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## DAVOR PEĆNJAK

Institute of Philosophy, Ul. grada Vukovara 54, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
davor@ifzg.hr

ABSTRACT: In this article I defend Strong Agent-Causal Libertarianism in O'Connor's version against several objections raised by David Widerker. More specifically, I try to show that we can overcome difficulties raised by the question whether an agent has a control over controlling doing action E, by objection of possible nomically sufficient condition for obtaining of E and by objection of possible logically or metaphysically sufficient condition for obtaining of E.

KEY WORDS: Agent-causal libertarianism, control, logically sufficient condition, nomically sufficient condition, strong agent-causal libertarianism.

Agent-causal libertarianism is defended recently very much by Timothy O'Connor (1995, 1996, 2000). On the other hand, David Widerker (2005) thinks that O'Connor didn't provide a successful version of agent-causal libertarianism. I think that Widerker's attack is not so successful and strong as it seems. So, in the first part I shall expose O'Connor's version of agent-causal libertarianism; in the second part I shall present several Widerker's counterarguments, and I shall try to show why I do not find this attack so convincing.[1]

Widerker (2005: 87–88) dubs O'Connor's version of libertarianism "Strong Agent-Causal Libertarianism" (henceforth: SAC). What does this version of libertarianism say?

In the free will debate, libertarians generally hold that there are genuine free actions. This means that they hold that under the same set of antecedent circumstances it is within our power to perform or to refrain from

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[1] I shall not discuss in the present article the assumption that one can cause a causally complex event only indirectly by causing its first relatum that Widerker sees also as possibly problematic for Strong Agent-Causal Libertarianism.

performing a certain action A. In slightly other words, it is within the control of an agent to perform or not to perform a certain action A. If an agent performed an action A at time t, libertarians hold that it was still within the power of an agent, up to time t of performing action A, to refrain from action and so not to perform action A.

Well, since free will debate is much more than alive, some people who hold this doctrine nevertheless admit that they cannot *prove* that our world is not deterministic (Widerker 2005: 87). But others which are dubbed Strong Agent-Causal libertarians by Widerker, despite admitting the same, nevertheless say

> that they can do so if there is such a thing as agent-causation, or more specifically, if there are acts that consist in the agent's agent-causing a certain event. Call such acts 'agent causal events'. Implied by this claim is a thesis that SAC-libertarians think that they can establish, namely that (SAC) Necessarily, an agent-causal event is within the control of its agent. (Widerker 2005: 87–88).

Now, Widerker sets to show that O'Connor did not provide a successful version of agent-causal libertarianism. First question is whether there is a sense to ask whether an agent has a control over controlling an action.

To have a control over doing E in strong agent-causal libertarianism means that under the same set of antecedent circumstances agent S can do E at t and that agent S can refrain from doing E at t. O'Connor (1995) says that it does not make sense to ask whether agent S has *control over his controlling* of E. This is attacked by Widerker (2005: 88–89) who says that it is a meaningful question. I agree here with Widerker but for the following reasons I don't see it as a threat to SAC.

To ask whether S have a control over control of doing E is not a meaningless question, but answers to it are irrelevant for establishing that S has (libertarian) freedom if S has just the control over doing (or refraining from) E. What would be the answers whether S has control over his controlling of E? One would be YES, the other NO. What does each imply?

The answer NO implies that an agent does not have a control over controlling of E. Very probably, this is the right answer about our world. Metaphysical constitution of the world is then such that we do not have control over controlling E but we have (a property of) only control over E. But this is enough for having freedom because it means that a control over doing E in strong agent-causal libertarianism means that under the same set of antecedent circumstances agent S can do E at t and that agent S can refrain from doing E at t.

If we have control over controlling E, that would mean that we can exercise or not exercise that control over E. If we do, (agent says to him-

self: let me have control over E!) then it collapses into controlling E – namely it is within our power to do or to refrain from doing E. If we decide not to have control over controlling E, then it means that it is not up to us anymore to do or to refrain from E. In fact, E is then completely not up to us. In fact, nothing about E is then up to an agent. (Both, obtaining or not obtaining of E, is not in control of an agent anymore if he renounces control over controlling E.) If it happens, then it happens because of something else in which an agent does not play a role, and the happening or not happening of E can be explained without evoking powers of an agent: it happens because of determinism or pure chance or because of other agents if it happens at all.

To have a control over controlling E would be a kind of meta-freedom. Namely, with this kind of control we could be free regarding whether we would like to have freedom of doing or refraining from E, or to have any control over E (doing something).

But regarding doing actions, it is enough, for libertarian construction of freedom, that we have just a control over doing or refraining from an action E. That's enough for SAC.

Widerker then attempts to examine what seems to him the strongest reasons that can be provided for SAC libertarianism; he names these "The Default Argument", and says the following what SAC libertarian may say:

> Look, you charge me with not having shown that an agent-causal event is within the agent's control. Fair enough. However, what you do not seem to realize is that this must be so by default. We have seen earlier that such an event cannot be caused by anything else. Furthermore, it also can't be a chance occurrence. If *I* cause my intention to raise my arm, then obviously this occurrence is not something I find myself with, or that happens to me out of the blue. Thus, it does not occur at random. Hence, by default it must be in my control, as the only two reasons for this not being so do not obtain. (Widerker 2005: 90)

First difficulty for "The Default Argument" is this.

> There is, however, s further type of scenario in which an agent presumably lacks control over an agent-causal event which the SAC-theorist also needs to rule out as impossible in order to for the Default Argument to succeed; a scenario in which there obtains for an agent causal-event a *nomically* sufficient condition. Suppose that there were a law of nature to the effect that the obtaining of antecedent conditions of a certain type F would be always followed by the occurrence of a certain type of agent-causal event. If that were the case, then if conditions of the said type were to obtain, then a certain agent-causal event would become inevitable. Its inevitability would not be due to its being caused, as, consistent with the SAC-theorist view, causation does not reduce to nomic regularity. Rather it would be due to (i) the fact that its occurrence would be entailed by the conjunction consisting of the

relevant law of nature and the relevant antecedent condition, and (ii) the fact that the agent would not have control over this conjunction (once the said antecedent condition occurred). (Widerker 2005: 91)

But agent-causal theorist says that causation is a basic relation. Of course, causation does not reduce to nomic regularity. So, if we take that nomic regularity is not a basic relation, then nomic regularity may require interpretation. But what would be (one of) the most plausible interpretation? A causal one, of course. So, to what, then, we can reduce something that is expressed as nomic regularity (initial conditions plus laws of nature, see what Widerker says above)? We can reduce it, following O'Connor (1996: 144), to the capacities of objects which have their basis in the object's nature, which consists of structural and dynamical properties, and to appropriate circumstances. So, in some specified circumstances, these structural and dynamical properties do their job in time sequence and this is what we call causality. So, either there is a (continuous) connection between structural and dynamical properties of objects which are not properties of an agent, appropriate circumstances (which obtain before E) and an agent's structural and dynamical properties and his doing E, or there is not such a connection.

If there is, then occurrence of E can be explained without involving an agent, tracing relevant sequence of events which uniquely determine E outside him: to explain E it is enough to have initial conditions and laws of nature. In other words: structural and dynamical properties of objects which are not properties of an agent and appropriate circumstances which obtain before E *determine E* – so there is no agent-causal event. This surely is not any version of libertarianism; this is determinism, so it cannot be reconcilable with any version of agent-causal libertarianism, hence not with SAC either. So, (a bit disguised) *description* of determinism is not something which is an objection to SAC.

If there is no connection between structural and dynamical properties of objects which are not properties of an agent and appropriate circumstances which obtain before E and occurrence of E, how do we know that obtaining of these appropriate circumstances and structural and dynamical properties of objects involved, and then occurring of E, is not in fact only coincidence; so it would not be a law of nature that E happens in these "appropriate" circumstances. It only seems as it is. Despite how many times it happens, the next time it does not have to happen.

So it seems that there could not be nomically sufficient condition consistent with SAC. Either we have a more or less classical determinism or we have only coincidence which does not have to happen.

Another difficulty for SAC, according to Widerker, is a situation "in which there obtains prior to the occurrence of an agent-causal event a *logi-*

*cally* or *metaphysically* sufficient condition" (Widerker 2005: 91). He has particularly in mind the problem of (in)compatibility of God's foreknowledge and human freedom. If God is essentially omniscient, then He knows what lies in our future, but He knows it now; He believes at $t_1$ that an event will happen at a later time $t_2$. If a later event is an agent-causal event, then at $t_1$, God believes that an agent-causal event will happen at $t_2$. Since He is essentially omniscient, He holds a true belief at $t_1$ (and hence, knows at $t_1$) about a later time $t_2$. So, it is not possible that what He believes at $t_1$, does not happen at $t_2$; so, what happens at $t_2$ is inevitable; moreover, if what happens at $t_2$ is an agent-causal event, then an agent-causal event is inevitable. God's foreknowledge, namely, what He believes at $t_1$ about an event at a later time $t_2$, constitutes a logically or metaphysically sufficient condition for obtaining of the event at $t_2$. This conclusion is certainly contrary to the nature of strong agent-causal libertarianism.

But the debate about God's foreknowledge and human freedom is far from a settled matter as well as analyses of the attribute of essential omniscience. So, it does not have to be that essential omniscience entails inevitability of future events if we employ other analyses of that attribute. Let me mention some of them which can be employed by SAC-theorist in defense of SAC.

Warfield (1997) argued forcefully that God's foreknowledge and human freedom are compatible in the following way. First, Warfield accepts that logical fatalism is refuted and is false.[2] He states the following propositions (Warfield 1997: 80):

(1)  God exists in all possible worlds and is omniscient in all possible worlds

(2)  Plantinga will freely climb Mount Rushmore in 2020 AD[3]

(3)  It was true in 50 AD that Plantinga will freely climb Mount Rushmore in 2020 AD

(2) and (3) are consistent though (3) implies

(4)  Plantinga will climb Mount Rushmore in 2020 AD.

But (4) does not cast any doubt on Plantinga's power to refrain in 2020 AD from climbing. "If Plantinga were to refrain from climbing, (3) would not have been true, but this does not, the refutation of fatalism assure us, require Plantinga to have objectionable 'power over the past'" (Warfield 1997: 80). So, when (2) and (3) are accepted, then human freedom and God's foreknowledge are compatible in the following way:

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[2] See, for example, van Inwagen (1983: chapter 2).

[3] Originally, Warfield put 2000 AD, but his article was published in 1997, so for stylistic reasons I put 2020 AD, to be future from now; but it does not alter anything.

If *p* and *q* are logically consistent, then *p* is consistent with any proposition that is logically equivalent to *q*. More formally:

(7)  □ IF {◊ (*p* & *q*) & □ (*q* ↔ *r*)} THEN ◊ (*p* & *r*)

Recall that the following propositions are, given that logical fatalism has been refuted, logically consistent:

(2)  Plantinga will freely climb Mount Rushmore in 2020 AD

(3)  It was true in 50 AD that Plantinga will freely climb Mount Rushmore in 2020 AD.

But if God exists in all possible worlds and is omniscient in all possible worlds, then

(5)  God knew in 50 AD that Plantinga will climb Mount Rushmore in 2020 AD.

is logically equivalent to (3). That is, given (1), necessarily, (3) is true if and only if (5) is true. It follows then, from (7), that (2) and (5) are logically consistent. This generalizes trivially to my claim that God's necessary existence and necessary omniscience are compatible with human freedom. (Warfield 1997: 81–82)

So we can say even that God foreknows that an agent-causal event E will happen in that way: that it will happen, it will happen freely, and that an agent will have within his control to refrain from E but he will not refrain.

SAC theorist may employ also a different strategy if he wishes so. Analysis of the attribute of omniscience provided by Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2002: chapter 6) also applies to avoid this kind of objection. They analyze the attribute of omniscience in the sense of "maximal knowledge". Maximal knowledge is maximal possible knowledge both in quality and quantity. It is a kind of knowledge that is unsurpassable and only God can have it. True, there could be situations in which non-divine persons can know something that God cannot know, but no one other than God can have quantity and quality of knowledge that would equal His. This analysis is motivated to avoid many problems which may arise for the notion of omniscience. Analyzing the problem of foreknowledge and freedom, they conclude on *epistemological* reasons that omniscient being cannot foreknow what human beings will do in the future because "an omniscient being *cannot foreknow* the occurrence of contingent events that are *not causally inevitable*" (Hoffman and Rosenkrantz 2002: 128).[4]

So it seems to me that SAC survives these three objections that Widerker put against it.[5]

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[4] Full argumentation is too long to be presented here because main theme of this article is not the debate about freedom and foreknowledge, so please see Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2002: chapter 6, especially 126–135).

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