

Reactive Attitudes and Sourcehood:

The Remaining Threat from Determinism in P. F. Strawson's Account

**Il-Hwan Yu
(University of Nebraska-Lincoln)**

목차

1. Abstract
2. Strawson's Notion of Free Will
3. The SNM Thesis
4. Objections and Replies

Abstract

- Hard determinists' argument :

H1: If determinism is true, then all people do not enjoy free will.

H2: Moral responsibility requires free will.

H3: If determinism is true, then all people are exempted from moral responsibility.

Abstract

- P.F. Strawson's refutation to the hard determinists' claim:

S1: Determinism is already true.

S2: Reactive attitudes are based on the natural facts of human society.

S3: Moral responsibility requires reactive attitudes.

S4: The truth of determinism cannot suspend reactive attitudes.

S5: Even if determinism is true, all people cannot be exempted from moral responsibility.

Abstract

- Strawson's refutation to the hard determinists' claim :

S1: Determinism is already true.

S2: Reactive attitudes are based on the natural facts of human society.

S3: Moral responsibility requires reactive attitudes.

S4: The truth of determinism cannot suspend reactive attitudes.

S5: Even if determinism is true, all people cannot be exempted from moral responsibility.

Abstract

- My argument against Strawson's claim:

(The support for the hard determinists' claim)

1. If Strawson want to show the plausibility of his claim, then he should persuade hard determinists to agree with his claim.

Abstract

- My argument against Strawson's claim :

1. If Strawson want to show the plausibility of his claim, then he should persuade hard determinists to agree with his claim.

* Hard determinism: **contra-causal freedom pr libertarian freedom**

→ If determinism is false, then free will is possible.

* Soft determinism: the power to affect the objects in exactly the way we are meant to.

→ Soft determinism's freedom is consistent with the truth of determinism.

Abstract

- My argument against Strawson's claim :
 1. If Strawson want to show the plausibility of his claim, then he should persuade hard determinists to agree with his claim.
 2. Reactive attitudes can serve as a basis of moral responsibility only if an agent is the source of his action, which requires that the agent be free. (the SNM thesis)

Abstract

- My argument against Strawson's claim :
 1. If Strawson want to show the plausibility of his claim, then he should persuade hard determinists to agree with his claim.
 2. Reactive attitudes can serve as a basis of moral responsibility only if an agent is the source of his action, which requires that the agent be free.
 3. On hard determinism's view, if determinism is true, then sourcehood is impossible, and thus reactive attitudes cannot serve as a basis of moral responsibility.

Abstract

- My argument against Strawson's claim :
 1. If Strawson want to show the plausibility of his claim, then he should persuade hard determinists to agree with his claim.
 2. Reactive attitudes can serve as a basis of moral responsibility only if an agent is the source of his action, which requires that the agent be free.
 3. On hard determinism's view, if determinism is true, then sourcehood is impossible, and thus reactive attitudes cannot serve as a basis of moral responsibility.
 4. Strawson's theory of moral responsibility is still vulnerable against a hard determinist's claim.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Reactive attitudes:
 - Reactive attitudes serve a basis for moral responsibility in our actual lives.
 - Reactive attitudes are natural facts of human society
- The suspension of reactive attitudes
 - (1) Excusing conditions → Free will
 - (2) Exempting conditions → Moral capacity:

An agent is capable of the commitment to interpersonal relationship

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Excusing conditions:

Excusing conditions involve the possibility of an agent being in an unavoidable circumstance where he has no control over his action which harms us.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Excusing conditions

→ An agent can be excused from moral responsibility for their harmful actions if we learn that they were acting under unavoidable circumstances.

- If the agent satisfies excusing conditions, then we suspend or modify reactive attitudes for their actions and exculpate them for moral responsibility

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Free will:

The ability to control our choices and actions

- Strawson's excusing conditions → Alternative possibilities

- Alternative possibilities:

For any agent S and an action A of S , if S can control A , then S could have done otherwise.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- The pleas on the list of excusing conditions provided by Strawson

“He couldn't help it”

“It was the only way”

“They left him no alternative.”

“He was pushed”

“He had to do it”

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- The pleas on the list of excusing conditions provided by Strawson

“He couldn't help it”

“It was the only way”

“They left him no alternative.”

“He was pushed”

“He had to do it”

→ **The lack of Alternative possibilities**

: He could not have done otherwise

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- The pleas on the list of excusing conditions provided by Strawson

The obscure pleas:

“He didn't mean to.”

“He hadn't realized.”

“He didn't know.”

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- The pleas on the list of excusing conditions provided by Strawson

“He didn't mean to.”

“He hadn't realized.”

“He didn't know.”

→ These circumstances the agent has points to losing control his action, and it is natural to suppose that this loss of control implies that the agent could not have done otherwise.

“Although he didn't mean to hurt us, he could not have done otherwise.”

“Although he didn't know that he hurts us, he could not have done otherwise.”

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- The best way to tie together all of the excuses on Strawson's list is to understand them all as alternative possibilities.
- All of the excuses on Strawson's list points out that the relevant agent could not have done otherwise.
- Some complicated part:

However, Strawson does away with the full list of conditions that he enumerated and considered exculpatory.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- The transition of freedom from metaphysical conditions to epistemic conditions.
- Strawson reduces all kinds of freedom as metaphysical conditions to his notion of “the quality of will”.
- The quality of will: the agent's intention and attitude (good will or ill will)

For any agent *S* and an action *A* of *S*, we adopt reactive attitudes, such as resentment or gratitude, by considering whether *S*'s will is good or ill when performing *A*.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Why does Strawson intend to reduce all kinds of freedom as metaphysical conditions to the quality of will as epistemic conditions?
- Answer: To reject hard determinists' claim (Universal Application of Excuse)

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- If excuse applies universally, then it would be formulated as the following:

If determinism shows that excuse applies universally, then it will show that no person acts with a morally objectionable will.

- As Strawson pointed out, this is merely a consequence of the reign of universal good will, not universal determinism.
- Thus, it is argued that determinism does not entail any of the sort of contexts in which we would suspend or modify the reactive attitudes.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- In my view, Strawson's reduction of freedom to the quality of will is incomplete:
 - **Hard determinists might argue that excusing conditions suggest that when an agent is not free to do otherwise, he is not legitimately deemed morally responsible for his action, regardless of considering whether the quality of his will is good or ill.**
 - Thus, that Strawson leaves the excusing conditions unanalyzed implies that he leaves a gaping hole with regard to the transition project from freedom as metaphysical conditions to the quality of will.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Also, I argue that excusing conditions should be interpreted a different of freedom rather than alternative possibilities.
- This is because **alternative possibilities are inconsistent with the quality of will with respect to a certain case, such as willing addicts.**

Ex) Willing addicts: Willing addicts are addicts who enjoy being addicted. They not have the power of voluntary self-control as they are neurophysiologically addicted.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Given Strawson's quality of will, willing addicts are held responsible because addiction—drug addiction—is blameworthy and the addicts' will is ill when indulging in addiction.
- According to alternative possibilities, however, willing addicts are not held responsible because addicts could not have done otherwise, except for indulging in addiction because of neurophysiological compulsion.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- For this reason, my claim is that excusing conditions should be interpreted as a kind of freedom which is consistent with the quality of will: sourcehood, whether an agent is the source of his action.

- Sourcehood, as conceived by Harry Frankfurt:

For any agent S and an action A, S is the source of A iff A is brought about by motives with which S is identified

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Frankfurt contends that even though the agent lack freedom to do otherwise, they still act freely and thus meet the freedom requirement for moral responsibility.
- According to Frankfurt, the idiosyncratic human desires system which consists of first and second order desires.
- First order desires refer to all the immediate and reflective desires that arise within our mind; second order desires are the desires of first order desires.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Suppose an agent T desires to smoke. This is a first order desire. However, T wants to remove the desire to smoke from his mind and instead wishes to live a healthy life. This is the desire of first order desires, i.e., second order desire.
- With respect to the willing addict case, Frankfurt's position is consistent with that of Strawson.
- On Frankfurt's account, for addicts, the first order desire is neurophysiologically under compulsion. However, their second order desire wish to indulge in drug on their own will. Thus, in Frankfurt's view, willing addict is held responsible.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Based on sourcehood, all of the excuses on Strawson's list can indicate a set of circumstances in which the agent's reasonable alternatives are constrained in specific ways. That is, the unavoidable circumstance makes it unreasonable to expect the agent to do otherwise.

Ex) The original plea: "They've left me no choice"

→ They've ruled out all the alternative possibilities

Ex) The revised plea: "They've left me with no reasonable alternative.

→ They've constrained my reasonable alternatives, rather than cutting out alternative possibilities.

Strawson's Notion of Free Will

- Thus, all of the excuses on Strawson's list can be explained by sourcehood.
- All of excusing conditions indicates that the agent was not the source of his action—the agent did not do what he really wanted to do.

the SNM thesis

P1: For any agent S and an action A of S, if S was not the source of A, then S's circumstance satisfies excusing conditions.

P2: For any agent S and an action A of S, if S is not the source of A, then reactive attitudes in response to A could not serve as the basis of moral responsibility.

C1: For any agent S and an action A of S, reactive attitudes in response to A can serve as the basis of moral responsibility only if S is the source of A.

the SNM thesis

P3: On hard determinism's view, for any agent S and an action A of S, if determinism is true, then it is impossible for S to be the source of A.

C2: On hard determinism's view, if determinism is true, then all reactive attitudes cannot serve as the basis of moral responsibility.

Objections and Replies

- Objection 1: Denying P1? The Idea of Strawsonian Excuse as Frankfurt's Sourcehood

One might object to understanding Strawsonian excusing conditions alongside Frankfurt's sourcehood.

For instance, if I decide to betray a friend in order to gain money that I desperately need, then I may not be doing what I really want to do at all—and yet I do it because I need the money. I'm a pretty bad person in this scenario even if it pains me that I'm doing something so rotten. I'm blameworthy.

Objections and Replies

- Objection 1: Denying P1 → The Idea of Strawsonian Excuse as Frankfurt's Sourcehood

One might object to understanding Strawsonian excusing conditions alongside Frankfurt's sourcehood.

→ In this context, one might understand Strawson's excusing conditions and Frankfurt's sourcehood as follows:

on Strawson's view, in the example, the quality of my will was questionable, even if conflicted. Therefore, according to Strawson, I would be held morally responsible.

→ On the other hand, on Frankfurt's view (which I endorse), at least if, in the example, it is true that my willings do not align with motives which brought about the betrayal, then I might be excused from moral responsibility for the betrayal. Since the assessments are different, one might conclude that it's inappropriate to analyze Strawson's excusing conditions through Frankfurt's concepts.

Objections and Replies

- Objection 1: Denying P1? The Idea of Strawsonian Excuse as Frankfurt's Sourcehood

- Refutation to the objection 1

-> I maintain that on Frankfurt's view, in the example, I did what I really wanted to do and thus I am held responsible. This is because I deliberated to pick out a priority of sorts, decided to choose what was deemed best for me, and acted on that decision.

-> Since, for excuse, Frankfurt's view is consistent with Strawson's view, sourcehood from Frankfurt's line of thought can apply to Strawsonian excusing conditions.

Objections and Replies

- Objection 3: Denying P3 → Higher-order Desires Theory

P3 can be problematic.

If determinism is true, first order desires are necessitated by antecedent causal conditions; however, second order desires can be free. This is because, according to Frankfurt, our own self's being the source of our actions is not necessitated by the causal link. If this is right, determinism cannot threaten an agent being the source of his action; thus, in Frankfurt's view, P3 cannot be plausible.

Objections and Replies

- Objection 3: Denying P3 → Higher-order Desires Theory

Refutation to the objection 3

→ Frankfurt's claim is based on soft determinism. However, in P3, I defined the content of determinism as hard determinism. Thus, the attempt to undermine the plausibility of P3 by applying soft determinism to P3.