterminism into the picture in the following way. Due to certain properties of the agent's brain it is indeterministic whether or not the agent will suffer a massive stroke at t_1 . As such there is now a genuine possibility that, rather than make the decision in question at t_1 , the agent will die of a stroke at t_1 ... Yet it seems quite obvious that if, in the actual sequence, the agent makes the decision in question, then they are as morally responsible as if there had been no possibility of anything else happening. After all, in the actual sequence in which the agent makes the decision, all the right connections were made and so the compatibilist control requirements are met (2007, pp. 64–65).

Harrison then proposes the following:

[I]f the indeterminism is internal to the agent's decision making processes rather than external, that does not make any difference in terms of the reliability with which the agent can ensure a particular decision is made. In other words, if it is indeterministic whether Jones will make decision X or be dead at t_1 , or indeterministic whether Jones will make decision X, or decision Y, Jones's ability to reliably ensure that he makes decision X is equally damaged in both cases. Jones can no more antecedently ensure that he makes decision X at t_1 when the source of the control-diminishing indeterminism is external to his will, than he can when it is coming from within his own will (p. 11).

I agree with Harrison that in the scenario with indeterminism external to the decision-making process, the indeterminism precludes it from being the case that the agent can ensure that he makes a particular decision at the relevant time, t_1 , and that if the actual sequence unfolds in the absence of mundane freedom- or responsibility-subversive factors, the agent would be responsible for the decision. I do not, however, see how any of this undermines the view that antecedent proximal control may well be required for free action and responsibility. To flesh this out, consider, first, a deterministic world in which it is not true that the agent, Peggy, will suffer a fatal stroke at t_1 . Rather, given

her (compatibilist) alternatives, Peggy will either decide to keep the promise or to break it. Imagine that the actual sequence culminating in Peggy's decision contains no responsibility-undermining factors. Supply the best compatibilist story about how Peggy resolves her conflict concerning what decision she should make. If she is self-controlled, Peggy has the ability to ensure that she decides in accordance with her best judgment.

Peg, in her indeterministic world, is pertinently like Peggy: whatever compatibilist story we tell about how Peggy resolves her conflict, we advance this very same sort of story about how Peg attempts to resolve her conflict; the relevant segment of the actual sequence of events in the trajectory leading to Peg's decision in Peg's scenario, right until just prior to the moment at which Peg decides, is type- or near-type identical to the "corresponding" segment in Peggy's case. Still, assuming that it is not indeterministic that Peg will suffer a fatal stroke at t_1 , Peg cannot ensure that the decision that she will make at t_1 will accord with her previously formed best judgment, even though the relevant segment of the causal trajectory is free from otherwise responsibility-subverting factors such as the influence of clandestine manipulation. I, thus, reject Harrison's claim that "if the indeterminism is internal to the agent's decision making processes rather than external, that does not make any difference in terms of the reliability with which the agent can ensure a particular decision is made" (p. 65). In the scenario in which the indeterminism is external, provided Peg does not die at t_1 , nothing else can, so to speak, "go wrong" at t_1 : if Peg is self-controlled, there will be no "surprises" in what decision she makes; she will decide on the basis of her best judgment. But in the scenario in which the indeterminism is internal, things can "go very wrong": even if Peg* differs not a whit from peg, Peg may end up deciding akratically.

In all fairness to Harrison, Harrison seems to be aware of this sort of response. He says:

One might object that there is a relevant difference when the indeterminism is located between the agent's reasons and decision. For if the indeterminism is external to the agent's will, then although the agent cannot strictly speaking ensure that they make (say) decision X at t_1 (for they might be dead at t_1), they nevertheless can ensure that if they make a decision at t_1 , it will be decision X (p. 66).

But then, Harrison submits, the compatibilist faces another problem: the compatibilist will have to relax the favored compatibilist condition of control (whatever it precisely is) to the extent to which an otherwise similar modest libertarian condition that includes pertinent indeterminism will satisfy whatever constituents of control that the compatibilist condition specifies:

In other words, the compatibilist will have to say that an agent's decision issues from a suitably responsive mechanism provided there are a sufficiently broad range of circumstances in which the agent would have made a different decision if there had been reason to, without committing themselves to the far stronger claim that the agent would always decide otherwise if there was reason to. But now note that if the compatibilist makes their reason-responsive conditions moderate enough to cover torn decisions, then indeterministically resolved torn decisions will satisfy such control conditions too. There is no way for the compatibilist to avoid this without just stipulating that a process or mechanism leading to decision needs to be deterministic. In other words, there does not seem to be any non question begging way in which the compatibilists can show why indeterministically resolved torn-decisions fail to satisfy moderate reason-responsiveness requirements. . . . If this is right it seems that there is no reason to see indeterministic efforts of will as diminishing of control in any way that matters. (p. 67, note omitted).

I concede Harrison's point that any compatibilist reasons-responsiveness view of control that is worth its salt should be able to accommodate torn decisions. Does it follow, though, that if "this is right it seems that there is no reason to see indeterministic efforts of will as diminishing of control in any way that matters"? In a number of places, I have granted that an agent such as Peg may have (proximal or active) control in making the decision that she does; still, she does not have control over which decision "prevails." I have, at times, expressed this sort of concern about control in the following way:

[T]he luck objection is intriguing precisely because it points to factors that undermine responsibility even on the assumption that these factors do not affect proximal control. An agent such as Peg does not have dual directional control over her actions: she seems not to have antecedent control over doing one action rather than another. Libertarians like Kane have conceded this, but have suggested that lack of such control leaves untarnished the proximal control that an agent exercises in performing actions. Further, they have proposed that if proximal control is not undermined, there is little reason to suppose that when, for instance, Peg decides to keep her promise, her deciding is a matter of luck. [Disputing this claim,] I [have] underscored the point that the actions of a libertarian agent such as Peg are luck infused in a manner that compromises responsibility. That there is a problem of luck is brought out by the fact that there seems to be no adequate action explanation of the akratic action of Peg's relevant counterpart. I [...] conclude that luck can undermine responsibility without influencing proximal control [...]. An enticing implication of the luck objection is that, in addition to standard requirements of responsibility including the one for proximal control, there is yet an additional insulated-from-luck requirement (2003, pp. 270–71).

Responding to whether this line of reasoning merely begs the question concerning control against the modest libertarian, I propose that should determinism not be incompatible with the freedom to do otherwise—the ability to do otherwise even with the past and the laws “fixed”—as Kadri Vihvelin (2000) has argued, this sort of compatibilism, too, would barrel into the luck objection that is at issue.

I agree with Randolph Clarke that theorists inclined toward libertarianism should be wary about modest versions for, among other reasons, on these versions, it is false that the agent has some *further* power to influence causally which of his alternatives he realizes, a power over and above the mere chance of acting differently, and a power over and above the power to exercise proximal control *in* making whatever decision that he does (1996; 2003). Clarke proposes that a free decision is one that is nondeterministically caused by apt agent-involving events, such as the agent’s prior reasons, *and* co-produced by the agent’s agent-causing it (2003, chap. 8). Augmentation of the nondeterministic causation of the decision (which ensures, under normal circumstances at least, that the agent had genuine alternatives) with the agent causation of it secures for the agent the exercise of further positive powers extending beyond the powers the agent would have had in the absence of agent-causing that action. These powers influence causally which of the agent’s open alternatives, just prior to his doing what he did in his nondeterministic world, will become actual (Clarke, 2003, pp. 96, 105, 133). It is not improbable to conceptualize these powers as consisting, at least partly, in the powers that the indeterministic agent has to ensure that he decides in accordance with his best judgment provided that he is sufficiently self-controlled. A compatibilist who wants little to do with agent causation may suggest that, at least with respect to ensuring that the free agent can decide in accordance with his best judgment, the agent should be able to exert antecedent proximal control in deciding as he does. But then barring any appeal to agent causation, it would seem that a modest libertarian should either accept the constraint of antecedent proximal control or provide an alternative that, again, secures for the agent the power to ensure that (in the absence of responsibility-undermining factors and unexpected death) the agent can decide in accordance with his decisive best judgment if the agent is adequately self-controlled.

In the passage that I last cited, I suggest that the problem that modest libertarians encounter about control is intimately tied to lack of an explanation, in terms of prior reasons, of why an agent such as Peg* makes the decision that she does when her relevant counterpart, Peg, makes a different decision under type- or near type-identical conditions. Harrison first interprets me as claiming that the pertinent explanation

is a contrastive one—an explanation of why one thing rather than another occurred (p. 69). He then writes:

However, contrastive explanations are not the only kind of explanation that there is. There are also ‘plain’ explanations. A plain explanation is an explanation in terms of the event’s prior causes. If an event is indeterministically caused, it is still caused, and as such a plain explanation is still available. The plain explanation will simply cite the prior causes Why should the lack of a relevant contrastive explanation be a problem in itself? [. . .]. It must [. . .] be that the lack of contrastive explanation is taken to indicate either a lack of control—in which case the arguments I have made in the preceding sections take over. Alternatively it might be taken to indicate a lack of rationality or a problem with respect to ‘attribution’ (pp. 69–70).

With cases involving indeterministic agents such as Peg, one of my overriding concerns has been with *plain* explanations. To elucidate, assume, as the event-causal libertarian insists, that Peg*’s decision (under appropriate conditions) is free. Assume, further, that it is a decision that is contrary to her decisive best judgment, the content of which is that it is better for her to keep the promise. Peg*’s decision is, thus, a strict akratic action; it is a free, intentional action that is contrary to what we stipulate is her consciously held best judgment. On customary accounts of akratic action, when an agent performs a strict akratic action, there is a misalignment between the motivational strength of the desire from which her act causally derives (the motivationally strongest desire) and her best judgment (Mele, 2004, p. 43; 1987). If we accept these typical accounts, Peg*’s best judgment—the judgment that she ought to keep the promise—should stand opposed to her stronger desire—her desire to break the promise. With Peg*’s libertarian free decision, though, we see no such misalignment because Peg* *shares* the relevant past with Peg. Given her a past, Peg*’s desire to keep the promise does not differ in motivational strength from this desire of Peg’s. Regarding Peg, however, we may assume that her desire to keep the promise has *greater* motivational clout than her competing desire and, further, that there is no misalignment between this stronger desire and her judgment that it is better for her to keep the promise. So we have a pretty obvious problem: how are we to explain Peg*’s *akratic* decision?

Perhaps a libertarian might claim that the misalignment in question does not occur *prior* to choice but at the moment of choice. The desire to break the promise, it may be suggested, does not become the strongest desire of Peg* until she makes it so at the moment of choice. On this view, it is false that akratic misalignment preexists the pertinent choice. Rather, such misalignment is created by the akratic

agents themselves when they choose (Kane, 1999, p. 114, n. 7). What, precisely, though, does the *akrates* do to shift the balance of motivational strength in favor of the desire that is allegedly out of kilter with her best judgment? Various explanations of the balance have been proposed, ones that make use of such things as selective focusing, failing to remind oneself how one will feel later knowing that one has acted contrary to one's better judgment, and conversely, thinking of how good one will feel afterward in light of being aware that one has successfully resisted temptation, and failing to make an effective attempt at self-control.³ On the view that akratic misalignment occurs at the moment of choice, Peg*'s situation may be depicted in this way: Let t be the time at which Peg* makes the decision that she does. *Unlike* Peg, at t , Peg* selectively focuses, fails to make a concerted attempt at self-control, and so forth. At t , these activities (as we may say) of Peg*, in turn, bolster the motivational strength of her desire to break the promise, which, at t , causally gives rise to her decision to break the promise, despite her consciously held better judgment at t that she ought to keep the promise.

I limit comment to two concerns with this picture.⁴ First, the actual world, where, at t , Peg decides to keep the promise, and possible world, W, in which she decides at t to break the promise, do not differ in *any* respects until t . It is, consequently, a mystery why, at t , Peg* engages in the activities that we have outlined when Peg, at this time, fails to engage in these activities. Engaging in these activities, or failing to do so, seems itself to be a matter of luck. Second, either these activities are free or they are not. If the latter, there is strong reason to doubt that the decision that Peg* makes is free as this decision stems from activities (that allegedly occur at the time when the decision is itself made) that are themselves not free.⁵ If some of these activities, such as selective focusing, are not actions, if free, they will be indirectly free. If they are actions—an intentional omission would qualify as an action—then, again, if free, they would presumably be indirectly free. If the latter—if, that is, these activities *are* free—and if it is false that free events are uncaused, as the event-causal libertarian assumes, these activities (if they are events) must themselves be nondeterministically caused. Again, given that the actual world and world W are indiscernible right up until t , it is a mystery what the causal antecedents of these activities could be. More cautiously, if these activities have causal precursors, and

³ For the first and third of these explanations, see Mele (1987), chs. 5-6; for the second of these explanations, see, for example, Milo (1984), esp. ch. 5.

⁴ Other concerns are discussed in my (2005), sec. 2.

⁵ I am not ruling out the possibility that if one event causes another, the two may occur simultaneously.

Peg* engages in these activities, then again it seems to be entirely a matter of luck that Peg fails to engage in these activities.

In sum, the event-causal libertarian says that, consistent with the past and the laws being what they are, at t Peg can either freely decide to keep the promise, or at t she can decide to break the promise, and that whatever decision she makes at t , there is an action explanation of that decision. Roughly, apt reasons, it is claimed, nondeterministically cause the decision that the agent makes. It seems that this view is not quite on target as Peg*'s scenario illustrates. As I have registered, proximal control is a function of one's actions being appropriately caused by agent-involving springs of action. It appears that an agent who decides akratically exercises less proximal control in deciding as she does than otherwise similar agent who decides contingently. So it would be too quick to claim, without further explanation, that indeterministic Peg*, who decides akratically, exercises the same degree of proximal control in making the decision that she does as deterministic Peggy would in making a type- or near type-identical decision when Peggy is perfectly self-controlled.

Harrison claims that according to various authors, a different sort of concern with agent-internal indeterminism is that such indeterminism prevents “us from connecting what the agent decides with any fixed character. “When an agent's will is indeterminate, there does not seem to be any stable character to attribute their actions to” (p. 71) He reproduces the following passage from a work of mine: (the passage spins the tale of Jones who is torn between deciding to smoke and deciding to refrain; to preserve continuity with the pertinent example in the present piece, Peg takes the place of Jones):

Entertain [...] the thought experiment that God has a thousand times caused the world to revert to precisely its state at the moment just before Peg decides to keep her promise, and that on about half these occasions [Peg so decides] and acts accordingly. Assume, again, that in each of the reruns, Peg was trying to do two competing tasks, and that whatever she ended up doing, she would have done voluntarily, intentionally, and rationally. Suppose, as I have proposed, responsibility gauges the moral worth of an agent with respect to some episode in her life—a person discloses what she stands for when she is morally responsible for some deed. Then, given type *identical pasts*, when Peg does one thing in half or so of the reruns but something else in the others, there is no saying what Peg stands for (2002, pp. 118–19).

Harrison remarks:

The conception of responsibility this criticism presupposes is one according to which unless the decision that the agent makes in the actual sequence is strongly connected (for which we can read deterministically

caused) by the agent's character, then the decision cannot be "deeply reflective of who we are" (Double 1996, p. 76). The agent is only morally responsible if their decision "discloses in conduct one's moral stance or commitment vis-à-vis a particular episode in one's life" (Haji 2002, p. 118, pp. 21–22). (Harrison, 2007, p. 72.)

Regarding attributability, I am genuinely puzzled about some of the views that Harrison ascribes (or appears to ascribe) to me. So, for instance, I believe that an agent can be responsible for acting "out of character," and I do not believe that "we are 'set' so to speak" and that there need be "the kind of tight connection between an agent's action and their character in the kinds of cases [involving torn decisions] we are talking about" (p. 73). Indeed, I believe that there is no *essential* connection between responsibility and character. (This is, of course, not to deny that one may be to praise or blame—one may be appraisable—for contributing to parts of one's character or that one may be appraisable for acts that "stem from" one's character.) My relevant views concerning "attributability" may be summarized in this way: I have argued that if an agent is morally blameworthy for performing an action, she performs the action in light of the belief that she is doing moral wrong; the deed reflects negatively on her. Similarly, if the agent is praiseworthy, she performs the action (at least partly) on the basis of the belief that she is doing right; the deed reflects positively on her. In this fashion, when responsible, the agent reveals, on the pertinent occasion, what she morally stands for with respect to the action that she performs (2002). Some might put the point in this way: The agent's actions, when she is responsible for them, reveal the "quality of the agent's will." Yet another way of capturing what is of underlying concern here is this: Appraisals of responsibility are first and foremost appraisals of the agent; they disclose the moral worth of an agent with respect, generally, to some episode in her life. When praiseworthy, a person's moral standing or "record" has been enhanced in relation to some germane episode; metaphorically speaking, a positive mark has been entered into her pertinent evaluative ledger. When blameworthy, an agent's standing or record has been blemished; a negative mark has been recorded into her ledger.⁶

Reconsider the Peg/Peg* case. Assume that Peg is praiseworthy for her decision to keep her promise. Then making this decision must reflect positively on *her* (and not, for example, on her character). If nothing in her relevant past—her germane reasoning, for instance—is altered, and she (or her counterpart Peg*) now decides to break the promise, then it seems that so deciding cannot reflect poorly on *her*. There is

⁶ For elaboration of this view, see my (1998). See also Zimmerman (1988).

nothing that she has done differently as a result of the doing of which it would be true to the facts that she is now blameworthy or at least that she is not now praiseworthy. *If* she were now blameworthy for breaking the promise, it would have to be so in virtue of the fact that something about *her* in relation to her breaking the promise is different—different than it would have been in relation to her keeping the promise. But nothing about her now is relevantly different. Here, it might be helpful to reflect on what I said previously regarding a plain explanation of Peg*’s behavior. If Peg is praiseworthy, her decision is made partly on the basis of the belief that that is what she ought to decide. If Peg* is blameworthy, her decision (unlike Peg’s) is made at least partly on the basis of the belief that it is wrong for her to decide as she does. Without an explanation of Peg*’s akratic action, it is unclear why the belief that it is wrong for her to decide to break the promise rather than the apt belief that Peg presumably has—the belief that Peg ought to decide as she does—is a constituent of the causal explanation of Peg*’s decision. It would seem, then, that Peg* is not now blameworthy. Consequently, the initial assumption that Peg is praiseworthy for keeping her promise need not be granted either.

In conclusion, in some works, I have pursued the thought that modest libertarianism erodes control. But there is also another strand to my thinking (to which I have alluded above) concerning the sort of luck that is associated with modest libertarianism. It is simply that, independently of eroding control, the type of luck at issue undermines free action or moral responsibility (see, for example, 2000, p. 223). Assume that Peg exercises proximal control in deciding as she does in the actual world and that she would have exercised this sort of control had she decided otherwise. Still, her very exercises of active control seem to be a matter of responsibility-subverting luck.⁷ I have yet to be persuaded that this is not so.

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⁷ Compare this with Mele 2005, pp. 398–99.

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