1. A partial error theory for sceptical or incompatibilist intuitions

Scepticism about moral responsibility natural: both philosophers and laymen affected (but not all are impressed).

Argued elsewhere: We should not give weight to intuitions of undermined responsibility triggered by deterministic descriptions of the world, rollback arguments, regress arguments, and by arguments from luck adduced by Al Mele or Derk Pereboom (“The Explanatory Component of Moral Responsibility”, forthcoming in *Noûs*, with Karl Persson)

A. The relevant notion of responsibility is an explanatory notion. We take an agent to be morally responsible for something (a decision, an action, an outcome) when we take it straightforwardly explained in normal ways by a motivational structure of the agent's that is of a type that tends to be affected by expressions of reactive attitudes in the right way.

B. X is taken to straightforwardly explain Y only in relation to an explanatory frame.

C. Not all mentioning of prior causes undermine R. The abstract perspectives of descriptions of determinism or of regress arguments make the agent's motivational structures seem less relevant: they introduce explanatory frame in which it is not a significant explanation.

D. Similarly, contrastive questions move motivational structures into explanatory background.

E. Such changes of explanatory frame should not be understood as undermining ordinary ascriptions.

(i) Perspective shifts do not undermine ascriptions of explanatory judgments.

(ii) Both “sceptical” perspectives and “non-sceptical” perspectives focus on certain features at the expense of others.

(iii) A plausible explanation of the everyday concept of moral responsibility, tied as it is to our reactive attitudes and notions of desert, is that it has kept track of preconditions for the efficacy of expressions of reactive attitudes. The performance of this function presupposes identifying explanatory relations that strike us as significant under “normal” circumstances.

(iv) We don’t have sceptical intuitions because they track something important; they are cognitive spandrels.

2. Sceptical intuitions without abstracting away: manipulation

Manipulation arguments, Watson’s Harris case

General structure of sceptical manipulation arguments:

(i) Agent A is manipulated to do something.

(ii) The manipulation decreases or removes the agent’s responsibility.

(iii) Manipulation is relevantly like ordinary (deterministic?) causes of action.

(iv) Hence, ordinary causation undermines an agent’s responsibility.

Loki’s manipulation: (1) Take your favourite case of an actual agent morally responsible for some bad action, where this person (“Agent”) developed normally, acquiring her motivational structure and values by ordinary developmental processes. (2) Consider a “Loki variation” of this case, where an agent’s development is exactly similar, but where the environmental input in Agent’s development and decision procedures have been intentionally provided by the mischievous Norse god Loki. (A giant Truman show, if you will, but only Loki knows how Agent is set up.) Loki knows all about how environment affects development and behaviour and sets things up so as to ensure that Agent performs the action. The very motivational structures responsible for actual Agent’s deed are responsible in the Loki variation too. Without Loki’s intervention, the agent would have been a better person, doing better things. (3) If you share my untutored intuitions, Loki’s manipulation seems to strongly undermine Agent’s responsibility.

  - But something relevant seems to have changed. This intuition must be explained away as an error: that is my task here.

- Soft-line reply: Agent would change if knowing what Loki had done.
  - Too quick: that might be true about most of us, depending on how the counterfactual is understood. Plus: Agent is not mistaken about proximal sources of experiences.

Apparent problem for earlier error theory: undermines without abstracting away. It is the very same act and the very same motivational structure; it is just the Loki cunningly ensured that it would obtain.

3. Still changing explanatory frames

Highly significant prior causes also change explanatory frames.

Separation of negative and positive charge vs.

Thor’s (Thor: the God of Thunder and Lightning) intention to punish the owner

But: du I really want to say that Agent is morally responsible in the Loki variation?

Psychological reasons not to, reasons closely related to underlying rationale for our concept of rationality.