CHAPTER – 3
MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PERSONHOOD

To know what people really think, pay regard to what they do, rather than what they say
Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650)

Introduction

The study of the relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility is a new development in philosophy of mind which is gaining popularity among many thinkers. The importance of this relationship cannot be over emphasized as human beings are responsible beings and are therefore morally accountable for their actions – commissions as well as omissions. The reductionist view of personal identity maintains that identity to some extent is a matter of degree and so identity is not absolute. This is in conflict with the fact that the responsibility for a person’s action does not diminish with the passage of time. On the other hand, the non-reductionist view that a person is something over and above the body, brain or mental states is in tune with the fact that identity is ontologically determinate. However, this is in conflict with the fact that it is beliefs, desires and other mental states that enables a person as an appropriate candidate for attributions of responsibility. For Walter Glannon,

Foreseeability grounds my concept of responsible behavior, which says that a person is responsible from the time of a freely performed action to the time when the foreseeable consequences of his action (or omission) obtain. These consequences include being held responsible by others for an action many years after that action was performed.230

We can further say that fully responsible moral agent must possess the ability to recognize moral reasons and also the capacity to be motivated to act on these reasons. In the absence of any of these qualities, an agent cannot be held responsible for his/her actions. In the absence of either one of these, the individual will only be partly responsible.

The question of moral responsibility is important because human beings are moral beings. It is impossible to understand the nature of human beings in general, and persons in particular, without considering the role played by moral responsibility in our day-to-day life. If we are told that no one will be held responsible for any of their actions, there will be chaos everywhere. Society will not be able to function properly without the notion of moral responsibility, it can be considered as the thread that binds the society together. This claim can be proved right when we consider the nature of persons; the fact that personhood is gained and it is not something we are born with. The fact that personhood is gained also means that the idea of person is continuously growing.

Further, we are influence by the world around us every day and all these influences contribute in the growth process of a person. For example, there is a difference in our treatment between a three year old kid and nineteen years old. We will not expect the nineteen years old to make the same mistake (like crossing the road without looking and getting hit by a car) as the three year old and not get blamed for the action. This shows that the idea of right and wrong are learnt, and our personality develop through our knowledge of the world. This enable us to develop the idea of personhood which in turn help us to decide what our moral responsibilities are and how do we fulfill them. Here we can see that the idea of a person involves continuous growth, where we are influence by our circumstances. This is in contrast to Parfit’s idea of a person, which is nothing but an interrelated physical and mental events called “relation-R” (without any branching). Parfit’s idea of a person may get influence by the circumstances, but it is a bit difficult to imagine that it will have feelings, desires, hopes and fears. It does not have the warmth and complexity that we normally associate with persons. Persons are so much more than “relation-R”; even if we are still unable to point out exactly what they “are”, we can at least say what they “are not”, and that is they are not just “relation-R”.

Another interesting fact about personhood being acquired is that, we learn what our limitations are. For example, a child is not born with the idea of what or how much he/she could do or not do. They are told by their parents through words and actions about their limits. Like, telling a child not to jump from the bed as he/she could get hurt. In case the child did not listen and get hurt, it is still a lesson as he/she will not do it again as long as he/she remembers the pain. Also, we will be looking at
the notion of person from the ethical point of view, not a metaphysical or epistemological point of view. We will look at the notion of a person as a moral being with responsibilities towards other persons, societies and the world at large. Thus, we can see the importance of considering moral responsibility while dealing with personhood. We need to be clear about what kind of relationship they have so that we could be clear about how important they are. We will be dealing with some philosophers, mainly, John Martin Fisher, Mark Ravizza S.J, Walter Glannon, Anthony Freeman, Brian Garrett, Victoria McGeer etc. And their view on the relationship between moral responsibility and persons will be discussed in details.

3.1 Personhood Reconsidered

Before we look at the relationship between moral responsibility and personal identity or personhood, it is important to look into what place the problem of personal identity has in philosophy once more. It has been one of the most debated and discussed problem as it concern every individual’s life. Every normal person is interested in his/her identity, so it is very important to know what philosophers have to say about this particular problem. Brian Garrett\textsuperscript{231} holds that in philosophical debates, the concept of personal identity is taken in an abstract way – what matters are not the characteristics that distinguish us, rather those which we have in common.

Also, identity is to be understood in terms of numerical identity, e.g., twins are not the same as they are two different people. And not qualitative identities, e.g., identical twins are exactly similar and so are identical footballs. The question “what is a person?” can be understood in two different ways – either as a satisfaction question or as a nature question. E.g., “what is a table?” – taken as a satisfaction question, the answer will be “a table is a man-made object, typically with four legs, used for putting books, coffee cups etc.” If, on the other hand, taken as a nature question, the answer will be “table can be made of different materials like, wood, steel, plastic, etc.” We can see the difference between the two different questions and their answers. Garrett wants to determine whether an answer to the question “what is a person?” as understood as a satisfaction question, is independent of the answer to the nature question. One of the best answers to the satisfaction question is to say that persons are self-conscious mental beings.

\textsuperscript{231} Garrett, 1998.
The idea that persons are self-conscious mental beings can be traced back to Locke’s writing where a person is projected as “a thinking, intelligent being that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places.” In other words, self-consciousness can be said to be the core of personhood. According to Garrett,

The topic of personal identity lies at the intersection of metaphysics and morals. For many philosophers, therein lies its real importance. It is because the concept of person is a moral and legal concept that we must be clear about our identity and what it involves. The concept of a person is loaded with assumptions of duties and rights, and hence its proper construal is of obvious moral importance. For example, many familiar positions on abortions and euthanasia presuppose particular conceptions of persons…another important effect of discussions of the importance of personal identity has been to provide a new perspective on the debate between utilitarianism and its critics. Parfit has argued that reductionism lends support to a more impersonal ethic which ascribes no weight to distributive principles. For example, an impersonal ethic would justify assigning a pain to person A who has suffered much in the past in preference to assigning a slightly greater pain to person B who has led a relatively pain-free life. Such an ethic gives no weight to distributive principles. It aims simply to maximize the net sum of happiness over suffering.

There are two main basic categories that give answer to the nature question, immaterialist and materialist. The immaterialist like Plato and Descartes hold that, “a person possesses an immaterial soul, an entity with no extension in space. The soul, in some way, interacts with the body. The soul is the seat of our mental life, and the activities of the embodied mind manifest themselves in action.”

The materialist, on the other hand, rejects the view that persons are immaterial souls or have any immaterial parts. All the different types of materialism identify persons with some biological entity, either body or brain. There is a form of materialism that rejects the orthodox materialist view; it is reductionism about persons propounded by Hume and Parfit. The central thought of reductionism is that, “the concept of person is a derivative concept, built up primarily out of psychological concepts (memories, intentions, desires, etc.) which, despite appearances to the

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232 As quoted in Garret, 1998: 5.
234 Ibid., p. 6.
contrary, can be fully understood in essential respects without reference to the concept of a person or of personal identity.”235 For the immaterialist, the identity of a person over time consists in the continued existence of immaterial soul. For the different kinds of materialists, the identity of a person over time consists in the continued existence of some biological object. And for the psychological criterion of personal identity, in order to preserve personal identity, the cause of psychological continuity could be normal, reliable, any cause; depending on whether they believe in weak or strong reductionism.

Further, the difference between materialism and immaterialism can be seen in the way they provide answer to questions pertaining to the nature of personal identity. There are three main types of materialism; firstly, animalist theory says that a person is identical to an animal or human being. Secondly, a body theory says that a person is identical to a human body. And thirdly, the brain theory says that a person is identical to the physical seat of his mental life, i.e., the brain and central nervous systems. One thing that is common to all the theories is that, they all identify persons with some biological entity.

On the other hand, there are different versions of immaterialist or dualist view. First one says that a person is to be identified with an immaterial soul. Second says a person has no physical part at all apart from their body, so when we say “John is six feet tall”, it is to be understood as elliptical for the judgment “John’s body is six feet tall”. Third says a person is a composite or union of soul and body (Descartes’ version), but only the soul is essential to my identity because I will exist only as long as my soul exist. However, the objection to Descartes’ dualism, as to how the immaterial soul is suppose to interact with the material body, is well known and need not be repeated here. So we can see from the views of materialism and immaterialism on the concept of persons just put forth how different their views are and how many kinds of views are there.

Further, according to Lawrence Locke, a common sense way of understanding “person” is to consider it as just one of a group of people, a human being. However, there are other sense of understanding which play specialized yet important roles in our thought. The main point is that the concept of person provides society with the

235 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
seat of responsibility, the proper object of blame, punishment and reward. And this honor or burden, as the case may be, is reserved for persons alone, as it is essential to the very idea of person. So, we can say that there is something special about persons that make them distinct from any form of animal, and this is the reason that makes the concept distinct from “human being”. Further, we can see that no animal is considered morally responsible for its actions. Also, even though all people are considered or treated as human beings, not all are treated as persons. For Locke,

In a more subjective sense, the concept of person becomes our concern whenever we become concerned with those facts about our-selves that seem essential and with which we identify when we are satisfied that we will survive to some future time. This sense of the word is not limited to the mere idea of a locus of perceptions. What we think of ourselves, what others get to know when they get to know us “as a person”, includes values, attitudes, beliefs, something of our past history and of our future plans: character in a broad sense. This more subjective meaning of “person” is often a concern of theories of personal identity.236

Further, Locke goes on to say that our capacity to form second-order volitions is a useful person-characteristic to discover; it provides a feature of consciousness that help us to distinguish persons from non-persons. By being a feature unique to persons and by being a necessary condition for moral responsibility, our capacity to form second-order volition shows why part of the concept of a person has been that only they are a morally responsible agent. Also, it helps explain why moral responsibility is attach to persons in the first place, that is, through self-awareness, evaluation, and second-order volitions, persons uniquely have the capacity for freedom of the will and so can be responsible for actions in a way that non-persons cannot. Thus, we can say that the reasons we have for holding persons responsible in that special way called morally responsible is reasons of character.

Also, according to Victoria McGeer, “The agent has a privileged authority in self-ascribing intentional states because it is she who makes it the case that she deserves to be ascribed these states; she has ‘maker’s knowledge’, not the knowledge of a particularly accurate perceiver or detector.”237 Here, we can see that for McGeer, the fact that I have “maker’s knowledge” or knowledge from the inside makes it

possible for me to ascribe intentional states to myself. And this shows that as I have the privileged authority to self-ascribe intentional states; I can be held morally responsible for my actions. However, there are many conditions that need to be considered before one can be held morally responsible for one’s actions. We will consider some of the conditions of moral responsibility in the next section.

3.2 Conditions of Moral Responsibility

According to Glannon,

when we say that a person is responsible, we mean that he is capable of recognizing and reacting to reasons for or against actions that he ought to or ought not perform and of accounting for them. In this regard, he makes himself an appropriate candidate for praise or blame, approval or censure. On the other hand, to say that the person should be punished, we mean either of two things: that he deserves to suffer in some sense that is proportionate to the extent of his wrongdoing (on the retributivist view); or that punishing him will contribute to the total amount of people’s happiness or welfare (on the utilitarian view).238

However, it is a fact that punishment does not suffice as a deterrent measure in our society; otherwise we will have no more crime after so many punishments given by our legal courts. The deeper issue here is the relationship between metaphysics and morality. According to Derek Parfit, as already discussed in the last chapter, we must start with metaphysical judgments about personal identity and arrange our moral practices around these judgments. The changes that will follow Parfit’s reductionist view will be a change in diminished importance of responsibility, desert, and compensation with the passage of time. This is due to the diminished psychological connectedness and continuity in us over a period of time. However, diminished psychological connectedness is not compelling enough to change our moral practices, because it is a fact that we require only a low threshold of psychological connectedness and continuity to preserve our conception of personal identity which our moral practice supposes.

Further, Glannon holds that,

Our moral intuitions and practices ought to serve as constraints and stabilizers on our metaphysical theories. At the same time, metaphysical theories about the nature of persons ought to feed, shape and substantiate our moral intuitions and practices. By moving back and forth between the practical and theoretical, we reach a stable point of ‘equilibrium’ where morality and metaphysics balance and complement each other.\textsuperscript{239}

We can say that Parfit’s reasons are not compelling enough. In order to hold a person responsible for his/her past actions, including acts performed under delusion, there must be a recurrence of a publicly identifiable earlier self. In the absence of any, we will be attributing the responsibility to a different person effectively. The reason is that, “responsible behavior is not a momentary snapshot of action but a temporally extended and causally complex process involving both mental events and actions identified with voluntary bodily movements.”\textsuperscript{240} We can say that we are held responsible by others on the basis of our own responsible behavior. Also, we are held responsible for particular actions, not what one might do but what one had done on the basis of the person’s actual desires, beliefs, intentions and decisions. Actions as well as the beliefs about the likely consequences of their actions are the main important point here.


An important difference between persons and other creatures is that only persons can be morally responsible for what they do. When we accept that someone is a morally responsible agent, this typically involves more than a particular belief about him; it entails a willingness to adopt certain attitudes toward that person and to behave toward him in certain kinds of ways.\textsuperscript{241}

Also, only persons can be morally responsible for their actions, while non-persons can be responsible for any events. Moral responsibility is associated not only with negative responses like resentment and blame, but also with positive responses like gratitude, respect, and praise. This is propounded by those who believe that there is a spectrum of reactions that are appropriately applied only to persons and this includes

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., pp. 239-240.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., p. 243.
\textsuperscript{241} Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 1.
positive reactions as well. P.F Strawson, in his essay *Freedom and Resentment*, (2003) is “at pains to emphasize how important the reactive attitudes and feelings are to us, how deeply we care about them. Such attitudes characterize and indeed help to constitute our human relationships and point to something unique about us as persons.”

Further, our response towards non-persons tends to be “objective” while we are engaged with persons. We do not have any attitudes such as love or resentment towards non-person. We do not punish non-persons, because punishment involves an element of moral condemnation that is inappropriate to, say, a rat or a hen.

According to Strawson, to be morally responsible is to be an appropriate candidate for the reactive attitudes. Only a morally responsible agent can be rationally accessible to the reactive attitudes. The person need not be an actual recipient of these attitudes, as far as the person is an apt candidate for these attitudes. Fischer and Ravizza accept Strawson’s view and they further want to show how an agent is morally responsible for their behavior regardless of the truth or falsity of causal determinism. They want to develop and defend this view which will offer a strong plausibility argument about the compatibility of causal determinism with moral responsibility. However, even if we are to find out that causal determinism is true, this should not in itself change any of our basic and fundamental view of ourselves as a morally responsible agent – persons. It is very unlikely that a scientific discovery like the truth or falsity of theories like causal determinism will persuade us to give up the rich texture of our relationships with family and friends. Without personhood and moral responsibility our lives would be radically different and unattractive too. Our commitment to moral responsibility and our view of ourselves as persons is too deep to be given up for a doctrine like causal determinism.

### 3.3 Challenges to Moral Responsibility and Personhood

Causal determinism challenges moral responsibility and personhood in two ways – indirectly, it holds that causal determinism rules out control and thus also moral responsibility. And directly, it says that causal determinism rules out moral responsibility (but not in virtue of ruling out control). It is important to look into

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242 Ibid., p. 5.
243 “Causal determinism is the thesis that, for any given time, a complete statement of the facts about that time, together with a complete statement of the laws of nature, entails every truth as to what happens after that time…all events can in principle be fully explained by reference to past states of the world and the laws of nature”. (Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 14).
details on how causal determinism poses a threat to moral responsibility and personhood. Because the very fact that our commitments are challenges calls into question the ultimate tenability of our natural beliefs. Fischer and Ravizza go on to develop two versions of the indirect challenge. The first one called the modal version or the principle of the transfer of powerlessness says that, “if a person is powerless over one thing, and powerless over that thing’s leading to another, then the person is powerless over the second thing.”

Further, Fischer and Ravizza hold that the transfer principle is the first part of the first version of the indirect challenge. The second part is called the principle of the fixity of the past that says “if a person’s performing a certain action would require some actual fact about the past not to have been a fact, then the person cannot perform the act.” Here, we must keep in mind that when we speak of moral responsibility and control, it implies the existence of alternative possibilities or freedom to do or choose otherwise. But the idea that we have the relevant sort of control can be challenged in a simple way – suppose causal determinism obtains and Smith mows his lawn on Wednesday afternoon. In such case,

It follows from the truth of causal determinism that conditions obtaining the past (say, Monday), together with the laws of nature, imply that Smith mows his lawn on Wednesday afternoon. And since Smith has no control over the past, and Smith has no control over the laws of nature, it follows (given the Transfer Principle), that Smith does not have the relevant sort of control over his behavior – Smith is not in fact free between Monday and Wednesday afternoon to refrain from mowing his lawn on Wednesday afternoon.

However, if we apply the above two principles to challenge control, what we get is a startling conclusion that says, “Since we don’t know that the thesis of causal determinism is false, we don’t know whether we have the sort of control that is traditionally associated with moral responsibility…and thus we are not persons.” They give the second version of indirect challenge called the principle of the fixity of the past and laws that says,

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244 Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 18.
245 Ibid., p. 19.
246 Ibid., p. 20.
247 Ibid., p. 21.
An agent can perform an act only if his performing that act could be an extension of the actual past, holding the natural laws fixed...that is to say that, given the truth of causal determinism, it follows that S cannot do other than what he actually does – he lacks the sort of control that involves alternative possibilities.\textsuperscript{248}

The direct challenge to our moral responsibility, according to Fischer and Ravizza proceed by arguing that causal determinism rules out alternative possibilities and thus control. Ultimately, causal determinism rules out moral responsibility. The principle of transfer of non-responsibility says, “If no one is morally responsible for p, and no one is morally responsible for the fact that if p obtains, then q obtains, it follows that no one is morally responsible for q.”\textsuperscript{249} As we can see, the challenges posed by causal determinism are based on plausible and commonly accepted principles such as the intuitive ideas that the past and the natural laws are fixed, and not on some thought experiments or sci-fi notions. In order to answer the challenge pose by causal determinism, Fischer and Ravizza give different type of solution. Here, we must remember that what they want to prove is that moral responsibility and causal determinism are compatible. Let us examine them and see if they can solve this problem, and give enough proof convincingly.

\textbf{Solution from Frankfurt-type examples}

Further, Fischer and Ravizza argue that in order to feel secure in our view of ourselves as persons, we must address the challenges posed by causal determinism. It is a fact that in the absence of the control on moral responsibility that we think we possess at least sometimes, we would have to give up many important views on ourselves and others. To do so would be to abandon behavior that constitutes our life as we know it, that gives the dramatic contours and rich texture it has as well as mark its boundaries. The truth of causal determinism would pose great challenges to our intuitive presupposition that we possess the relevant control that we need in order to fulfill our moral responsibility. As only a person can be morally responsible for his/her behavior and moral responsibility requires some sort of control, we naturally presuppose that we possess the required control.

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., p. 24.
However, this idea is being challenge by the truth of determinism. We can further ask whether we really require control that involves alternative possibilities and whether its absence implies that we will be no better than mere brutes or fancy machines. In order to find an answer, Fischer and Ravizza give Frankfurt-type example where X fulfills her intention to join the university without any help from Y, who had planted a device on X’s brain to monitor it and will stop X from not joining the university in case she change her mind.\(^{250}\) Here, X is fully responsible for her action even if she could not have done otherwise. From this kind of example, it can be said that,

> In cases in which a responsibility-undermini ng factor operates in the alternative sequence but not in the actual sequence, an agent can be held morally responsible for an action, although he could not have done otherwise…moral responsibility does not require the sort of control that involves the existence of genuinely open alternative possibilities. But this is not to say that moral responsibility does not require control of any sort.\(^{251}\)

From the above quote, it seems that there is another sort of control needed to have moral responsibility. So, the two kinds of control are – “guidance control”, that involves an agent’s freely performing an action, e.g., X turning her car at the right side instead of the left side, successfully. The other one is called the “regulative control”, which involves the dual power to do something and also free to do something else as well. That is, regulative control involves the power both to exercise guidance control of A and the power to exercise guidance control of something else instead of A. It is important for an agent to have regulative control in order to be held accountable for their behavior – actions, results of the actions and omissions as well.

We can further give an account of the difference between guidance control and regulative control. E.g., in case where X guides her car in the right side turn normally. But her car is a “driver instruction” automobile with dual controls, and X could not have turned the car in the left side as she would not have been allowed by the instructor. What is clear from the above example is that, at a deeper level guidance control is the sort of control associated with moral responsibility for action. And not

\(^{250}\) The example given by Fischer and Ravizza are much more complex. This is just a paraphrased version.

\(^{251}\) Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 30.
regulative control, even if it may appear intuitively that regulative control always comes with guidance control.

It appears that Frankfurt-type examples are consistent with causal determinism, and further that causal determinism is compatible with guidance control that grounds moral responsibility. Fischer and Ravizza want to prove that guidance control and moral responsibility is compatible with causal determinism. We can say that our account of moral responsibility should capture our intuitive judgments about clear cases, and not cases like actions produced by powerful brainwashing and indoctrination, potent drugs or manipulations of the brain. The causal history of an action is important for us in attributing moral responsibility, because when people are manipulated they do not have the required control and thereby cannot choose to act differently.

However, the Frankfurt-type examples shows that what an agent actually does is more important in ascribing moral responsibility, and so another approach is needed to look at it more carefully, called an “actual sequence” approach. It means,

An approach to moral responsibility that does not require alternative possibilities...holds that ascriptions of responsibility do not depend on whether agents are free to pursue alternative courses of action; rather what is important is what the agents actually do, and how their actions come to be performed.252

The Frankfurt-type examples show us that, as long as no responsibility-undermining factor actually operates, an agent will be morally responsible, even if the agent lacks alternative possibilities.

Another useful way to develop an actual sequence approach to moral responsibility is to switch from “agent-based” approach to “mechanism-based” approach. In the Frankfurt-type example where the agent could not have done otherwise, we can say that the agent is not reasons-responsive253. But the mechanism that is operating here is reasons-responsive, while the alternative mechanism that would operate is not. In the case where X turn her car to the right, her action come

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252 Ibid., p. 37.
253 By “reason-responsive” it means that “there is the normal, unimpaired operation of the human deliberative mechanism…the agent is responsive to reasons.” (Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 37). So, the absence of it will make the agent not reason-responsive.
from the normal faculty of practical reasoning which can be taken to be reasons-responsive. While in the alternative scenario a different kind of mechanism would have operated. \( X \) would not have been able to do otherwise because her car is a “driver instruction” automobile with dual controls. Here, neither the agent, nor the alternative scenarios are reasons-responsive. Thus, the actual-sequence mechanism can be reasons-responsive even if the agent is not, because she could not have done otherwise.

Another interesting point is that, in the Frankfurt-type example, the actually operative mechanism is the agent’s own in some important sense. Even if she could not have done otherwise, the initial plan was hers, and she did not change her mind at all. However, the mechanism that would have operated in the alternative scenario would not have been hers. We have two distinct dimensions of assessments – whether a mechanism is the agent’s own and its degree of reasons-responsiveness. They are treated as two separate dimensions of guidance control by Fischer and Ravizza. So, we can add in the theory of the clear case of moral responsibility that, “an agent exhibits guidance control of an action insofar as the mechanism that actually issues in the action is his own, reasons-responsive mechanism.”

According to Jeremy Byrd,

Frankfurt-type examples give good reason to think that agents can be morally responsible for events which they could not prevent. What is it that makes an agent responsible, then, depends on the actual control the agent has in such circumstances. Fischer and Ravizza are right to insist that for you to be responsible for what you do, the world must be appropriately sensitive to your actions. To test for this sensitivity, one needs to examine counter-factual situations and see how the world would have responded had the agent done something else instead. It is a mistake, though, to include the counter-factual interference of other agents in such situations. To see how the world would have responded to some other action, one need to know how sensitive the world would have been if no one else had interfered. Frankfurt-type examples are interesting precisely because they seem to show that the mere presence of counter-factual interveners does not undermine our moral responsibility given that the world is otherwise responsive to our actions.

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Here, Byrd is suggesting that for the purposes of evaluating an agent’s moral responsibility, there is a relevant distinction to be made between the counter-factual choices of rational agents and other counter-factual events. For him, Frankfurt-type examples show that the world might be appropriately sensitive and that the agents might be responsible for the consequences of their actions and omissions, even if they cannot prevent these consequences.

**Solution from Reasons-responsiveness**

Further, Fischer and Ravizza give us a distinction between two kinds of reasons-responsiveness – strong and weak. Strong reasons-responsiveness obtains if three conditions are fulfilled; “the agent must take the reasons to be sufficient, choose in accordance with the sufficient reasons, and act in accordance with the choice.” It means that there are three possible alternative sequence failures to strong reasons-responsiveness; first, failure to be receptive to reasons – where an agent fails to recognize the available sufficient reasons to perform an action, typically associated with delusional psychosis. Second, failure of reactivity – where an agent choose not to act according to the recognition that certain reasons are sufficient for performing an action, found in compulsive or phobic neurotics. Third, failure to translate one’s choice into action – here the agent is inflicted by various physical incapacities or weakness of the will. In the absence of any of these failures in the alternative sequence where the actual kind of mechanism were operating, we will have an actually operative mechanism that is strongly reasons-responsive. In such cases, there would be a tight fit between the reason the agent has and the reasons in the actually operative mechanisms; between the agent’s reasons and his choice, and his choice and action. In other words, the agent would be tightly aligned with reasons and his/her actions would fit the contours of reasons closely.

However, Fischer and Ravizza do not consider strong reasons-responsiveness as a necessary condition for guidance control and moral responsibility, nor for morally blameworthy and/or imprudent acts. We can see this when we consider a case where X still choose to, say, go to a meeting, even if X has a strong reason not to go there, a deadline to finish and submit an important assignment is tomorrow. Here, X can be held morally responsible for going to the meeting, but the actual-sequence

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mechanism which results in her action is not reasons-responsive in the strong sense. The reason of the failure here is due to X’s disposition toward weakness of the will. In another case, Y steals cookies from a departmental store, knowing full well that it is morally wrong to do so. Y also knows that he will be apprehended and so it is not prudent for him to steal. Here, in stealing the cookie, Y is morally responsible for his action, but the actual-sequence mechanism involved is not strongly reasons-responsive. He has sufficient reasons, both moral and prudent, not to steal the cookies, but he still does it. From these cases, we can see that there is a problem for the claim that strong reasons-responsiveness is necessary for moral responsibility. Strong reasons-responsiveness may be both necessary and sufficient for a certain kind of praiseworthiness – as it is a great virtue for a person to connect his/her action with the contours of value in a strongly reasons-responsive way. But it is a fact that, not all agent who are morally responsible can be said to be morally commendable.

According to Fischer and Ravizza, the main difference between strong and weak reasons-responsiveness is that,

Under the requirement of strong reasons-responsiveness, we hold fixed the actual kind of mechanism and ask what would happen, if there were a sufficient reason to do otherwise. In contrast, under weak reasons-responsiveness, we (again) hold fixed the actual kind of mechanism, and we then simply require that there exist some possible scenario (or possible world) in which there is a sufficient reason to do otherwise, the agent recognizes these reason, and the agent does otherwise.\footnote{Ibid., p. 44.}

If we look at the case of X again, if X was told to pay a thousand bucks to attend the meeting, it is most likely that she will not attend it. And if X still attends the meeting, it is reasonable to think that she is morally responsible for her action to the extent that she acts on a weak reasons-responsive mechanism. Also, if Y still goes ahead and steals even after he was told that he would be shot if he steals the cookies, then we can say that he cannot be held morally responsible for his action. The reason will be that the agent is not exhibiting genuine control of his action. It is plausible to say that as long as Y’s actual sequence mechanism is at least weakly reasons-responsive, it seems that he can be held morally responsible for stealing the cookies. Thus, it can be said that weak reasons-responsiveness is all the responsiveness that is required for the
sort of control involved in moral responsibility, given that the relevant mechanism is the agent’s own. Further, it is not possible to specify “the” mechanism that actually issue the agent’s action, reasons-responsive mechanism. But there is an assumption that lies behind the theory of moral responsibility, that it is assumed that there is some natural, unproblematic way of selecting the relevant mechanism. A mechanism must be temporally intrinsic is an intuitively natural and unobjectionable one.

According to Anthony Freeman, responsibility and choice are different as responsibility is a first-person matter. In a given situation we are responsible if we feel responsible about the outcome of our actions. He says, “I would say that responsibility is always ultimately a first-person matter…conscience is always to be followed, even an objective third-person judgment would say that it is in error.”258 If we are to follow Freeman’s idea, we will have to give priority to the first-person point of view. This will mean that even when the law says we are not guilty, if we do feel responsible, then we will still be responsible. On the other hand, if we do not feel responsible at all then we are not responsible even if the law says we are. The practical consequences of such change would be to provide any and every help possible – religious, psychological, practical – to persons so that they can cope with and work through the consequences of their responsibility.

Further, in the case where one feels innocent even when the court of law finds them guilty, we need to remember that an individual is a part of society. It is to be hoped that the first-person and third-person judgment is in agreement on this, because they have the same root and source of ethics. Freeman further holds that,

First-person reality is not to be isolated, with each person living out their own individual life cut off from everyone else, but to be integrated into a socially coherent whole…Whatever the cause of the psychopathic condition, and whatever, more broadly, should prove to be the relation between brain states and moral consciousness, my proposal remains that the reality of personal responsibility depends upon the individual’s first-person sense of it. If certain individuals lack both the personal and social awareness that could give them this sense of responsibility, then so be it. That lack should not be ignored or denied. It forms part of the total experience to be incorporated into what I have called the ‘socially coherent whole’.

which alone can form the context for a practical and socially acceptable first-person approach to responsibility.\textsuperscript{259}

One the other hand, for Fischer and Ravizza, the account of guidance control they present here helps to reconcile causal determinism with moral responsibility for actions, even if moral responsibility is inconsistent with freedom to do otherwise. They hold that,

The approach to moral responsibility developed here says that an agent can be held morally responsible for performing an action insofar as the mechanism actually issuing in the action is the agent’s own, weakly reasons-responsive mechanism; the agent need not be free to do otherwise...thus a compatibilist about determinism and moral responsibility need not reject any of the very plausible ingredients of the indirect challenges from causal determinism to moral responsibility.\textsuperscript{260}

So, the account of guidance control and thus responsibility requires weakly reasons-responsive mechanism. A weakly reasons-responsive mechanism must have a possible scenario in which the same kind of mechanism operates and the agent does otherwise.

Here, sameness of kind of mechanism does not mean sameness of micro details. There could be difference with respect to the sort of incentives the agent has to do otherwise and the particular details of the mechanism issuing an action. The possibility of a scenario where there exist a difference between what an agents does otherwise at time T, from the actual scenario prior to T, is all that is required by the theory of moral responsibility, if it is accepted that causal determinism is true. The approach to moral responsibility thus, makes room for responsibility for actions even in a causally deterministic world. Because, it is crucial that an agent have it in his/her power at T so to act that the past which is relative to T, would have been different from what it actually was. There is a semi-compatibilism between moral responsibility and causal determinism, even if causal determinism is incompatible with freedom to do otherwise.

Further, Fischer and Ravizza hold that in their approach moral responsibility does not require alternative possibilities. Rather, it is more important to focus on the

\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., p. 66.
\textsuperscript{260} Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 51.
properties of the actual sequence in making ascriptions of moral responsibility directly, and not pointing to the existence of alternative possibilities. Since moral responsibility does not require alternative possibilities, there is no need to hold that agents can have it in their power to actualize scenarios different from the actual scenario. For Fischer and Ravizza,

We need not run afoul of the plausible idea that our freedom must be the freedom to extend the actual past. By adopting an actual sequence approach to moral responsibility, we can thus avoid the thrust of the Indirect Challenges. Indeed, this is the great ‘payoff’ of adopting an actual-sequence approach to moral responsibility.261

So, just as “strong reasons-responsiveness” is too strong, “weak reasons-responsiveness” is also too weak. They want something in-between, “moderate reasons-responsiveness” that says, “we hold the fixed operation of the actual kind of mechanism, and we then simply require that there exist some possible scenario (or possible world) in which there is a sufficient reason to do otherwise, the agent recognizes this reason, and the agent does otherwise for that reason.”262 The need for moderate reasons-responsiveness arises because if strong reasons-responsiveness is too strong, the weak reasons-responsiveness is too loose, to fit between reasons and actions. It can be seen in a case where X want to attend a meeting, but the ticket cost a thousand rupees and that stop her from attending it. However, if we say that she will attend the meeting if the ticket cost 2000 bucks, then it will be puzzling. Here, we can see that the mechanism is weakly reasons-responsive, but it is not intuitively clear that she is morally responsible for her action. Thus, weakly reasons-responsive behavior becomes problematic when the particular reason to which an agent responds is not easily understood and also, when the general pattern of an agent’s responds is puzzling.

Solution from Reactivity and Receptivity to Reason

According to Fischer and Ravizza, the moderate reasons-responsiveness is constituted of two important categories – “reactivity to reason” the capacity to translate reasons into choices and subsequently to behavior, and “receptivity to reason” the capacity to recognize the reasons that exist. These categories are

261 Ibid., p. 54.
262 Ibid., p. 64.
important as they help us in deciding what kind of reasons-responsiveness we have in a given situation. Also, the responsiveness relevant to moral responsibility is crucially asymmetrical. In order to have the required responsiveness, what is needed is a weak sort of reactivity to reasons, but when it comes to receptivity we need a strong sort. This can be seen in a case where, for example, Justin cannot resist injecting heroin till he was told that he will die unless he stop it from now. The fact that he does not want to die stops him from taking any more injection of heroin. This shows that weak reactivity to reasons is all the reactivity required for guidance control and thus moral responsibility.

However, in another case, Justin refuses to take heroin only if it cost Rs. 500 per 10grams, but will not have any problem if it cost Rs. 1000 per 10grams. Here, we will generally question whether Justin is morally responsible for his action. For Fischer and Ravizza,

in judging a mechanism’s receptivity, we are not only concerned to see that a person acting on that mechanism recognizes a sufficient reason in one instance; we also want to see that the person exhibits an appropriate pattern of reasons-recognition…we want to know if (when acting on the actual mechanism) he recognizes how reasons fit together, sees why one reason is stronger than another, and understands how the acceptance of one reason as sufficient implies that a stronger reason must also be sufficient.\(^{263}\)

An agent can be held morally responsible for his/her actions, only if the actual mechanism that issues these actions is at least regularly receptive to reasons. An important defining characteristic of regular reasons-receptivity involves an understandable pattern of reasons-receptivity, both actual and hypothetical. In order to get the pattern of one’s reasons-receptivity, Fischer and Ravizza holds that it will be like being interviewed by a “third person” about what a person would consider being sufficient reason for receptivity in certain circumstances. The person may give only one reason as sufficient given her actual values or preferences. This should be done many times over in different context, so that the third party can find out one’s sufficient reasons for receptivity given another set of values or preferences. The information from the interviews as well as the background information will then be

\(^{263}\) Ibid., pp. 70-71.
employed by the third party to find out the pattern in the set of reasons-recognitions. The third party will need to have certain objective conditions and make sure that an agent’s preferences, values, beliefs and reasons are graded in terms of their strength. On the other hand, an agent’s reasons-receptivity must also exhibit a suitable correspondence to the objective grading of the strength of reasons; so that the pattern in the agent’s reasons-receptivity is understandable to others. This will mean that the agent’s answers must be minimally grounded in reality so that it will not be utterly divorced from reality. We can say that regular receptivity to reasons requires an understandable pattern of reasons-recognition, minimally grounded in reality.

The asymmetry between reactivity and receptivity to reasons can be seen in the way they are being dealt with. Receptivity to reasons needs the agent to exhibit an understandable pattern of reasons-recognition, so that he can show the plausibility of his mechanism having the cognitive power to recognize the actual incentives to do otherwise. In case of reactivity to reasons, the agent must simply display some reactivity, so it is rendered plausible that his mechanism has the executive power to react to the actual incentives to do otherwise. In both cases, we can see that the important power is the general capacity of the agent’s mechanism, and not any particular ability of the agent to choose and do otherwise.

Thus, we can see that we now have a reasons-responsiveness which is stronger than the weak reasons-responsiveness, but weaker than strong reasons-responsiveness. This responsiveness requires only weak reactivity to reasons, but regular receptivity to reasons. This becomes clearer if we consider the case of animals, children and psychopaths. They are not considered to be moral agents because they are without any understanding and appreciation of moral reasons. Fischer and Ravizza hold that,

We shall understand our responsiveness theory to require that an agent be regularly receptive to reasons, at least some of which are moral reasons…responsibility requires that (given the actual-sequence mechanism) the agent recognizes an understandable pattern of moral reasons; that is, just as the recognition of non-moral reasons must have a suitable structure, so must the recognition of moral reasons.264

264 Ibid., p. 77.
Here, we can say that the moderate reasons-responsiveness requires that an agent act on a mechanism that is regularly receptive to reasons, some of which are moral reasons, and at least weakly reactive to reasons. According to Glannon,

Cases of disorders of mood like schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, and impulse like obsessive-compulsive disorder, may excuse persons from responsibility because the cognitive and volitional impairments they involve preclude persons from recognizing or reacting to moral reasons for or against certain actions…this disconnectedness and disunity may be of such a degree that affected individuals effectively become different persons from what they were at an earlier time.\textsuperscript{265}

Thus, we can see that each of the solutions put forth by Fischer and Ravizza help them to move forward in proving the compatibility between causal determinism and moral responsibility. The arguments are persuasive enough to make us reconsider our existing views on moral responsibility.

\subsection*{3.4 Moral Responsibility and Consequences}

Fischer and Ravizza further give an account of moral responsibility for consequences; build on the account of moral responsibility for actions. When we look at certain cases where an agent performs an action where the situation was such that she could not have done otherwise. There are other people who will interfere and make sure that she carried out her intention without fail. Even in such case, an agent can be held responsible for the consequences of her action. However, there are some consequences over which the agent cannot be held responsible for her action, because she could not have prevented the outcome of her actions. The problem here is – how do we decide when and when not to hold an agent responsible for the consequences of her actions? The reason given by some thinkers is that there is a failure to distinguish intuitions about consequence-universals from intuition about consequence-particulars. And once we are able to clear up this confusion, the puzzle will disappear. That is,

The distinction between consequence-particulars and consequence-universals can be made in terms of criteria of individuations…consequence-particular is individuated more finely than a consequence-universal…the actual pathway to a consequence-particular is an essential feature of it, so that if a different causal pathway were to

\textsuperscript{265} Glannon, 1998: 240.
occur, then a different consequence-particular would occur. In contrast, the same consequence-universal can be brought about via different causal antecedents.266

There is a strategy called “divide and conquer”, put forth by some thinkers267 that associate moral responsibility with alternative possibilities. They begin with a careful articulation and separation of different things for which one might be held responsible. It point out that it is difficult to find one thing of which both the claim – that one is morally responsible for one’s actions and that there is no alternative to it – are true. This strategy allows a theorist to take a unified view of cases and alleged that an agent cannot be morally responsible for a consequence-universal insofar as she cannot prevent it from obtaining. However, Fischer and Ravizza hold that the divide and conquer strategy is not invincible even though it is powerful. They start with the consequence-particulars first – and says that,

The proponent of Divide and Conquer seems to be confusing power to do otherwise (in the relevant sense) with the mere possibility of something different occurring…this possibility is too exiguous to ground ascriptions of moral responsibility…if one accepts the claim that moral responsibility for an event-particular requires that there be alternative possibilities, then one ought also to say that such responsibility requires that there be alternative possibilities of a certain sort.268

So, the claim by the divide and conquer theorists that there are always the appropriate sorts of alternative possibilities when people are inclined to ascribe moral responsibility is denied.

Regarding consequence-universal, the divide and conquer theorists hold that an agent cannot be held morally responsible for the universal consequences of her action. However, Fischer and Ravizza hold that there is certain sort of guidance control of the consequence-universal although the agent cannot prevent from obtaining. Thus, an agent can be held morally responsible for her actions. Here, further distinctions can be made between “descriptive” consequence-universal and

267 Peter van Inwagen (1978) is the main theorist taken up by Fisher and Ravizza here.
“modalized” consequence-universal. Taking the case of “Assassin” Fischer and Ravizza says that,

> It is important to distinguish between the ‘descriptive’ consequence-universal, ‘that the mayor is shot in some way or another’, and what might be called the ‘modalized’ consequence-universal: ‘that the mayor would have had to have been shot’, or perhaps ‘if the mayor were not shot by Sam acting on his own, then he would be shot by a process initiated by Jack’s device’…we do not claim that Sam is morally responsible for the modalized consequence-universal; perhaps Jack is morally responsible for the modalized consequence-universal, or perhaps someone else (or nobody) is. In contrast to the modalized consequence-universal, however, we do contend that Sam is morally responsible for the descriptive consequence-universal.270

So, we can see that the account of guidance control of consequence-universals is not structurally parallel with the account of guidance control of consequence-particulars. Their similarity lies in the fact that both are build on the account of guidance control of actions.

Fischer and Ravizza go on to give an account of moral responsibility for consequence-universal. They confront the divide and conquer theory that Sam cannot be held responsible for the mayor being shot because the state of affairs is quite out of Sam’s control. They hold that although Sam does not have regulative control, he does have guidance control over the consequence-universal. This is enough as guidance control is all the control required for moral responsibility for consequence-universal. Further, in order for an agent to be held morally responsible, the two mechanisms leading to the bodily movement must be suitably responsive; the “inner mechanism” – leading to the agent’s bodily movement, and the “outer mechanism” – leading from the bodily movement to the relevant event in the external world. Responsive in the inner mechanism is necessary for moral responsibility.

However, in the absence of responsiveness from any of the mechanisms, an agent cannot be held morally responsible for the state of affairs. If only one

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269 In this example, Sam plan to shot the mayor and unknown to him Jack plant a device in Sam’s brain that will force Sam to carry out his initial plan, even if Sam wants to change his mind. Sam did not change his mind, and killed the mayor, without any intervention from Jack.

mechanism response to a situation, then an agent cannot be held morally responsible for what obtains. So, Fischer and Ravizza hold that,

Moral responsibility for consequence-universal requires responsiveness in both the first and the second stage – the inner mechanism and the outer part. When there is responsiveness in only one stage, there is no moral responsibility. Further, there can be suitable responsiveness, at both stages, even if there are certain sorts of factors that render it impossible for the agent to prevent the consequence-universal from obtaining…nevertheless, there can be responsiveness at both stages, and the agent can be held morally responsible for the state of affairs.271

The intuitive idea of the approach is that guidance control of a consequence involves two interlocked and liked sensitivities. The inner mechanism that leads to bodily movement must be moderately reasons-responsive. The outer mechanism that leads from the bodily movement to the event in the external world must also be sensitive to the bodily movement. This sensitivity means that, in case the actual type of process were to occur and all triggering events272 that do not actually occur were not to occur, then a different bodily movement would result in a different upshot. This will mean the obtaining of a different consequence-universal. Looking at the case of the “Assassin”, now we can say that Sam is morally responsible for the mayor being shot. There reason is that had not Sam squeezed the trigger the mayor would not have been killed. It does not matter that Sam could not have done otherwise because of Jake, who will intervene in case Sam change his mind. The two components necessary for guidance control are present here – the actual sequence mechanism leading to Sam’s shooting, which is an ordinary practical deliberation, is moderately reasons-responsive. And the process leading from Sam’s shooting to the consequence-universal, that the mayor is killed that does not involve any “abnormal” circumstance of physical laws is sensitive to action. Thus, in order to understand consequence-particular and consequence-universal, the key element is to understand guidance control.

272 Triggering events is an event that would “initiate” a causal chain leading to a certain consequence. (Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 113-114).
Moral Responsibility and Omissions

Fischer and Ravizza moves on to the notion of responsibility for omissions. Here omission can be classified into wider and narrower concepts, wider concepts says that if a person fails to do A then she omits to do A. Omission to do A neither requires explicit deliberation nor the ability to do A, in the wider conception. Whether it is wider or narrower concept, we still need to have an account to moral responsibility for failures which don’t count as omissions. According to Fischer and Ravizza,

Actions and omissions are asymmetrical with respect to the requirement of alternative possibilities. That is, moral responsibility for an action does not require the freedom to refrain from performing the action, whereas moral responsibility for failure to perform an action requires the freedom to perform the action. A similar asymmetry is suggested for moral responsibility for consequences and moral responsibility for omissions: moral responsibility for a consequence does not require the freedom to prevent the consequence, whereas moral responsibility for failure to perform an action requires the freedom to perform the action.273

Further, there is a claim that guidance control is the sort of control necessary and sufficient for moral responsibility for omissions. Positive and negative agencies are symmetric with respect to the requirement of alternative possibilities. And it is also guidance control, and not regulative control, that is associated with moral responsibility for positive and negative agency – called the symmetric principle of moral responsibility.

There are different types of omissions – simple omissions like bodily omissions (failure to keep one’s eye directed straight ahead). Here, the way one actually moves one’s body, including simply keeping the body still, “fully constitute” the omissions. In such case, the application of the notion of guidance control is also relatively simple. One has guidance control of one’s failure to do A, just in case one’s actual bodily movement B issues from one’s own, moderately reasons-responsive mechanism. The account is parallel to the account in the case of action as here too, one holds fixed the actual-sequence mechanism that issues in B, and ask what would happen in a relevant range of alternative scenarios. However, a complex omission is

not fully constituted by a bodily movement, e.g., an agent’s failure to cause an alarm to go off. This involves both bodily movement as well as its relationship with the fact that the alarm did not go off. For Fischer and Ravizza,

Failure to do A is a complex omission insofar as doing A would require more than simply moving one’s body…an agent has guidance control of his failure to do A just in case:(1) his movement of his body in a certain way is moderately responsive to reason, and (2) the relevant event in the external world is suitably sensitive to his failure to move his body in a different way…thus it will be fruitful to think of complex omissions as the bringing about of certain sorts of consequence-universals.\(^\text{274}\)

Further, in complex omission that an agent brings about is not any type of consequence-universals, but it is a “relatively finely specified negative consequence-universals.”\(^\text{275}\) For example, take the case of “Good Fortune,”\(^\text{276}\) here at first look it seems like John did bring about the negative consequence-universals that the child is not saved from drowning. However, suppose the child is saved from drowning by floating to a nearby island within few seconds of John’s decision. In this case, we can see that what John had brought about is the fact that the child is not saved by him, which is different from the consequence-universals that the child drowns. We can see that John’s bodily movements are moderately responsive to reasons, but we can see that the relatively fine specified consequence-universal – that the child is not saved by John – is not sensitive to John’s bodily movements. Because even if John would have jumped into the water he would still be unable to save the child as the child would have floated to the island. Thus, we can say that John is not morally responsible for not saving the child. However, if there was no nearby island and the child drowns, then John would have been morally responsible for the finely specified consequence-universals that the child was drowned due to his inaction.

Thus, we can say that moral responsibility for complex omissions is a special case of moral responsibility for consequence-universals. Also, the consequence-universals in questions must be relatively finely specified negative consequence-

\(^\text{274}\) Ibid., pp. 133-134.
\(^\text{275}\) Ibid., p. 134
\(^\text{276}\) In this example, John walk along a beach, sees a child struggling in the water, and simply decides to continue walking, not bothering to try and save the child. (Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 134).
 universals. We can see that an agent’s moral responsibility for a complex omission can be ascertained simply by applying the analysis of moral responsibility for consequence-universals. So, an agent is morally responsible for omission as long as she has guidance control of her failure to act.

Further, according to Fischer and Ravizza,

Just as moral responsibility for positive agency is associated with guidance control, so moral responsibility for negative agency is also associated with guidance control. The account of guidance control in the context of negative agency is parallel to the account in the context of positive agency: given that the relevant mechanism is ‘one’s own,’ guidance control consists in a certain sort of reasons-responsiveness. This systematic approach to moral responsibility for positive and negative agency…is also part of a systematic, unified theory of the full content of moral responsibility, which includes responsibility for actions, consequences, and omissions. Our approach shows how control of a specific kind plays a pivotal role in the account of moral responsibility for the various sorts of things for which we normally hold agents responsible…the association of moral responsibility for negative agency with guidance control gives further assistance to the semi-compatibilistic project, for it is implausible to think that causal determinism rules out guidance control of omissions.277

Here, the asymmetric principle can be given as – an agent may be morally responsible for doing A even though she cannot refrain from doing A, but in order for her to be morally responsible for failing to do A, she must be able to do A. The problem with this theory is that, Frankfurt-type omission case show us that moral responsibility for failing to do A does not require the ability to do A. So, the asymmetric principle is rejected in favor of the symmetric principle that says – moral responsibility for an action requires guidance control of an action, and moral responsibility for an omission requires guidance control of the omission. The symmetric principle is more simple and systematic, and also fits better with the considered judgments about Frankfurt-type omissions cases.278

278 Frankfurt holds that, “there is every reason to prefer an account that is straightforwardly symmetrical. If what moral responsibility requires in a case of action is just ‘actual causal control’ (guidance control) of the relevant movement, then what it requires in a case of omissions is just
Moral Responsibility; a Historical Phenomenon

According to Fischer and Ravizza, essentially moral responsibility is a historical notion. Here, those phenomena that do not depend in any significant way on the past are called “non-historical phenomena”; it is solely dependent upon “snapshot properties” and not facts about history, for example properties like “smooth”, “round”, “bright” etc. On the other hand, those phenomena that depend in deep and interesting ways on features of the past are called “historical phenomena”. The relevant snapshot properties are held fixed and any alteration in certain features of the past would imply an alteration in the phenomenon. A historical phenomenon is, therefore, responsive to changes in its history. For example, the fact that a painting is a genuine Picasso depends crucially upon its history. It seems therefore, that what makes an individual object what it is, and not something else, is partly a function of its actual history.

Another important feature of historical theories can be seen in the claims of Bratman and Nozick. According to Fischer and Ravizza, for Bratman,

The rationality of an agent in intending is a function of how he actually form the intention, not on how he might have done so...Nozick claims that the justice of a particular distribution is a matter of how it actually came to be, rather than how it might have come to be...they both contain a claim that the mechanism of transfer of the relevant property is the only way the property can be acquired...there is a ‘uniqueness’ principle in both approaches...the account of Bratman and Nozick have the characteristic features of recursive definitions.

Fischer and Ravizza further suggest that moral responsibility is genuinely historical and not apparently historical. This distinction can be clearer if we take an example, it is important for a physician to know that the patient took a drug as this helps the physician to understand the present condition of the patient’s body. Here, the past is epistemically helpful in directing the physician to the pertinent snapshot

\[\text{the same ‘actual causal control’ (guidance control) of the omission of the relevant movement.” (Frankfurt, 1994: 621 -622).}\]

\[\text{Snapshot properties of an object at a time are the temporarily non-relational physical properties of the object at that time together with the properties that supervene on these properties. (Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 171).}\]

\[\text{Bratman, 1987 and Nozick, 1974.}\]

\[\text{Fisher and Ravizza, 1998: 180.}\]
properties alone. In such case, the pertinent phenomena are apparently historical and not genuine. A phenomenon is considered to be apparently historical when it is epistemically historical. When it is necessary to turn to the past in order to ascertain and evaluate properly the relevant snapshot properties, keeping in mind the limitations of the relevant situation.

On the other hand, a phenomenon is epistemically historical when there is something in the snapshot features of the present that fully ground the judgments in question, but things will entail about the past. An epistemically historical phenomenon has a distinctive feature that – even though features of the past are useful in helping us characterize and understand the present, all we really need to understand the present is contained in the snapshot features of the present. Features of the past point us to snapshot features of the present. The medical example gives us the apparently historical phenomenon, so does psychological examples. Psychological examples can be seen in cases where a person feels guilty because of some past action, which results in severe pain. In such cases, it is important to know the past of the person, so that she could be treated properly. Apart from this, however, the past do not play any role anymore. The ultimate solution of the problem lies in the present and so the importance of history is epistemic; it is an apparently historical phenomenon.

On the other hand, moral responsibility is considered as a genuine historical notion. So, according to Fischer and Ravizza,

Two sorts of cases make this contention reasonable. The first sort of example is one in which the agent acts (an exercise guidance control) at one time, and thus brings it about that he is incapable of acting freely (and exercising guidance control) at a later time…the second sort of case…relied on the point that the current time-slice view of responsibility tends to claim that a structural feature of the agent – a certain selected mesh – is a sufficient condition for moral responsibility…the selected mesh could be generated by an apparently ‘responsibility-undermining’ process or mechanism, and thus that the mere existence of the mesh is not indeed sufficient for moral responsibility; the history behind the mesh is also relevant.282

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282 Ibid., pp. 195-196.
The point becomes clearer if we take an example, in case of the first sorts – if a drunk driver careens out of control and plows into a toddler on a tricycle, we will hold him responsible even if he was so drunk that he was not in control of his sense at the time of the accident. This is because he had guidance control of his drinking problem and could have expected that it might lead to a horrible tragedy. However, if it would have been the case that the alcohol had been injected into the driver against his will, and placed behind the wheel of a running automobile. Our intuitions concerning his responsibility would be totally different. So we can see that not only the snapshot properties of the agent and the mechanism that leads to his behavior, but also the history of the relevant behavior, that specify an agent’s moral responsibility. The second sorts can be seen in case where X is hypnotized by a hypnotist to choose A instead of B of his desires. Here, we will not say that X acted on his own and will not hold him responsible for the outcome of this action.

Thus, we can see that the history of an action is crucial to the issue of whether the mechanism that brings it forward is the agent’s own or not. Further, moral responsibility also requires a certain degree of historical continuity and connectedness. It will be possible to say that two agents, who have all the same current time-slice properties, differ as to their moral responsibility. The reason is that the difference in the agent’s histories brings about the difference in responsibility. However, there is a problem with claims that historical phenomenon is one that entails something about the past. If this is accepted then many things will be counted as historical.

Here, Fischer and Ravizza argues that in order to differentiate historical from non-historical phenomena, it will be sufficient to say that historical phenomenon entails that an immediate fact obtained in the past. An immediate fact specifies what is happening in the present at any given time, it is a contingent fact that specifies what is really going on in a basic sense at a given time. The mark of a historical fact is that it entails the obtaining of some intuitively immediate fact about the past. Historical facts entail that some immediate facts obtained in the past – also called the “entailment view”. One possible objection is that, if we are to take a historical phenomenon as which entails something about the past, then too many things will be counted as historical. Fischer and Ravizza argue that the entailment view “captures the core idea of a fact’s being historical…the immediate facts in question need not be
‘specific’; for example, they can be specified disjunctively and very abstractly…it is in compatible with a historical fact’s obtaining at some time T that the universe popped into being at T.”

3.5 Taking Responsibility

Fischer and Ravizza moves on to “taking responsibility”; a part of the process by which a mechanism leading to an action becomes one’s own, so it is a necessary feature of moral responsibility. We can say that from first person perspective on responsibility, one can say “being responsible” makes no sense unless one does “take responsibility” for one’s action. Here the process of becoming a moral agent can be divided into three stages; “training,” – when a child is treated as if she is responsible by the parents, by taking certain attitudes, they are engaged in moral training. This training induces in the child a view that she is an agent and in some situations, a target for praise and blame. “Taking responsibility,” – the training is an important part of taking responsibility for one’s actions and omissions. “Being held responsible” – because of the training and due to the fact that the child is ready to be held responsible by herself as well as by others, she is held responsible for her actions as well as omissions.

Here, the three stages are not easy to distinguish and they cannot be distinguished into water-tight compartment type distinctions. They overlap each other and compose a cycle that must be continually repeated in the process of becoming a fully morally responsible agent. We can see that the second stage – taking responsibility – needs more explanations. It further involves three major ingredients; firstly, it is important that an individual must see herself as an agent, whose motivational states are the causal source, in a certain characteristic ways, of upshots in the world. Secondly, an individual must accept that she is an apt candidate for the reactive attitudes in certain contexts as a result of how she exercises her agency. She need not have any theory that explains in which context she is praised or blamed. Here, an agent could be the kind of person who does not engage in any significant metaphysical reflection about the relationship between causal determinism and the fairness of our social practices of applying the reactive attitudes. She could also be someone who does in fact engage in such reflections.

283 Ibid., p. 204.
Thirdly, it is important that an individual’s view of herself specified in the first two conditions be based, in an appropriate way, on the evidence. The agent’s view of herself as an agent and sometimes appropriately subject to the reactive attitudes is grounded in her evidence for these beliefs. Thus,

In taking responsibility a person forms a disposition to view himself as an apt target for the reactive attitudes on the basis of the way in which he exercises his agency. This process may involve conscious and deliberate reflection, but it need not. Just as a person who acts for a reason need not explicitly formulate the reason or consciously invoke it as an action guide, so a person can take responsibility in an implicit, non-deliberative way. Thus, as we are using the term, ‘taking responsibility’ is not intended to refer exclusively to the kind of self-reflection and deliberate acceptance of responsibility that one might witness in the therapist’s office or philosopher’s study.284

If we take an example of a young child who is being raised in a “healthy” moral environment, we can see that the disposition to hold herself responsible will be formed quite naturally. It will be formed without a great deal of conscious reflection or “soul searching”. In such case, the child is guided by the reactive attitudes and practices of her community, and she gradually comes to see herself as having a kind of agency which makes her accessible to the reactive attitudes taken toward her. In this process, we must know that there need not be any conscious or explicit reflection about the content of the conditions we have specified for moral responsibility. Also, there need not be any kind of metaphysical or philosophical reflection about these matters.

At this stage, it is important to be clear about one thing, “what precisely the agent takes responsibility for?” This is important because it is a fact that an agent’s actions spring from many different mechanisms. Our actions are the outcome of many different influences and not only one or two specific things. Some can include the normal exercise of practical reason, non-reflective habit, direct stimulation of the brain etc. So, when an agent takes responsibility it is assume that she is taking responsibility for acting from a particular kind of mechanism, and not for all her actions whatever their source. Otherwise it will not be possible to hold anyone morally responsible for any of their action, it will be impossible to take decisions too.

\[284\] Ibid., p. 214.
For example, a child is encouraged to accept that she is appropriately praised and blamed for her actions by her parents who hold her responsible. Admonitions like “you should not just think of yourself” encourage the child to recognize that her practical reasoning can affect others. Also, a child is punished or blamed for behavior that they did not pause to think or deliberate about; thereby holding them responsible for their actions which issue from the non-reflective mechanisms as well.

Here, we can say that an agent, by taking responsibility for acting from a particular mechanism (could be either from practical reasoning or non-reflective mechanism), that mechanism is considered his own. By taking responsibility for acting on a particular mechanism, she has taken the responsibility for action from the mechanism in all its details. It is like taking the responsibility for the entire iceberg in virtue of seeing the tip of the iceberg. For example, in taking responsibility for behavior that flows from ordinary practical reasoning, an agent need not know all or any of the details of the neural states that underlie the mental states that constitute her practical reasoning.

There are different kinds of objections to the above account of taking responsibility put forth by Fischer and Ravizza. The two aspects to the objection are – firstly, the account seems to provide incentives to agents not to take responsibility and thus avoid moral responsibility. Secondly, there are cases of moral responsibility in which the agent has failed to take responsibility. The first objection can be answered by making it clear that “taking responsibility” is not just a matter of saying “I take responsibility”. That is, taking responsibility is not just any kind of verbal behavior or action. Rather, taking responsibility is coming to have a certain cluster of beliefs in a certain way, which is different from the commonsense notion, and so special. To have a certain belief or not to have a set of beliefs is not voluntary or up to an agent, whether to entertain a belief/set of beliefs or not may be voluntary. It means that, as having a belief is not voluntary we cannot say that the account provide incentives for an agent to fail to take responsibility.

Further, some critics can point out that an agent’s dispositional beliefs could be under her “indirect control”. An agent can have a belief that she can perform certain action now which will lead her to have the belief in the future. But Fischer and Ravizza points out that their “account of responsibility does not encourage agents to
embark on programs designed to issue in the lack of the beliefs involved in taking responsibility. This is because the price of refusing to take responsibility may be as high as that of accepting responsibility.”

By rejecting either of the conditions on taking responsibility can result in alienation from the society; to refuse to take responsibility can lead to a stage where one’s own personhood is in jeopardy.

The second objection says that, there will be cases in which an agent seems to be morally responsible, but in which the agent simply has failed to take responsibility. Fischer and Ravizza points out that an agent’s verbal behavior does not decide the matter, and to fail to have concurrent set of beliefs about one’s control does not imply that one lacks the relevant dispositional beliefs. Similarly, in this case also “the mere fact that one has not suitably aligned one’s internal attitude with the external attitude does not imply that one lacks the belief that one is an apt candidate for the reactive attitudes.”

However, the critic might point out that his objection does not rest on a failure to make a relevant distinction or on any misunderstanding on the notion of taking responsibility. The point is that, he believes that there are cases in which it is intuitively plausible to say that an individual is morally responsible, even though the individual does not see herself this way.

In answer to the above objection, Fischer and Ravizza hold that if an individual does not see herself as an agent and a fair target for the reactive attitudes, she cannot be deemed genuinely active and morally responsible. That is, if an individual fails to see herself in a certain way, she fails to be a morally responsible agent. Thus,

The approach we are taking to moral responsibility might be called ‘subjectivist’ in the sense that we require that an agent have a certain sort of view of himself in order to be morally responsible. That is, moral responsibility, on our view, is not simply a matter of having a set of ‘objective’ features; in addition, one must view oneself in a certain way.

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285 Ibid., p. 218.
286 For example, we can see in the case of Michael Ross, the ‘mild-mannered’ Cornell graduate and serial killer. (Fisher and Ravizza, 1998: 219-220).
288 Ibid., p. 221.
Fischer and Ravizza now goes on to say that as taking responsibility is one of the components of guidance control, there is a need to argue that the conditions specified for taking responsibility are compatible with causal determinism. It is important to show the distinction between cases in which there is no reflection by the individual on the relationship between causal determinism and the fairness of the social practices involving the reactive attitudes and cases in which there is such reflection. They start with the cases where there is no reflection on the compatibility of causal determinism and taking responsibility. Here, it can be seen that the three conditions they have put forth are compatible with causal determinism; causal determinism does not rule out an individual’s believing that he is an agent, and that the given social practices render him a fair target for the reactive attitudes in certain circumstances. Finally, causal determinism does not rule out the fact that this picture of herself be produced in the agent by the evidence for it, in an appropriate way. However, when we consider an individual who is philosophically sophisticated and have reflected on the relationship between causal determinism and the fairness of the application of the reactive attitudes, things are more complicated. Along with the judgment about our social practices, she also must make some sort of metaphysical judgment like – all things considered, it is appropriate to subject certain individuals, including herself, to the reactive attitudes in certain contexts.

Further, as already discussed, one of the main aims here is to insulate the attitudes and practices that constitute our moral responsibility from the possible discovery that causal determinism is true. So, it can be assumed here that a reflective individual knows that causal determinism is true. She also views herself as an agent, but can she deem herself an apt target for the reactive attitudes? Here, we can see that the question is not only about the given social practices anymore, but whether these practices can be justified, all things considered.

Further, Fischer and Ravizza hope that it will be possible to bring most open-minded individuals to think that it is at least plausible that causal determinism does not rule out the aptness of the reactive attitudes. Also, they must be convinced to keep aside any doubts about the consistency of causal determinism with the aptness of the reactive attitudes. This can also be seen in the already discussed second condition on taking responsibility, which says,
An individual must view himself as, prima facie at least, an apt candidate for the application of the reactive attitudes, and be willing to put aside his residual doubts, for all practical purposes. In the context of explicit philosophical reflection, we contend that the satisfaction of this version of the condition is enough for the agent to have taken responsibility.289

Fischer and Ravizza further discuss the process leading to the current time-slice features’ being in place and their leading to the action of an agent. We have already discussed that sometimes it is possible for a scientist or direct electronic simulation to manipulate our brain. What seems relevant here is not only the fact that the mechanism issuing in the action is suitably reasons-responsive; what also matters is how that mechanism has been put in place. What we need is a responsiveness which has a globally historical approach, not only locally historical. In order to better understand how the ownership component of guidance control works, it is important to consider some cases. Julia is an ordinary adult, who has had a normal moral education and so she can be deemed morally responsible for her behavior. A scientist electronically stimulates Julia’s brain secretly, which will create a literally irresistible urge to slap her best friend Jess, the next time she sees Jess. Julia experiences the irresistible urge and indeed slaps Jess when they met in the marketplace. Here, Julia cannot be held morally responsible for slapping Jess, because firstly, the mechanism leading to the action is not moderately reasons-responsive. Secondly, it is plausible to say that Julia has taken responsibility for the sort of mechanism that actually issues in her action, including the scientist’s manipulation.

In the second case, everything is the same, except that the scientist induces via his direct manipulation of Julia’s brain, an extremely strong desire to slap Jess, but the desire is not literally irresistible. Here, Julia will slap Jess under all condition except if she knows that if she slaps Jess then she would cause the death of large number of innocent people. When Julia slaps Jess in the marketplace, she is quite sure that her action will not harm anyone. We can say that Julia is not morally responsible for her action as the kind of manipulation involved in the first and the second cases should not make a difference to Julia’s responsibility. Even though the mechanism leading to Julia’s action is moderately reasons-responsive, she fails to take responsibility for the kind of mechanism that actually issues in her action. So, Julia is not deemed morally

289 Ibid., p. 227.
responsible for her action, as she fails to meet the ownership condition on guidance control.

Also, as Julia does not know about the manipulation of the scientist, and has not explicitly considered such manipulation, it is plausible to say that Julia has not taken responsibility for the kind of mechanism that actually issues in the action. Here,

We interpret the notion of the mechanism that leads to an action so that it includes only those factors that play a role in the actual path that lead to the action. On this sort of interpretation, peripheral manipulations are not included in the specification of the kind of mechanism that leads to actions.290

In case Julia becomes aware of the stimulation of her brain by the scientist, awareness and reflection will return her to the mechanism of ordinary practical reasoning. She can be held morally responsible for any of her actions, as she will be acting from her own mechanism.

In the third case, the sort of manipulation is such that the agent’s taking responsibility itself is somehow electronically implanted. That is, the individual’s view of herself as an agent and an apt candidate for the reactive attitudes is electronically implanted. The third condition on taking responsibility says that an agent’s view of herself must be based on her evidence in an appropriate way. However, this is too abstract to tell us whether an electronically manipulated agent can be held morally responsible for her actions. The notion of “appropriateness” is left unanalyzed by Fischer and Ravizza; they hold that such agent cannot be taken as forming her view of herself in the appropriate way. They hold that,

The sorts of specifications of appropriateness required to rule out the direct electronic implantation of the relevant cluster of beliefs do not appear also to rule out causal determinism. Of course, absent a defensible specification of appropriateness, we cannot pretend to have a decisive defense of compatibilism. But…most of us do not object to the idea that external circumstances causally determine our beliefs. It is presumably less problematic that our beliefs are causally determined by the external world than that our motivational states (such as desires, choices, and intentions) be so

290 Ibid., p. 234. (As shown in the footnote of the text).
determined. Thus, it is at least plausible that the relevant sort of appropriateness could, in principle, be specified in a way that is consistent with determinism.\textsuperscript{291}

Thus, what they are saying is that, both components of guidance control—moderate reasons-responsiveness and mechanism ownership— are compatible with causal determinism. As a result, taking moral responsibility is compatible with causal determinism as well.

### 3.6 Moral Responsibility and Externalism

In the conclusion, Fischer and Ravizza states that their approach to moral responsibility is “externalist”, as oppose to Frankfurt, Watson and Hume’s approach.\textsuperscript{292} While Frankfurt’s approach is hierarchical, Watson’s approach requires a mesh between rational and motivational states. Watson’s approach is an internalist account as it attends solely to the relationship between states from various systems of preferences. In Hume’s approach, moral responsibility is based on the expression of character traits. It focuses exclusively on the relationship between different elements or aspects of an agent’s mental economy. It posits a mesh between a particular preference and a certain character trait, without going outside the aspects of the agent’s internal makeup. That is, moral responsibility is not solely a function of internal features of an agent’s configuration of mental states and dispositions. Internalism is denied, because it is not the case that the only thing that matters for moral responsibility is the arrangement of mental states; it also matters how that arrangement got there. Another reason is that, certain changes in the external world must be reflected in changes in the agent, for the agent to be morally responsible. There must be a certain patterns of reasons-recognition – a certain kind of sensitivity to external reality – as well as minimal reactivity to reasons. The internalist claim, on the other hand, neither attends to the agent’s history, nor attends to her connection to the external world. e.g., Frankfurt’s approach.

According to Cynthia MacDonald, “Externalism” is the view in which “the intentional mental states of persons are individuation-dependent on objects and/or phenomena external to their bodies.”\textsuperscript{293} She goes on to say that the current discussions

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\textsuperscript{291} Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 236.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid., pp. 252-253.
\textsuperscript{293} Macdonald, 1995: 99.
on first-person authority commonly take place against the background of three assumptions in particular. They are as follows,

First…it is standardly assumed that the knowledge that one has of one’s own mental states is epistemically direct, in the sense that it is non-evidence-based…Second, the kind of knowledge that characterizes first-person authority is essentially direct: if one’s intentional states could exist without being directly knowable, one could not be authoritative about them…Third, authority, whatever else it may require beyond directness, is not normally thought to require either infallibility, in the sense that one’s beliefs about one’s own mental states cannot be false, nor incorrigibility, in the sense that one’s beliefs about one’s own mental states cannot be shown by others to be false.294

Here, we can say that my authority with regard to my own intentional states typically puts me in a better position than anyone else to claim to know what the contents of those states are. However, such claims to knowledge can be challenged and can be shown to be false. There can be cases where others can sometimes be in a better position than the subject, in knowing the content of the subject’s mental states.

Further, Fischer and Ravizza give a sketch of moral responsibility for emotions and the role played by guidance control. That is,

The emotional reactions for which individuals can legitimately be held morally responsible are precisely those which are the product of guidance control…guidance control of emotions does not require the availability of alternative possibilities. What is natural to require, on our sort of approach, is that we can trace back to some appropriate point in the agent’s past and find an exercise of guidance control that then results in the subsequent emotional reaction…must be the result of guidance control at some suitable prior time, in order for the agent to be morally responsible for the emotional reaction…it is natural for us to adopt an indirect approach based on guidance control.295

In the article, “Recent Work on Moral Responsibility,” (1999) Fischer holds that P.F Strawson’s concept of moral responsibility is one of the most influential one, in which moral responsibility is understood in terms of certain social practice. Fischer says that,

294 Ibid., pp. 101-102.
On this approach, when members of a given society regard someone as a responsible agent, they react to the person (or deem it fitting to react to him) with a characteristic set of feelings and attitudes – for example, gratitude, indignation, resentment, love, respect, and forgiveness. Strawson uses the term “reactive attitudes” to refer to this range of attitudes that belong to [our] involvement or participation with others in interpersonal human relationships.296

Here, we can see that our attitudes toward other persons seem to be importantly different from those we take toward non-human, animals and inanimate things. The fact that we take the reactive attitudes toward other persons, as opposed to non-person, shows that we are engaged with persons in a distinctive way. For example, non-persons can be used, exploited, manipulated, or perhaps just enjoyed. But we do not have the reactive attitudes such as resentment or gratitude toward them. We can say that in contrast to our attitudes toward persons, we view non-persons from a more detached and “objective” perspective. A broadly Strawsonian approach to moral responsibility analyzes responsibility in terms of the reactive attitudes and certain associated practices, such as punishment and moral reward.

Further Fischer holds that, freedom involves the availability of genuinely open alternative possibilities at certain key points in one’s life. And without this sort of alternative possibility, one is compelled to do as one actually do. Here, some philosophers talk in terms of freedom, while others employ the term, “control”. For Fischer, the term “control” highlights the fact that mere chance occurrences do not secure the satisfaction of the relevant requirement and so is preferable. The traditional view then is that,

Moral responsibility for behavior requires the sort of control that involves genuinely available alternative possibilities at some point suitably related to the time of the behavior in question. We might call this sort of control “alternative-possibilities” control. The intuitive picture behind the alternative-possibilities control requirement is that moral responsibility requires that the agent select one from among various genuinely open paths the world might take. There are two important ideas here. One is that there must be various paths genuinely available to the agent (at least at some times suitably related to the time of the behavior under consideration). The second idea is that the agent (and not some outside force or mere chance) selects which path.

296 Fischer, 1999: 93-94.
will be the path into the future. It seems to me that both ideas are important components of the traditional conception of the sort of control associated with moral responsibility—alternative-possibilities control.  

Conclusion

Fischer and Ravizza concede that after they put forth so many considerations, there may still be someone who will not accept their view. They contend that they do not want to present knockdown argument; instead they want to persuade others that their theory is one illuminating way to explain how ascriptions of moral responsibility could be justified, even if causal determinism were true. So, if an individual refuse to accept their view and do not deem herself an apt target for the reactive attitudes, she will not take responsibility for the kinds of mechanisms that lead to her behavior. According to this account, she will not be morally responsible for her behavior.

However, Fischer and Ravizza do not consider this as a defect of their theory, because they subscribe to Galen Strawson’s “subjectivist” approach to moral responsibility. This approach requires,

That an agent have a certain kind of view of himself, in order to be morally responsible for his behavior. And this is precisely the case, on our account of taking responsibility (and moral responsibility). In order to be morally responsible, a person must see himself as an agent who is an appropriate candidate for the reactive attitudes.

Thus, the plausibility argument for the compatibility of causal determinism with taking responsibility is presented and also why it is attractive is put forth with convincing arguments.

After considering the arguments put forth by the different philosophers, we can say that the relationship between moral responsibility and persons is something we cannot ignore. They are intertwined in such a way that to consider one and leave out the other will not present the true picture. It will be difficult to consider persons alone, without the role of moral responsibility, and try to understand it better. The reason can be seen from the discussions above, that persons are dynamic and complex and therefore to understand them is to understand everything that comes into contact

\[297\] Ibid., p. 99.
with them. As we know that moral responsibility plays one of the most important roles in shaping personhood, their relationship is one of utmost importance. We need to understand them both in order to understand the true nature of their relationships. This is not to say that the role played by other concepts like, freedom, emotional attitudes like love, hate, anger, sadness etc. are not important.

What we are claiming here is that moral responsibility is the thread that binds the notion of personhood together. It enables a person to “be” a person, by pointing out the right thing to do in a particular circumstance. It also show how one ought to behave in certain situations. From the above discussions, we can see that; firstly, to be a human being is not to be a person. Personhood is gained and not something we are born with. So, we can say that a person must have self-knowledge, self-awareness and must be self-reflective. Secondly, being a person means being an agent. Whether we are alone or with friends, we are constantly influencing and being influenced by our environment. Without this interaction we will not be able to develop as a person properly.

Thirdly, persons are agents because they are self-reflective. That is to say that it is only when we reflect, that we become aware of our beliefs, desires, wants, needs, wishes etc. These give rise to our moral obligations, and we become a moral agent. Thus, the importance of self-reflection can be seen here. Finally, unless we are embodied and conscious, we can neither be a person nor be an agent. Even though our body is not the most important attributes we have, yet it is necessary for us to be embodied in order to be an agent.

Thus, we can say that, as argued by Fischer and Ravizza, there seems to be some kind of compatibilism between causal determinism and moral responsibility. And the most important point in the whole discussion is that, we can see the relationship between moral responsibility and personhood cannot be ignored. They compliment and supplement each other in such a way that without one the other will be incomplete. We will not be able to have complete knowledge about one without the other, and vice versa. We can even go to the extent of saying that, attempting to understand either persons or moral responsibility alone will be erroneous.

Also, after the discussion on the relationship between personhood and moral responsibility, it is important to move on to the relationship between a subject and the
other. The relationship between the self, the person, and the moral agent needs to be look at. Here, when we say “agency”, the role of society cannot be ignored. It is in the social realm that personhood is gained and agency is developed to its full capabilities. So, it is important that we have a proper discussion on how they are related and what kind of relationship they share. We can say that, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity needs to be discussed in details.