

Tackling it Head On: How Best to Handle the Modified Manipulation Argument

1. Introduction

Patrick Todd's article, "A New Approach to Manipulation Arguments," has spurred considerable discussion in the literature.¹ In his essay, Todd attempts to reframe how manipulation arguments function dialectically. These arguments, often presented by incompatibilists, typically rely on cases in which agents, though they have met a number of compatibilist sufficient conditions for responsibility, have been manipulated such that they intuitively fail to be blameworthy for their actions.² While it has traditionally been assumed that the incompatibilist must argue that these manipulated agents are *not at all* responsible for their behavior, Todd contends that the incompatibilist need only argue that manipulation *mitigates* responsibility. Though innovative, Todd's "modified manipulation argument," or simply MMA, has been met with resistance. In a recent paper, "Manipulation and Mitigation," Andrew Khoury attempts to defuse MMA by presenting a competing *compatibilist* version of the argument—CMMA.³ Others, such as Justin Capes and myself, have independently objected directly to specific premises of MMA.⁴ In this paper, I first present Derk Pereboom's "four-case" manipulation argument along with Todd's modified version. Next, I argue that, though creative, Khoury cannot defuse Todd's objection with

¹ Patrick Todd, "A New Approach to Manipulation Arguments," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 153, No. 1, (2011), pp. 127-133.

² In Todd's version of the manipulation argument, though an agent meets compatibilist conditions for *responsibility*, readers are asked to what extent that agent is *blameworthy* for his or her behavior. One possible compatibilist retort to this argument is to contend that the concepts of responsibility and blameworthiness can come apart—an agent can be responsible without being blameworthy. While I think this is an interesting strategy to take, for the purposes of this essay, I will accept the assumption that an agent who is not blameworthy is also not responsible.

³ Andrew Khoury, "Manipulation and Mitigation," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 168, No. 1, (2014), pp. 283-294.

⁴ Justin Capes, "Mitigating Soft Compatibilism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (2013), pp. 640-663 and Hannah Tierney, "A Maneuver around the Modified Manipulation Argument," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 165, No. 3, (2013), pp. 753-763.

CMMA. Finally, I conclude that the objections developed by Capes and myself show significantly more promise as rejoinders to modified manipulation arguments.

2. Pereboom's Manipulation Argument

There are many versions of the manipulation argument, but they all share a common argumentative form. Michael McKenna provides a helpful formulation:

1. If S is manipulated in manner X to A, then S does not A of her own free will and is therefore not morally responsible for A'ing.
2. An agent manipulated in manner X to A is no different in any relevant respect from any normally functioning agent... determined to do A from [compatibilist-friendly agential structure] (CAS).
3. Therefore, if S is a normally functioning agent determined to A from CAS, she does not A on her own free will and therefore is not morally responsible for A'ing.⁵

In this passage, a “compatibilist-friendly agential structure”—CAS—refers to a set of minimally sufficient conditions for acting freely, like those proposed by Frankfurt and Fischer and Ravizza.⁶ In this paper, I will focus on Pereboom's “four-case” manipulation argument. Specifically, I will discuss Case 2 and Case 4, the comparison of which is key to Pereboom's objection. Consider Case 2:

Plum is like an ordinary human being, except that he was created by neuroscientists, who, although they cannot control him directly, have programmed him to weigh reasons for action so that he is often but not exclusively rationally egoistic, with the result that in the circumstances in which he now finds himself, he is causally determined to undertake the moderately reasons-responsive process and to possess the set of first- and second- order desires that results in his killing Ms. White. He has the general ability to regulate his behavior by moral reasons, but in these circumstances, the egoistic reasons are very powerful, and accordingly he is causally determined to kill for these reasons. Nevertheless, he does not act because of

⁵ Michael McKenna, “A Hard-Line Reply to Pereboom's Four-Case Manipulation Argument,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 77, No. 1, (2008), p. 143.

⁶ Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 68 No. 1, (1971), pp. 5-20 and John Martin Fischer & Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: An Essay on moral Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

an irresistible desire.⁷

Though Plum meets several sets of compatibilist sufficient conditions for responsibility,⁸

Pereboom argues that readers will not find Plum morally responsible for his actions.

Pereboom then compares Case 2 to Case 4, which is identical to Case 2 except it replaces the team of neuroscientists with the truth of causal determinism:

Case 4: Physicalist determinism is true, and Plum is an ordinary human being, generated and raised under normal circumstances, who is often but not exclusively rationally egoistic (exactly as egoistic as in [Case 2]). Plum's killing of White comes about as a result of his undertaking the moderately reasons-responsive process of deliberation, he exhibits the specified organization of first- and second-order desires, and he does not act because of an irresistible desire. He has the general ability to grasp, apply, and regulate his behavior by moral reasons, but in these circumstances the egoistic reasons are very powerful, and together with background circumstances they deterministically result in his act of murder.⁹

According to Pereboom, there is no relevant difference between the two cases that could support the claim that Plum is responsible in Case 4 but not in Case 2. Thus, Pereboom concludes, just as manipulation undermines our attributions of moral responsibility, so too does the truth of determinism, rendering compatibilist conditions for responsibility insufficient.

There are many ways to respond to manipulation arguments. McKenna describes two general strategies one can take—the “soft-line” and the “hard-line.”¹⁰ Soft-liners typically reject the claim that there are no relevant differences between manipulated agents and determined agents—they reject premise two of McKenna's above schema. To take the soft-

⁷ Derk Pereboom, *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 113-114.

⁸ See A.J. Ayer, “Freedom and necessity,” *Philosophical Essays* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954), pp. 3-20; R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”; John Martin Fischer & Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: An Essay on Moral Responsibility*.

⁹ Pereboom, *Living Without Free Will*, p. 115.

¹⁰ McKenna, “A Hard-Line Reply to Pereboom's Four-Case Manipulation Argument.”

line, one must find a relevant difference between the manipulation case and the determinism case, such that the manipulated agent is not responsible while the determined agent is. To do this, compatibilists often argue that there is some feature of the manipulation case that eliminates the agent's responsibility that is not a feature of the determinism case. These soft-liners must then articulate which ingredient in their proposed set of sufficient conditions is not met. While such a response may seem initially successful, it is not the best long-term strategy. Incompatibilists need only make a slight change for the manipulated agent to fulfill any additional responsibility conditions the compatibilist deems appropriate, rendering the cases relevantly similar once again.

One can also pursue the hard-line when responding to manipulation arguments. If one wishes to be a hard-liner, one grants the symmetry between manipulation and determinism, but argues that it is not clear that the manipulated and determined agents are not responsible for their behavior—hard-liners reject the first premise of McKenna's above schema. There are four steps to such a strategy.¹¹ (1) First, one must reject all non-starters. If a manipulation case features an agent who doesn't come close to fulfilling the relevant responsibility conditions, then it can be rejected out of hand. (2) If the manipulated agent is at least in the vicinity of satisfying the compatibilist's set of sufficient conditions, then the hard-liner can either (1) grant the similarities between the cases or (2) make any changes to the manipulation case necessary so that both agents fulfill all appropriate conditions for responsibility. (3) From here, the compatibilist must put pressure on the incompatibilist's contention that the manipulated agent is not morally responsible. To do this, she can draw her readers' attention to the compatibilist conditions that the manipulated agent fulfills, and the extent to which such conditions enhance an individual's agency. (4) The hard-liner can

¹¹ Ibid.

also point to the way in which other cases, very much like the manipulation case, are ubiquitous in the real world, yet hardly ever undermine our actual ascriptions of responsibility. The hard-liner need not prove, definitively, that manipulated agents are morally responsible. Rather, hard-liners need only argue that it is not so obvious that these agents aren't free and responsible.¹² By successfully raising doubt that the manipulated agent is not blameworthy, the compatibilist is able to shift the dialectical burden onto the shoulders of the incompatibilist, who must now prove, definitively, that manipulated agents really aren't responsible for their behavior.

3. Todd's Modified Manipulation Argument

While Pereboom and other defenders of manipulation arguments contend that manipulated agents aren't at all responsible for their actions, Todd argues that they need only contend that manipulated agents are *less* responsible. According to Todd, to illustrate the mitigating effects of manipulation, the incompatibilist should begin with a case that features an agent who is neither manipulated nor determined. Modifying Pereboom's four-case argument, Todd outlines a case that describes only Plum's murder of White. Then, he poses the following question to the reader:

Q1 On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how much blame Plum deserves for killing White, where 0 is no blame at all, and 10 is the most blameworthy you can imagine someone being.¹³

Todd then presents Pereboom's Case 2, including the description of the team of neuroscientists and their manipulation of Plum. Next, Todd argues that a question similar to the following should be posed to readers:

Q2* Having now found out about the role the neuroscientists played in programming Plum, on a scale from 1 to 10, rate how much blame Plum deserves

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Todd, "A New Approach to Manipulation Arguments," p. 129.

for killing White, where 0 is no blame at all, and 10 is the most blameworthy you can imagine someone being.¹⁴

According to Todd, if readers lower the degree to which they blame Plum, then the incompatibilist has successfully made the first move of a manipulation argument. After all, even slight modifications to ascriptions of responsibility illustrate the mitigating role of manipulation. And because all relevant compatibilist responsibility conditions are fulfilled in the manipulation case, the compatibilist cannot grant even small downgrades, for granting the mitigating role of manipulation is to also grant the mitigating role of determinism. Once the incompatibilist establishes that the manipulated agent is less responsible than the unmanipulated agent, she must then provide an argument for the symmetry between manipulation and determinism. From here, the incompatibilist can conclude that the truth of determinism undermines compatibilism. Todd calls this the Modified Manipulation Argument, or simply MMA:

- (1) If blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 2, blameworthiness is mitigated if mere causal determinism is true.
- (2) If blameworthiness is mitigated if mere causal determinism is true, then compatibilism is false.
- (3) Blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 2.
- (4) So, compatibilism is false.¹⁵

Todd's argument has created quite a stir, and with good reason. Initially, it seems much harder to refute MMA than traditional manipulation arguments. According to Todd, if the compatibilist wishes to take the hard-line, she must contend that unmanipulated Plum and manipulated Plum are equally responsible. Todd labels this contention the "*No Difference Thesis*."

No Difference Thesis: Case 2-style manipulation should make no *difference* to one's judgment of how much blame Plum deserves for killing White."¹⁶

¹⁴ Q2* does not appear in Todd's "A New Approach to Manipulation Arguments;" it is a reconstruction of his reasoning on pp. 130-31.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 132.

But it really seems, intuitively, that the manipulated version of Plum is at least *slightly* less responsible than the Plum described in Todd's first case. To deny even a slight variance places compatibilists in a difficult position; they are forced to defend an incredibly strong and counterintuitive claim.

4. Khoury's Counter-Argument for Compatibilism

Khoury, in a recent essay, "Manipulation and Mitigation," presents an incredibly creative response to MMA.¹⁷ Rather than defend the No Difference Thesis, or critique the form of Todd's argument, Khoury presents a compatibilist variant of the modified manipulation argument—CMMA.

While Todd argues that the incompatibilist need only show that Plum's blameworthiness is mitigated to get MMA off the ground, Khoury argues that compatibilists can claim this ground for themselves. According to Khoury, it is not the compatibilist's burden to argue that blame and responsibility are completely impervious to manipulation. Rather, the compatibilist need only show that manipulation doesn't completely eliminate responsibility. After all, even if the presence of manipulation causes us to downgrade our judgments of responsibility, then manipulation is still compatible with a certain degree of responsibility. And given the symmetry between manipulation and determinism, it stands to reason that determinism is also compatible with a certain degree of responsibility, contra incompatibilism. Khoury formulates CMMA in the following way:

- (1*) If blameworthiness is not eliminated for Plum in Case 2, blameworthiness is not eliminated if mere causal determinism is true.
- (2*) If blameworthiness is not eliminated if mere causal determinism is true, then incompatibilism is false.
- (3*) Blameworthiness is not eliminated for Plum in Case 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 131, emphasis in original.

¹⁷ Khoury, "Manipulation and Mitigation."

(4*) So, incompatibilism is false.¹⁸

According to Khoury, (1*) is trivial, since both (1*) of CMMA and (1) of MMA simply express the idea that manipulation and determinism affect responsibility and blameworthiness in the same way, which is unobjectionable to incompatibilists and hard-liners alike. Khoury also argues that (2) and (2*) are trivial. For Khoury, compatibilism and incompatibilism are all-or-nothing theses. Compatibilism is the view that determinism does not mitigate (or, by extension, eliminate) responsibility, while incompatibilism is the view that determinism eliminates (and thus also mitigates) responsibility.¹⁹ Thus, the compatibilist will be happy to grant (2) and the incompatibilist must likewise accept (2*). Given that CMMA is valid, if both (1*) and (2*) are trivial, then the incompatibilist must reject (3*) in order to object to CMMA. But rejecting (3*) commits the incompatibilist to an incredibly controversial claim, which Khoury calls the “Complete Difference Thesis.”

Complete Difference Thesis: Case 2-style manipulation should make a complete difference to one’s judgment of how much blame Plum deserves for killing White.²⁰

And while Todd may be right that the compatibilist will have difficulty defending the No Difference Thesis, Khoury argues that the incompatibilist will have an equally hard time defending the Complete Difference Thesis. If there is no reason to prefer one difference thesis over the other, then the battle between MMA and CMMA breaks down. And, according to Khoury, such a break down can be seen as a victory for the compatibilists. To support this claim, Khoury relies on a passage from McKenna, noting that if the clash between MMA and CMMA “plays out in a dialectical stalemate this amounts to a victory for

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 292.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 292-293.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 292.

the compatibilist, since it is the incompatibilist who is presenting an argument.”²¹ According to Khoury, though CMMA may never gain the upper hand over MMA, it needn’t. So long as CMMA proves to be exactly as insurmountable as MMA, then the burden shifts to those who presented the original argument—the incompatibilists.

5. A Critique of CMMA

Though Khoury’s strategy is creative, CMMA will not be able to successfully undermine MMA. Khoury underestimates the dialectical burden he must bear in deploying CMMA. While CMMA is an excellent expression of what some, though certainly not all, compatibilists think about the relationship between manipulation, determinism, and responsibility, in order to gain any traction against MMA, it must be able to convince undecided readers, something of which even Khoury is doubtful.²²

Khoury argues that if there is no reason to prefer MMA over CMMA, then the compatibilist has won, for an incompatibilist presented the initial objection, and thus the burden lies with those who defend incompatibilism if the debate reaches a stalemate. To make this claim, Khoury relies on a line of argumentation employed by McKenna in his response to Pereboom’s four-case argument.²³ McKenna utilizes the four-step approach discussed above to generate skepticism about Plum’s lack of blameworthiness, in both the manipulation and determinism case. By generating doubt about a premise of the manipulation argument, McKenna argues that the compatibilist gains the upper hand in the debate over manipulation cases.

[Incompatibilists] are the ones who are making the claim that agents appropriately manipulated are not free and morally responsible. They are the ones who wish to employ this in an argument for an incompatibilist conclusion. In reply to them, the compatibilist’s dialectical burden is by

²¹ McKenna, “A Hard-Line Reply to Pereboom’s Four-Case Manipulation Argument,” p. 148.

²² Khoury, “Manipulation and Mitigation,” p. 294.

²³ Ibid.

comparison lighter than her opponent's. She needs only to show that the incompatibilists who advance the Manipulation Argument are not clearly right about the cases...²⁴

In order to reach the incompatibilist conclusion, Pereboom needs to establish that Plum is not responsible or blameworthy. Thus, by generating doubt about whether Plum really isn't responsible or blameworthy, McKenna is able to halt the argument in its tracks. In this context, the compatibilist really does shoulder a much lighter dialectical burden than the incompatibilist, for her argumentative aims are entirely different. The incompatibilist is trying to conclude that compatibilism is false. But the compatibilist's aim is only to undermine this incompatibilist conclusion. To do this, she doesn't need to prove that compatibilism is true or incompatibilism is false; she need only put pressure on the premises of the manipulation argument.

The context in which McKenna generates his hard-line reply to Pereboom is much different than the one in which Khoury presents CMMA. McKenna's objection targets specific premises of the manipulation argument; it is not a positive argument for the truth of compatibilism or the falsity of incompatibilism. In contrast, CMMA cannot function as a direct objection to MMA. Rather, CMMA is a positive argument for the conclusion that incompatibilism is false. While CMMA challenges MMA, it does so indirectly, by producing a conclusion at odds with the conclusion of MMA. In this way, Khoury's argumentative aims are very different from those of McKenna. While McKenna shoulders a much lighter dialectical burden than his incompatibilist competitor, this is because his argumentative aims are much smaller in scale. But Khoury's argumentative ambitions are just as grand as Todd's; each provides an argument against the other's favored theory. This means that Khoury does

²⁴ Ibid., 155.

not get to enjoy a lighter dialectical burden than Todd. If a stalemate arises, neither Todd nor Khoury gains the upper hand.

As it stands, Khoury cannot defeat MMA simply by introducing the competing argument CMMA. In order for Khoury to undermine MMA, he must argue that CMMA is more convincing than MMA or object to MMA directly. Khoury himself thinks CMMA and MMA are locked in a dialectical stalemate: “I submit that I don’t see how the mere weak claim that responsibility is mitigated in a manipulation case supports incompatibilism any more than the equally weak claim that responsibility is not eliminated in a manipulation case supports compatibilism.”²⁵ So, if CMMA stands no chance of convincing undecided readers any more than MMA, then it’s best to dispense with CMMA altogether. Rather, the best way to undermine MMA is to object to it directly.

Before turning to two objections that tackle MMA head on, I first want to consider another interpretation of CMMA. Though I don’t think this is Khoury’s view, one could understand the construction of CMMA as a critique of the form of MMA, rather than as a competing argument. One could argue that the fact that an argument with the same structure and similar premises as MMA supports the opposite conclusion (as CMMA does) reveals a flaw in MMA. This is an interesting interpretation of CMMA and one that could pose a real threat to MMA.

However, CMMA is able to come to the opposite conclusion of MMA not because of their shared structure, but because of the definitions of compatibilism and incompatibilism Khoury chooses to utilize. Recall that, for Khoury, compatibilism is the view that determinism does not mitigate (or, by extension, eliminate) responsibility, while incompatibilism is the view that determinism eliminates (and thus also mitigates)

²⁵ Khoury, “Manipulation and Mitigation,” 294.

responsibility.²⁶ Given Khoury's all-or-nothing definitions of these theses, the truth of MMA and CMMA are completely compatible; if our judgments of moral responsibility are mitigated (but neither eliminated nor left wholly untouched), then both compatibilism and incompatibilism are rendered false. Not only is such a conclusion alarming, but it would also satisfy no one. Thus, if CMMA is to be understood as a critique rather than a competitive argument, it is best understood as a critique of Khoury's own conceptions of compatibilism and incompatibilism, not as a criticism of MMA. Indeed, on this reading of Khoury's argument, the need for a compatibilist account of mitigation becomes even more apparent. After all, it's very likely that our judgments of moral responsibility can be mitigated in certain circumstances, and compatibilists must be able to account for such cases.

6. Tackling MMA Head On

Justin Capes and I, in different essays, both present objections to particular premises of MMA.²⁷ Though we utilize different strategies, we both refuse to defend the No Difference Thesis. Rather, we argue that compatibilists can grant that manipulated and determined versions of Plum are less responsible than their unmanipulated counterparts without ceding any ground to the incompatibilist. The way in which these objections interact with MMA is particularly promising, for our argumentative aims are much more constrained than those of Khoury. While Khoury rejects the conclusion of MMA by attempting to prove that incompatibilism is false, Capes and I seek only to undermine a specific premise of MMA. In restricting our argumentative aims, we have made the success conditions for our arguments much less burdensome—both Capes and I need only generate skepticism about the veracity of MMA's premises in order to succeed. Furthermore, both Capes and I attempt to account

²⁶ Ibid., p. 292.

²⁷ Capes, "Mitigating Soft Compatibilism" and Tierney, "A Maneuver Around the Manipulation Argument."

for the mitigating effects of manipulation and determinism within a compatibilist framework—a necessary task given the possibility that people’s responsibility judgments really are affected by cases of manipulation.

Capes argues that one could reject premise (2) of MMA by defending “mitigating soft compatibilism.” On this view, the truth of determinism alone rules out some conditions that, if fulfilled, would enhance agents’ ability to be responsible and blameworthy. However, the truth of determinism is still compatible with other conditions that are sufficient for moral responsibility. Perhaps determinism rules out the ability to do otherwise, for example, making it impossible for agents to be maximally morally responsible for any of their actions. But, according to the mitigating soft compatibilist, even if we cannot fulfill these conditions, we can still fulfill many other conditions sufficient for moral responsibility—we can still be reasons-responsive, exercise guidance control, and take part in shaping our own values and desires, for example. And though an individual may not be maximally responsible if determinism is true, she can still be held accountable and blamed for her behavior if she fulfills these sets of sufficient compatibilist conditions. In this way, Capes is able to put pressure on premise (2) of MMA, for there exists at least one strand of compatibilism—mitigating soft compatibilism—that is not rendered false by the fact that blameworthiness is mitigated simply in virtue of determinism being true.

While Capes argues that determinism itself can mitigate our attributions of responsibility, in “A Maneuver Around the Modified Manipulation Argument,” I argue that it is *how* agents are determined that affects the degree to which they are blameworthy and responsible. When we compare the manipulated Plum featured in Pereboom’s Case 2 to the unmanipulated Plum described in Todd’s first case, one can grant that the manipulated Plum may very well be less responsible. But this isn’t simply because he was manipulated. Rather,

it could be because of how the neuroscientists' meddling affected Plum's agential capacities. In Pereboom's description of Case 2, he points to how heavily egoistic reasons weighed for Plum in the moments before killing White. Indeed, it may very well be the case that Plum is not as responsive to moral reasons as he would have been had he not been manipulated. So, while the manipulated Plum is less responsible than the unmanipulated Plum, it is because he does not fulfill the compatibilist responsibility conditions to their fullest extent, not because manipulation is inherently mitigating. The same is true of determinism. Plum, as described in Pereboom's Case 4, is also less responsible than unmanipulated Plum, but this is only in virtue of the fact that he does not fulfill the compatibilist conditions to their fullest extent, not because the truth of determinism alone can mitigate moral responsibility. Of course, manipulated Plum is still responsible—after all, he meets the minimally sufficient compatibilist conditions for responsibility. He simply isn't *maximally* responsible. By adopting a scalar notion of responsibility and blameworthiness, a compatibilist can fully account for manipulated and determined Plum's mitigated levels of responsibility while still maintaining that determinism is compatible with moral responsibility.

7. A Soft Tackle?

Both responses to MMA have been met with resistance. Todd is wary of any compatibilist attempt to grant the mitigating role of determinism.²⁸ And Khoury argues that my objection to MMA is a soft-line, and thus unsatisfactory, response. Khoury argues that though Todd presents the comparison between unmanipulated Plum and manipulated Plum in such a way that one could point to manipulated Plum's diminished agential capacities as an explanation for his diminished blameworthiness, this is only an artifact of the case and can easily be altered. If readers attributed different degrees of blameworthiness to Plum in Pereboom's

²⁸ Todd, "Manipulation and Moral Standing: An Argument for Incompatibilism," *Philosophers' Imprint*, Vol. 12, No. 7, (2012).

Case 2 and Plum in an identical case that simply left out any mention of the neuroscientists, then it would no longer be possible to argue that their mitigated attributions of responsibility are caused by manipulated Plum's diminished agential capacities—for the description of unmanipulated Plum would feature those very same flaws. In this way, Khoury argues, my initial response to MMA will not do.

Khoury is right about this much: if unmanipulated Plum and manipulated Plum were both described as having the very same agential capacities, then I would have to alter my response. However, this fact alone does not make my initial objection to MMA a soft-line argument. Recall that the first step of taking the hard-line is to highlight any features of the manipulation case that are suspect. The fact that Todd attempts to saddle the compatibilist with a commitment to symmetrical attributions of responsibility to unmanipulated Plum and manipulated Plum is surely noteworthy. Not only are the levels of description between the cases worlds apart, but manipulated Plum is described as having agential limitations while unmanipulated Plum is not. To not reject such a commitment would do a disservice to compatibilists. And, if Todd's presentation of the cases were tweaked such that both Plums clearly met the same compatibilist conditions to the same degree, then the compatibilist would be forced to argue that both were equally responsible. But this is a move the compatibilist can easily make given my original response to MMA. Indeed, I argue: "Furthermore, if Plum were to possess the same reasons-responsiveness due to indeterministic processes, the compatibilist can argue that he is every bit as responsible as the manipulated and determined versions of Plum."²⁹

In arguing that an undetermined agent (like unmanipulated Plum), a determined agent, and a manipulated agent all deserve the same degree of blame *if* they fulfill the same

²⁹ Tierney, "A Maneuver Around the Modified Manipulation Argument," p. 760.

compatibilist responsibility conditions to an equal degree, one is providing an undoubtedly hard-line response. Such a rejoinder both grants the symmetry between manipulation and determinism and defends the claim that manipulated Plum and determined Plum *are* responsible, the two essential features of a hard-line response. Furthermore, by adopting a scalar model of responsibility, the compatibilist is able to accommodate the intuition that manipulation and determinism mitigate responsibility within a wholly compatibilist framework. Individuals can be responsible without being maximally responsible; they can be determined or manipulated in such a way that their agential capacities are limited, though not destroyed.

But there still may be a worry that my original objection to MMA constitutes a soft-line response. After all, it looks as though my objection is a rejection of premise 1 of MMA, not premise 2.³⁰ Recall the form of MMA:

- (1) If blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 2, blameworthiness is mitigated if mere causal determinism is true.
- (2) If blameworthiness is mitigated if mere causal determinism is true, then compatibilism is false.
- (3) Blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 2.
- (4) So, compatibilism is false.³¹

Originally, I had intended to grant premise (1) because I took manipulation and determinism to be symmetrical. I didn't want to take the soft-line and argue that manipulated Plum is not responsible while determined Plum is. But premise (1) of MMA features a specific case (Pereboom's Case 2) in its antecedent and a general claim about the truth of mere causal determinism in its consequent. And while I was happy to grant that Plum in Case 2 could have mitigated responsibility, I never wished to argue that the mere truth of determinism can

³⁰ Thanks to Matthew Flummer for pointing this out.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

mitigate responsibility. Thus, it really looks like I'm committed to rejecting premise (1) of a manipulation argument—a traditionally soft-line move.

However, denying premise (1) of MMA does not automatically render an objection a soft-line response—it depends on *why* one denies it. In the case of MMA, compatibilists could deny premise (1) because they reject the symmetry between manipulation and determinism *or* because they reject the notion that determinism in and of itself mitigates responsibility. While the former reasoning commits one to the soft-line, the latter is neutral between the two strategies. Thus, there is nothing inherently soft-lined about rejecting premise (1) of MMA, though the fact that both soft-liners and hard-liners alike can find fault with this premise may indicate that the structure of MMA could be improved.

Indeed, MMA is missing a key feature of Pereboom's original four-case manipulation argument, namely a comparison of a manipulation case and a determinism case. Pereboom first introduces cases featuring manipulation and then compares them to a case featuring determinism. It's on the basis of this comparison that Pereboom concludes that there is no relevant difference between manipulation and determinism. It is only after he establishes the relevant similarities between manipulation and determinism that Pereboom *then* generalizes to a claim about the compatibility of moral responsibility and determinism. Thus, premise (1) of MMA is quite a leap—beginning with a specific manipulated agent's diminished responsibility in a particular case and ending with a general claim about the mitigating powers of determinism. Such a jump overlooks several steps in the original manipulation argument and may prove problematic on many counts. Thus, perhaps a better strategy is to modify the manipulation argument in the following way:

(1**) If blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 2, then blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 4.

(2**) If blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 4, then compatibilism is false.

- (3**) Blameworthiness is mitigated for Plum in Case 2.
- (4**) So, compatibilism is false.

On this argument, Pereboom's comparison of manipulation and determinism cases is captured by premise (1**). And compatibilists who reject premise (1**) are clearly soft-liners, while those who reject premise (2**) or (3**) are hard-liners. Not only does this argument more clearly delineate the ground between soft-liners and hard-liners, it also rings truer of Pereboom's original four-case argument.

8. Conclusion

Of course, neither Capes's rejection of premise (2) of MMA, my rejection of premise (1) of MMA, nor our joint rejection of (2**) will succeed in convincing incompatibilists that compatibilism is true. But this was never our aim. Our goal was simply to challenge the modified manipulation argument by generating doubt about the veracity of its premises. And this is enough. According to McKenna: "If the compatibilist can merely cast doubt on the incompatibilist's positive claim, then she has adequately replied to the argument even if she has not offered a positive defense of her thesis regarding manipulation."³² Thus, like many other problems, MMA it is best tackled head on.

Acknowledgments I would like to thank Michael McKenna, Carolina Sartorio, and Shaun Nichols for their helpful feedback and suggestions. I would also like to thank Matthew Flummer for his valuable comments and the audience at Florida State University's Graduate Conference on Free Will and Moral Responsibility for an excellent discussion of an earlier draft of this paper.

³² McKenna, "A Hard-Line Reply to Pereboom's Four-Case Manipulation Argument," p. 155.