The Metaphysical Case against Luck Egalitarianism

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Luck egalitarianism is the name of a group of theories of justice that subscribes to the idea that a just society compensates for brute luck, but does not compensate for bad outcomes that fall under the responsibility of the agent himself. Notable defenders of versions of the theory are Dworkin (2000) and Cohen (1989). It has been argued that this conception depends on a libertarian account of free will. However, Carl Knight (2006) has argued that luck egalitarianism is also a plausible view under compatibilist accounts of free will. In this essay I argue that defenders of this view fail to distinguish between what Scanlon (1998) calls attributive and substantive responsibility. Compatibilist accounts of free will and responsibility provide an understanding of the former but not the latter concept, while the latter is the relevant one for justice. Consequently, if the libertarian position on free will is wrong, luck egalitarianism collapses into outcome egalitarianism. I argue that, in Dworkin's terminology, the distinction between brute luck and option luck will turn out arbitrary, or irrelevant, for justice under Scanlon's distinction.

1. Introduction

Responsibility of choice plays a crucial rule in a number of theories of distributive justice. Among these is luck egalitarianism, which states that a just society compensates for brute bad luck, but not for any event which falls under the responsibility of an agent[1]. There is something very appealing about the idea that if a person makes a fully informed voluntary choice of action, all the consequences that result from it are his to bear. This has both a positive and a negative component. If a person decides to start his own company which subsequently develops into the most successful company in the world, he is entitled to fully enjoy the fruits of his fortune. Similarly, if a person decides to use all his money to buy lottery tickets and loses, luck egalitarianism holds that a society does not have any duty to compensate this unfortunate person for his bad luck. Dworkin (2000) makes a useful distinction in this respect. 'Brute luck' is the kind of luck over which we do not have control. For instance, a person born with a handicap does not have control over his condition and its consequences, while a person who gambles all his money and loses has bad 'option luck': the kind of luck over which one does have control. Dworkin argues that in a just society brute luck is compensated for but option luck is not.

By making justice relative to what people choose to do Dworkin centralizes a complicated concept. The concept of choice has been elaborately discussed and criticized in the literature on free will. There is a generally accepted idea in both the literature on free will as well as the literature on distributive justice that the matter of whether we have free will and moral responsibility has great consequences for the field of distributive justice. G.A. Cohen, for instance, argues: 'Someone might say that to make choice central to distributive justice lands political philosophy in the morass of the free will problem' (Cohen, 1989: 934). I agree with Cohen that this is the case. In the free will literature, authors often think about the consequences their claims about free will have on matters of justice. Oddly enough, in the literature on distributive justice, the free will debate is referenced much less. For instance, Saul Smilansky (1997; 2003) and Sung-Hak Kang (2003) note that that political philosophers have downplayed the importance of the free will concepts in their debates. This is particularly odd in theories in which choice plays a crucial role, such as luck egalitarianism. The motivation behind this neglect appears to be that

the issue of free will is a metaphysical issue while distributive justice concerns itself only with practical issues. This essay, however, takes up the gauntlet and discusses the importance of the free will debate from the perspective of distributive theories of justice.

A few authors have discussed what kind of freedom is required for certain distributive theories of justice in which choice plays an important role. In particular, Carl Knight (2006) and Richard Arneson (2004) have defended luck egalitarianism from counterarguments related to the free will debate. I will argue that they have done so inaptly. The main counterargument against luck egalitarianism is that skepticism about free will (the hard determinist position) is plausible and seems to imply that outcome egalitarianism is the most plausible theory of justice (e.g. Smilansky, 1997). On the other hand, Knight argues in his paper 'The Metaphysical Case for Luck Egalitarianism'[2] (2006) that the luck egalitarian position goes very well together with the compatibilist position in the free will debate (a similar view is defended in Arneson, 2004). It is against this claim that I will argue in this essay. I argue that the difference between option luck and brute luck is irrelevant to distributive justice for both hard determinists and compatibilists. I will argue that Arneson and Knight do not take the distinction between attributive and substantive responsibility seriously (Scanlon, 1998). Knight discusses this distinction, but does so inappropriately. It follows from my argument that if you are a luck egalitarian, your position will collapse into outcome egalitarianism if you are not a libertarian about free will. In other words, the distinction between brute luck and option luck that Dworkin makes is incompatible with the combination of egalitarianism and determinism. There may be good other moral reasons why we should allow responsibility-based inequalities to subsist. However, given determinism, these cannot be justified from the egalitarian starting point.

In this essay I shall first review the positions in the free will debate and explain the problem hard determinism poses for luck egalitarianism (Section II). This will make apparent what the close relation is between metaphysics and political philosophy. Secondly, I will take a closer look at Knight's claim that luck egalitarianism and compatibilism are compatible (Section III). I will then introduce Scanlon's distinction between attributive

and substantive responsibility, after which I show that while determinism is plausible with regard to some notions of free will and moral responsibility, it is quite another matter whether determinism is also compatible with desert-entailing versions of moral responsibility and free will. Thirdly, some counterarguments by Knight (2006) will be considered, and I will argue that they do not help his case in light of the arguments presented in this essay (section 4).

2. Hard determinism and egalitarianism

	Determinism is *incompatible* with free will	Determinism is *compatible* with free will
Determinism is (likely) *true*	Hard determinists	Compatibilists
Determinism is (likely) *false*	Libertarians	(Indeterministic compatibilists: a rare position)

Table 1: A taxonomy of the free will debate.

There are a number of positions in the free will debate (see table 1). The first divide is between those who believe that determinism is true and those who believe that it is not. The second divide is between those who believe that determinism is a threat for free will (incompatibilists) and those who do not think so (compatibilists). There are roughly three positions within the debate. Firstly, there are those that believe that determinism is true and people have free will, such that for all decisions a person makes, he could have chosen otherwise (e.g. Kane, 2007). This position is called the libertarian position in the free will debate (not to be confused with the position in political philosophy due to, among others, Robert Nozick). The second position has been called the hard determinist position. Those who hold this position argue that as a result of the way we understand the

world as a causal, determined, system, there is only one possible course of action an agent can take. This implies that the freedom we ascribe to agents is an illusion. In short, there is no free will such that for every action an agent undertakes, he could have done otherwise. Both the libertarians and the hard determinists hold that free will and a deterministic world are incompatible (the second divide), but disagree on the plausibility of the determinism thesis (the first divide). The third position, that of compatibilism, holds that whether we have a free will, and the related matter of whether we can be held morally responsible for our deeds, does not depend on the truth of determinism. According to them, even though determinism is (likely) true, the concept of free will is compatible with a deterministic worldview. I will now discuss hard determinism in more detail with the purpose of showing how it undermines luck egalitarianism.

2.1 Hard determinism

Hard determinism subscribes to both incompatibilism and determinism. The classical version of hard determinism takes determinism to entail that the state of the world as it is today is a closed function of the state of the world as it was yesterday and all the causal laws of nature that work upon it. Humans do not fall outside of the causal system of natural laws. This thesis worries many, as it seems to leave no room for spontaneity or free agency, and thereby creates a concern with regards to the possibility of moral responsibility. Generally, by moral responsibility we mean to say that a person is to blame if he does something wrong and praiseworthy if he did something right. However, if determinism is true a person could not have done otherwise because the laws of nature determine his path of action as much as they determine the flow of a river. If we blame a person, we often mean to say: 'you should have done otherwise, and because you did not, you are to blame'. The hard determinist maintains that because the first part of the sentence is undermined by determinism (a person could not have done otherwise), he is not to blame for his actions.

This can be illustrated as follows: consider two people who both have similar, peaceful backgrounds and both go off to college. At their first college party they both get offered a sniff of cocaine. One decides to take it while the other decides not to. The cocaine sniffer unfortunately becomes addicted, ends up being expelled, and loses everything, while the other does well in college, graduates within four years and manages to get a good life for himself. Is the cocaine sniffer responsible? Yes, our intuition says. After all, he was fully aware of the risks of the drug, and knew he could get expelled for its usage. At the same time, his fellow college freshman remains clean. This seems to imply that another path could have been chosen. At the same time, the difference between the cocaine sniffer and his clean friend could be explained by differences in character. Some people are sensitive to peer pressure and impulsion. Others are prudent decision makers, and can inhibit themselves much better. Prudence is not something one chooses to have. One may choose at some point to start making prudent decisions. However, whether this occurs at all, and whether one can implement one's choice depends on the way a person is, mentally. And this, in the end, seems to be a product of both genes and environment, neither of which are under the person's own control.

Modern determinists often maintain that the threat to free will does not lie in the fact that everything is perfectly determined. After all, quantum mechanical randomness is radical indeterminism at a fundamental level, but it does not provide any reason why the coke sniffer could have chosen otherwise in a morally relevant sense. The real threat is posed by the implication that we are part of the causal universe as much as everything else. Scanlon (1998) calls this thesis the Causal thesis[3]. One way in which the threat of the causal thesis to responsibility has been phrased, due to Galen Strawson (1994), is to say that any character trait that is important to decision making is either given (by nature and education) or chosen. However, if it is chosen, there are other character traits that caused this decision. This creates an infinite regress: all choices depend on character traits, depend on character traits depend on character traits… However, at the end of this regress, there cannot be said to be an non-chosen, uncaused self that truly has chosen the character one has and can be held responsible for the choices that it makes. Therefore, when I refer to hard determinism, I do not mean that no laws of nature are probabilistic. What is important is that we are part of a causal system.

2.2 Egalitarianism and determinism

In this essay I shall use Arneson's (2004) definition of luck egalitarianism. While Dworkin himself did not like the label much, I think Arneson's description is very helpful. According to Arneson, luck egalitarianism is egalitarianism plus what he calls luckism. Egalitarianism as Arneson describes it either means that those who are worst off should get priority (prioritism) or that the aim should be to make everyone as equally well off as possible. For Rawls, Dworkin and Cohen there are reasons why inequalities should be allowed. Rawls relates this to efficiency-considerations that will benefit the group in society that is worst off (his famous difference principle; Rawls: 1971). Dworkin and Cohen relate this to responsibility. For Arneson this relates to responsibility and luck: 'Luckism is the idea that the strength of any moral reasons there might be to alter the condition of some individual for the better or for the worse (if the latter, this is to be done for the sake of improving the condition of other individuals) can be amplified or dampened by some factor involving an assessment of individual responsibility.' (Arneson, 2004: 2). The luck egalitarian position is that all bad luck should be compensated for, except if a person is responsible for it himself. Both Dworkin and Cohen support a version of this view. Their views differ in that Cohen believes opportunities should be equalized, whereas Dworkin believes that differences in resources due to 'brute luck' is the relevant unit to be equalized (however, Dworkin does believe that ambitions, even if they are due to luck, should play an important role in income distribution; Dworkin, 2000).

It should be noted that there is an important relation between the egalitarian belief in equality and luckism. Egalitarianism is often motivated by the idea that much of what determines a person's life (e.g. his place of birth and the genes he is born with) falls completely outside of the responsibility of a person and is therefore, in Rawls's words, 'morally arbitrary'. There are no moral reasons why a person who has had bad luck should suffer its consequences. This is what I take to be the core of egalitarianism[4]. I shall refer to this fundamental motivation of egalitarianism as the Egalitarian Proviso. Both luckism and the Egalitarian Proviso say that what falls outside the scope of one's responsibility should not affect a person. Crucial though is that luckism provides a deviation from the position that equality is always

good. A very unequal society may be fully just according to the luck egalitarian, if the inequalities are due to choices for which the involved citizen is fully responsible. It is the claim that responsibility is a relevant criterion for distributive justice that is crucial to the luck egalitarian.

How do hard determinism and luck egalitarianism relate to one another? Luck may be a somewhat ambiguous concept, but in its simplest form, luck is the opposite of what someone is responsible for. Susan Hurley (2002) argues in favor of this definition (and calls it thin luck). Hard determinism holds that whatever action a person undertakes, it is always a product of causes outside of him, and he is not responsible for any. He cannot do otherwise. For the hard determinist anything that happens to a person ultimately falls outside the scope of his responsibility. Smilansky (1997: 156) words it as follows: 'if people lack the sort of self-creating ability which only libertarian free will might have provided us with, then ultimately everything - including a person's choice - must be viewed as arbitrary, and cannot ultimately be seen as up to the person.' The way a person is, if we take the hard determinist's words for it, 'is as brute luck as it gets' (Ibid.). In other words, within the hard determinist's worldview there is no room for responsibility and everything is luck. In our example: whether someone is prudent or not is luck in its purest sense to the hard determinist. Therefore, whether someone has a good life as a college graduate or a bad one as a drug addicted college drop-out will turn out to be a matter of luck too.

To be fair, Dworkin (2000) did not define option luck in terms of responsibility, but in terms of deliberate action, and brute luck as luck that could not have been anticipated. The distinction itself is not undermined by hard determinism, but its moral relevance does seem to be affected by this. The distinction between brute luck and option luck only seems to be morally relevant if, in case of option luck, a person could have done otherwise. A gamble may be deliberately chosen, but if a person can only accept the gamble, being unable to do otherwise, the fact that the choice was deliberate does not appear to be morally relevant. In fact, making distributions sensitive to deliberate choice, if determinism is true, is in conflict with the Egalitarian Proviso, which maintains that all consequences of bad luck should be compensated for. If everything that happens to a person,

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including his personality, is a product of luck, then losses incurred through irresponsible action should be compensated for.

Another way to phrase the problem is by means of Dworkin's distinction between endowments and ambitions. The latter are properties for which one is responsible, while the former are a matter of luck. However, if we take determinism seriously, ambitions and endowments are not different in any morally relevant sense. One way to phrase it is to say that ambitions are also endowments. According to Dworkin, distributions should be endowment-insensitive and ambition-sensitive. If ambitions are seen as a subset of endowments though, it is easy to see that this statement leads to contradictions.

The relation between egalitarian justice and hard determinism appears to be twofold. Firstly, hard determinism argues powerfully that much of a person's position in life is due to moral luck and therefore arbitrary. According to Kang (2003), who downplays the importance of the free will debate for political thought, it is undeniable that determinism gives very strong support for egalitarian justice. It is even the case, he argues, that much of the force of egalitarianism is drawn from the determinist position, and little of it would still be convincing if determinism were false. The Egalitarian Proviso states that what a person is not responsible for should not negatively affect his life. Determinism seriously diminishes the scope of what we can be responsible for. Therefore, egalitarianism as the view that our society should be as equal as is possible (or feasible) seems to combine very well with the idea of determinism.

The second relation between hard determinism and egalitarianism is that hard determinism urges any egalitarian to become an outcome egalitarian, as it denies the moral significance of responsibility. While many (or perhaps all) egalitarians will accept that much of a person's life happens due to luck, Cohen and Dworkin do not accept that everything that happens in our lives falls outside the scope of our responsibility. This urges them to believe that redistribution should be limited to giving everyone equal opportunities (for Cohen), and correcting for brute luck (for Dworkin). Acknowledging that hard determinism is true implies that no one is morally responsible for his actions, and therefore all that happens to a person is luck. Combined with the Egalitarian Proviso that bad luck should be

compensated for, this view would collapse the luck egalitarian view into outcome egalitarianism. In other words, it would make luckism an empty criterion for justice. Also, it would make Cohen's thesis incoherent with the Egalitarian Proviso (see Smilansky, 1997). After all, equal opportunities will almost certainly have better consequences for the prudent. And these are, in the hard determinism view, simply the lucky. In short, hard determinism compels one to become an outcome egalitarian.

3. Does compatibilism offer reassurance?

Despite the above, luck egalitarianism has a very strong intuitive appeal. For many, the argument made above may not seem so worrying. After all, its argumentative force against luck egalitarianism depends heavily on the truth of hard determinism. While this view is certainly not outdated, it is certainly not mainstream either and remains a somewhat controversial position in the free will debate. Luck egalitarians have found reassurance in an alternative view: compatibilism (e.g. Knight, 2006; Arneson, 2004). This view holds that while determinism is plausible, it certainly does not follow from determinism that free will does not exist and responsibility is impossible. In this section I will discuss the claim that compatibilism offers an escape from the threat that determinism poses to the concept of responsibility and see whether this can save luck egalitarianism.

Central to many versions of compatibilism is the idea that the option to do otherwise is not necessary for responsibility and moral appraisal. This view was introduced by Frankfurt (1969). The idea is this: if it is possible to ascribe to a person a desire that is truly his (in Frankfurt's framework: he wants it and he wants to want it, and he may even want to want to want it), and a person takes the desired course of action, we can say that this person is responsible for this action. If it is something that we approve of we may say 'well done', or we may say 'this person is a very good person', without being wrong: even if determinism were true. This view of responsibility relates to action ownership: if an action truly falls under a person's desires, truly belongs to a person, such that we can say that it is typical behavior of his, we can attribute responsibility to him. There are several accounts of how responsibility can retain meaning in a

deterministic world. An important version of compatibilism is developed by Peter Strawson (1962). He argues that what we call moral responsibility is the idea that we see people such that their actions make it appropriate that we hold a *reactive attitude* against them. A reactive attitude is an emotional response to moral behavior, and moral judgment is holding such a reactive attitude from a third person perspective. Even if determinism is true, he argues, it still makes sense to hold someone responsible for doing something immoral (e.g. killing someone), in the sense that you change your attitude towards him. Compatibilism seems to provide us with some great instruments to fight off the worries raised by determinism. Such, for instance, is the position of Carl Knight (2006).

3.1 Scanlon's account

Scanlon (1998) sheds some light on the discussion of moral appraisal, desert and responsibility in the compatibilist account. Firstly, he makes an important distinction between two types of responsibility that often get mixed up, particularly in political debates. A person can be said to be attributively responsible for an action if he is subject to moral praise or blame for this actions. This relates to both Frankfurt (1969) and Strawson's (1962) account of responsibility. If a person truly owns an action, it is truly attributable to him: he can be said to be attributively responsible for it. A person is substantively responsible for an action if a person cannot complain about its consequences, because it was his own choice. This is the kind of responsibility we apply to those who did not buy car insurance and complain about the fact that they have to pay the full costs of the repairs when their car breaks down. Similarly, it is the kind of responsibility we apply when someone works hard for an achievement, and we feel that this achievement is thus well-deserved. According to Scanlon these two types of responsibility need not necessarily coincide. In particular, one can be held attributively responsible if one is not substantively responsible for an action.

This is exemplified in Scanlon's (1998) analysis of the well-known Frankfurt cases (1969), for instance, the willing addict. Frankfurt establishes the willing addict as a famous counterexample to the view that responsibility requires the opportunity to do otherwise. An addict takes drugs because he cannot do otherwise: he is, after all, addicted. The willing addict truly wants to take the drug. Even if he were not addicted, he would take the drug. In other words, even though he could not do otherwise, the action is truly his: the taking of the drug can be attributed to him, and not just to his addiction. In Scanlon's terminology, the willing addict is attributively responsible for taking the drug. But Scanlon would also argue that because he could not do otherwise, he is not substantially responsible for it.

Scanlon argues that if the causal thesis is true, this should have no effect attributive responsibility. This is what many compatibilist accounts have taught us. However, substantive responsibility, according to him, implies that the person in question could have acted otherwise, but did not do so. The attribution of substantive responsibility to people, therefore, is undermined by determinism. In case of the willing addict, Scanlon argues that the fact that he is not willing to do otherwise should not have as a consequence that he forfeits the community's duty to aid him. Similarly, if determinism is correct, it means that we can never do otherwise. In other words, we can never be substantially responsible for our actions. On Scanlon's account, this implies that moral appraisal is still appropriate, but that we can never say that a person has brought about his own fate, *and therefore* has forfeited our duty to help him. In his own words: 'In this respect our attitude toward those who suffer or are blamed should not be "You asked for this", but rather "There but for the grace of God go I"' (Scanlon, 1998: 294).

Scanlon's distinction between attributive and substantial responsibility clarifies the disagreement between compatibilists and incompatibilists about free will. According to Scanlon (1998), attributive responsibility may be compatible with determinism, but this is not the kind of responsibility that is relevant to questions of justice. Note that Dworkin's distinction between option luck and brute luck is about something similar to attributive responsibility. On Scanlon's account the relevance of Dworkin's distinction is irrelevant with respect to what a person deserves or does not deserve, if determinism is true. Again, if determinism is true, people cannot be said to have substantive responsibility. And it is substantial responsibility that is relevant to defend the moral non-arbitrariness of luck egalitarianism. The

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idea that responsibility of choice justifies inequalities rests on the idea of substantive responsibility, and not attributive responsibility. The fact that we can ascribe an action to an agent, such that he is attributively responsible for it, should have no consequence for what his due is, if there is no way he could have done otherwise. In Scanlon's account an agent may be attributively responsible for an action, while, as he could not have done otherwise, its consequences should be seen as luck. The difference between substantive and attributive responsibility is that substantive responsibility is desert-entailing, while attributive responsibility is not. Now, a version of responsibility that is not desert-entailing does not seem to be of much importance for distributive theory. Thus, compatibilism may offer us many useful tools to save the moral terminology in a deterministic world, but compatibilistic freedom cannot give us desert-entailing responsibility. The difference between the accounts is worded nicely by Fleurbaey (1995: 40): 'Even if a compatibilist account may provide grounds for moral attitudes of praise and dispraise, it is more questionable whether it could justify differences of welfare or advantage between people.' In short, Scanlon's account of responsibility states that attributive responsibility is compatible with determinism, but is not desert-entailing, while substantive responsibility may be desert-entailing, but is not compatible with determinism. Compatibilism in the free will debate may provide us with attributive, but not with substantive responsibility. Compatibalism can thus not provide any desert-entailing version of responsibility, which is required for luck egalitarianism.

4. Knight's defence of luck egalitarianism

In fact, Knight (2006) considers Scanlon's distinction, but does so inadequately. Knight presents two reasons why Scanlon's conclusion with respect to substantive responsibility need not worry the luck egalitarian. The first is that praise and blame may be enough to justify responsibility based inequalities. The second is that libertarianism may still be correct.

Knight's first argument is that it seems implausible to him that praise and blame can be disconnected from substantive desert-entailing responsibility. According to Scanlon, it does not follow from the fact that a person has conducted praiseworthy behaviour that it would be just to reward him.

Similarly blameworthy behaviour does not imply that it would be just to punish. This sounds implausible to Knight. He argues that it would be highly counterintuitive to shake the hand of those who act maliciously. 'Assuming that such persons are, determinism notwithstanding, responsible for their behavior, it may well strike us as wrong to subsidize their reprehensible choices.' (Knight, 2006: 183). This argument can be understood in two ways. I shall discuss the two interpretations briefly.

Firstly, this argument can be understood as an argument in favour of intuitions versus metaphysical conclusions. In this case, we can say that while Knight's premise about our intuitions is surely correct: not making the wrong-doer pay may be counter-intuitive. However, the implicit premise underlying his argument is surely false: if our intuition goes against a metaphysical conclusion, the metaphysical conclusion is to be rejected. The point of drawing on arguments from the free will debate for the distributive justice discussion is exactly that it may show us that some of our intuitions may be wrong. Moreover, the intuitions for the luck egalitarian case are far from unambiguous. Anderson (1999) famously summarized a large number of counter-intuitive examples that highlight that the luck egalitarian is very uncompassionate if he meets a person in need who has not been particularly prudent in his decision making.

Secondly, Knight's argument can be understood as a consequentialist, or paternalistic, argument: while it may not be the fault of the imprudent that he has acted imprudently, rewarding him for bad behaviour may encourage this kind of behaviour. Therefore, we should not do it. It is notable that Scanlon, while arguing for his distinction between two kinds of responsibility, also considers the great value of deliberate choice. Encouraging people to choose and be held accountable for their choices has many advantages. Scanlon (1998) argues that being held accountable for your own order in a restaurant ensures you get the dish that most accords with your taste. I think this is a very important consideration, but it diverges from the statement that responsibility based inequalities should subsist because they are just. It is rather a statement about efficiency. This may be an important consideration for questions of distribution. Rawls' (1971) Difference Principle is a famous example of a distributive rule that takes into account efficiency concerns. He acknowledges that inequalities

may be efficiency enhancing and that rather than striving for a completely equal society, inequalities should be allowed if they benefit the worst off. However, luck egalitarians do not make responsibility central to their account because of efficiency concerns, but because they believe that it is just in itself. Knight may argue that choice is important for efficiency, but does not thereby also show that it is just.

Knight's second argument is that even if Scanlon is right, and compatibilism cannot provide us with an account of substantive responsibility, it need not imply that luck egalitarianism is wrong. After all, luck egalitarianism would still be substantially different from outcome egalitarianism if libertarianism were correct. This is surely correct. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the libertarian position in the free will debate is not a very plausible one[5]. It is particularly striking that Knight himself writes that the critique that luck egalitarianism draws upon a libertarian position in the free will debate is 'particularly damaging' (Knight, 2006: 174). The plausibility of the view notwithstanding, Knight is right to assert that luck egalitarianism remains to be a substantive view if one maintains a libertarian position in the free will debate[6].

5. Conclusion

In this essay I have discussed the relation between luck egalitarianism and the free will debate. There appears to be a widely held view amongst luck egalitarians that while their notion of luck is tightly linked to the concept of free will, their position is not dependent on the libertarian position in the free will debate (Arneson, 2004, Knight, 2006). They argue that while hard determinism may be a threat to their view as a substantive theory that is different from outcome egalitarianism, compatibilism offers a way out. However, I have argued that this argument does not distinguish between Scanlon's two accounts of responsibility. While compatibilist accounts offer satisfactory accounts of attributive responsibility, compatibilism cannot deliver substantive responsibility: the desert-entailing kind. The conflation of these two concepts has confused the argument.

The consequence of this argument is not that luck egalitarianism, as a distinct theory from outcome egalitarianism, is implausible. While the

libertarian position in the free will debate is unpopular, it still has some defenders. Both Arneson and Knight therefore claim that we should regard the issue as unsettled. Hence, we should not draw any drastic conclusions from the debate. One the other hand, in the more plausible case that libertarianism is false, the point made in this article has as a consequence that the 'luck' in luck egalitarianism should disappear. In this case, luckism becomes an empty concept, and luck egalitarianism collapses into outcome egalitarianism.

The luck egalitarian project was a clear and principled divergence from the outcome egalitarian project. The conclusion that luck egalitarianism collapses into outcome egalitarianism if determinism is true, may therefore not be a welcome conclusion to the luck egalitarian. Finally, though he may rest assured that much of what he has argued for in terms of justice may still be relevant in terms of efficiency, and could therefore still be an appealing political idea.

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Notes

1. Another group of theories in which responsibility plays a crucial role are theories that use the capability approach. While these will not be discussed in this essay, many of the considerations will apply to those theories too.

2. It is this title that has inspired mine.

3. For this reason, hard determinist might be a bit of a misnomer. Free will skeptic would perhaps be better suited. For reasons of tradition and clarity, I shall stick to hard determinism.

4. Some other evidence of can be found in the definitions of G.A. Cohen and Larry Temkin. Cohen puts it as follows: 'a large part of the fundamental egalitarian aim is to extinguish the influence of brute luck on distribution' (Cohen, 1989: 931). Similarly, Larry Temkin writes: 'In particular, I believe egalitarians have the deep and (for them) compelling view that it is bad—unjust and unfair—for some to be worse off than others through no fault of their own.' (Temkin, 1993: 101).

5. For an attempt at a knock-down argument against libertarianism see Strawson (1994). This is a much debated paper, which I think has not been convincingly rebutted so far. However, it has not convinced all, as there are still some who argue for libertarianism in the free will debate (see Kane, 2007). We have to conclude that Strawson's argument remains controversial.

6. However, if we take Kang's (2003) argument seriously, much of the force of egalitarianism is lost if determinism is false.

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