

2013-14 Essay Contest First Place:

Jared Corbett is a senior at Oak Park and River Forest High School. He has taken a wide variety of courses but his strongest academic interests are literature, writing, and technology. Post-graduation, he plans to enter the arts and sciences program at one of the nine colleges to which he has applied.

Probabilistic Chains

Free will is one of the grandest and most persistent illusions we experience throughout our lives. It is ingrained into our experience and crucial for systems of economy and justice. Even those who accept the notion of free will as irrational cannot make decisions without belief in an open future. Common sense suggests Libertarianism, a belief in radical freedom, or at least the Compatibilist position that a determined future does not eliminate the possibility of free will. A closer examination of the facts reveals that Libertarianism is mysterious and that Compatibilism is, as Kant said, no more than “a wretched subterfuge.” Despite unanswered questions about laws governing the physical universe, Hard Determinism is more consistent with the facts than other theories. Although quantum mechanics demonstrates that some events in the universe are decidedly indeterminate, the theory does not imply freedom, since the future is not controlled by individual choice but constrained by probability.

Hard Determinism claims that because humans are physical systems, they obey physical laws, and because physical laws allow us to predict the behavior of physical systems, human behavior is causally necessitated by physical law. Imagine the simple causal chain in the relationship between a hammer and a nail. If a hammer were brought down forcefully onto a nail halfway embedded in a wooden block, the nail would sink into the block. There is no other

possible outcome in this chain of events. Suppose that the operator of the hammer who sets the causal chain in motion is also a physical system operating under unalterable laws: When the machine senses a nail in a wooden block, it strikes with the force necessary to drive it into the block. In this system, since the first cause is necessitated, all future causes are constrained as well, leaving the system with only one possible outcome. According to Hard Determinism, the universe has operated under a specific set of physical laws from the beginning. Given the laws of nature and states of affairs in the past, the future for humans is no more open than for the nail being struck by the hammer. All physical systems, including humans, can have only one possible future.

To defend their position, the Hard Determinists explain how the illusion of free will is produced in humans during the process of deliberation. When one deliberates, he is experiencing conflicting desires and must 'choose' how to act. According to eighteenth century Hard Determinist Baron d'Holbach, forces of similar strength conflict in the brain without the knowledge of the agent who falsely believes that he is deliberating. When one force overwhelms the other, the agent is convinced that he has made a choice. The so-called choice is as causally necessitated as the hammering of the nail, but the individual seems to have deliberated because the brain "experiences such rapid modifications that it is fatigued."¹ According to Hard Determinists such as Baron d'Holbach, this explains the "the inconstancy of man."² Persons essentially behave inconsistently and view their behavior as spontaneous because they are influenced by conflicting, unseen natural forces beyond their knowledge and control.

The absence of an open future leads to some counterintuitive conclusions. Peter van Inwagen notes that if one were to roll back history in a deterministic universe, events would play out in the same way.³ ⁴While this seems strange, it is physically and logically possible. Imagine

the big bang as a chemistry experiment writ large. It is relatively easy to predict the results of a small-scale chemical reaction. For instance, combining a gram of sodium and a gram of chlorine in the right way yields two grams of salt every time. No chemist would predict otherwise. In fact, it would be absurd to say that rolling back the reaction a few seconds could lead to a different result. For Hard Determinists, the same principle also applies to human history. Roll the clock back to 1945, and the Allies would win World War II before the end of the year every time. Why? The causes necessitating Allied victory would be in place. Oppenheimer would be working on the nuclear bomb, the Germans would be losing the Battle of the Bulge, and Axis governments would be running out of supplies.

To reject these claims, a Libertarian would have to prove there is something mysterious and immaterial about humans that allows them to develop agency and to defy physical law.⁴² The only evidence Libertarians have produced to defend their position is subjective or unproven. Libertarians often defend human freedom by endorsing the concept of agent causation, the idea that persons are agents who can cause events but are not themselves caused by earlier events. van Inwagen summarizes the standard argument in defense of agent causation as "...a process's having one outcome rather than one of the other outcomes it might have had as an event. For it to be up to an agent what the outcome of a process will be is for the agent to be able to cause each of the outcomes that the process would have."⁵ Basically, van Inwagen says that since

¹ Baron d'Holbach. "We are Completely Determined" In *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*. Edited by Louis P. Pojman and Lewis Vaughn, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 408.

² Baron d'Holbach, pp. 408.

³ Peter van Inwagen. "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will" In *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*. Edited by Louis P. Pojman and Lewis Vaughn, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 423-424.

⁴ Peter van Inwagen, pp. 421-422

⁵ Peter van Inwagen, pp. 430

humans face an open future, humans must have free will. But this assertion presupposes what needs to be shown. The primary question in the free will debate is whether it is rational to believe in an open future for humans. van Inwagen's argument does nothing to answer this question.

Our current understanding of physical law challenges d'Holbach's mechanistic world picture by revealing an irreversibly indeterministic universe. Quantum mechanics indicates that particle behavior is random and highly probabilistic. The theory appears to challenge the Hard Determinist position that there is only one physically possible future, and to reinforce the Libertarian picture of an indeterminate gap between present and future. However, it is possible for a Determinist to affirm there are multiple physically possible futures without contradiction. It is easy to make the mistake of associating an indeterminate future with agency, but in probabilistic cases agency is not required for an indeterminate future. Nor is it possible.

Consider an individual whose decisions were at the mercy of the odds. Although his future would be indeterminate, it would not be free since his future would not be up to him. Additionally, the random behavior in the quantum mechanical model yields a predictable universe because scientists are capable of predicting large-scale particle behavior. Imagine shining a flashlight at a glass window. Most of the light would shine through the window. For the purposes of the example, say that figure is 96%. Scientists cannot predict which photons (light particles) will penetrate the glass and which will not. However, they know 96% will always make it through the glass and 4% will not. Thus, under the quantum mechanical model, large aggregations of particles (including humans) behave predictably and consistently, and since individual particles behave randomly, there is no room for agency on any level.

After prematurely dismissing the quantum-mechanical problem, van Inwagen makes an appeal to subjective experience, asking if the reader can “really believe” a non-trivial choice (i.e. choosing a career) is not up to him.⁶ He appeals to the societal value of belief in free will by suggesting that agents, free or not, cannot make practical decisions without belief in an open future. He states that if an unimpeachable source informed him that his life is determined, he would have to admit he no longer understood the world. Van Inwagen concludes that agent causation offers the “smallest mystery available.”⁷³ While this is true from the subjective standpoint of Peter van Inwagen, he advances no argument anchored in real, objective evidence. True, most humans believe in an open future and it would be inconvenient to do otherwise, but everything we know about physics indicates that humans are nevertheless unfree.

Compatibilists attempt to reconcile the theories of free will and Determinism, but this theory is perhaps the most incoherent of all. Traditional Compatibilists such as W.T. Stace argue the problem is semantic, and what is commonly considered free will can exist in a deterministic universe. The mistake is to define “free” as “uncaused.” A voluntary act is one that is caused in the right way. Stace argues that if a person makes a choice based on their desires and action is not constrained by outside forces, he is acting freely.⁸⁴ Stace’s semantic solution broadens the definition of free will beyond what is usually considered free behavior. It extends the possibility of free will to animals generally considered unfree non-persons. A dog can choose between

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⁶ Peter van Inwagen, pp. 432.

⁷ Peter van Inwagen, pp. 433.

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⁸ Walter T. Stace. “Compatibilism” In *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*. Edited by Louis P. Pojman and Lewis Vaughn, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 446.

rolling in grass and chasing a ball, and if his behavior is consistent with his internal desires, his act is free. Yet, we would consider human will to be freer than that of dogs, because while dogs appear to act impulsively, humans are reflective, evaluating and choosing which desires they act upon. Stace also fails to acknowledge an important implication of Determinism. He concedes that actions are determined by causal chains, but he does not explain how desires belonging to causal chains are consistent with an open future. If one's desires are not one's own, but instead the result of unalterable natural forces, one cannot have free will. That is the premise of Determinism, and because traditional Compatibilism accepts this premise, it must reject the idea of an open future.

In response to these criticisms, some Compatibilists have refined their theory. Deep Compatibilists such as Harry Frankfurt argue that human will is different from that of other animals because humans form second order desires. Animals are part of a class called wantons, beings which act on their strongest desires in every case. Persons are distinct from wantons because they form second order desires to determine what they want to want.⁹⁵ However, the distinction between persons and wantons is weak. One could argue that second order desires are illusory and are really just a conscious recognition of one's strongest desires. The theory also suffers from an infinite regress, because the agent needs to want his second order desires, third order desires, and all desires that follow. Overlooking the regress leaves the theory with an equally fatal flaw: if the chain of desires is finite, as in a second-first order relationship, it is possible for a second order desire to be caused. For instance, if a person chooses to eat ice cream, their desire to desire ice cream might originate from past experiences of enjoying ice

⁹ Harry Frankfurt. "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" In *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*. Edited by Louis P. Pojman and Lewis Vaughn, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 451-454.

cream. If those past experiences were also caused by caused desires, then the person's will is determined.

Even if one accepts the theoretical argument for Hard Determinism, it is difficult to accept its practical implication that humans are not morally responsible for their actions. If everyone's actions are causally necessitated and no one can act differently, individuals could no longer be held responsible for their actions. A Hard Determinist would not be concerned with this outcome. Our subjective experience often blurs objective reality, but our view can be corrected through the lens of reason. Instead of mourning the loss of conventional morality, a Determinist might seek to replace it with social engineering that produces socially desirable behavior. It is irrational to accept the logic of determinism in theory and then reject it due to the practical demands of morality.

Hard Determinism initially might seem outdated, but the evidence suggests that, with modification, it is still the most rational position to maintain in the contemporary world. Libertarians fail to provide objective evidence to the contrary, and both Compatibilism and Deep Compatibilism fail to show how an open future is possible in a deterministic universe. Although determinism has disturbing moral implications and challenges subjective experience, it is senseless to reject the facts implied by the known laws of physics to comfort our gut convictions.

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2013-14 Essay Contest Second Place:

Freedom in Degrees

Sydney To is currently a junior at Valley Christian High School. During his sophomore year, *Sophie's World* introduced him to philosophy. Later that year, he entered the international Ayn Rand contest to make it as a semi-finalist. He followed up on this interest in the summer when he took an Introduction to Philosophy class at Evergreen Community College, and a Logic and Critical Thinking class the next semester. At the moment, his favorite philosopher is Susan Wolf for the much needed clarity her works brought him regarding the question of free will. He is especially grateful to all of the English teachers he has had in the past years for turning him into a better writer, and for their entertaining classes.

I. Introduction

Man would not be satisfied even if he had the whole world, yet he yearns for it still. The presence of such weighty influences is only bearable through our sense of progress, which exists only alongside our unique will, both bounded and free. The freedom to progress towards the attainment of some object, the achievement of some goal, the conformity to some standard or the fulfillment of some purpose is the utmost freedom we can have within the confines of our human nature. We have free will -- a sufficient degree of freedom to act in accordance with the paramount demands of our existence, those refined desires which bring about progress -- because of the condition of self-ownership unique to mankind.

II. Appropriate Freedom

The free will we desire not only grants us freedom to move in accordance with our influences, but freedom to influence our influences. In other words, we are free if we are not powerless over our influences, external or internal. An influence is any factor affecting the state of an agent: appetites, values, desires, principles, substances, threats, physical force, sensations, stimuli, emotions, standards, habits, morality, etc. Shackles are an external influence subverting free will as long as it prevents us from acting in the manner we desire. Alcoholism is a subversive internal influence if it causes us to act in an undesirable manner. While restraints by shackles or alcohol may be superable, their influence will detract from our free will by limiting our exercise of the will to an inappropriate degree.

The will can best be thought of as a manager, whose role exists only due to our internal influences, or employees, reacting to external influences or the market. While the manager has a degree of command over his employees, he cannot control everything they do nor does he desire to exert time and energy doing so. Conversely, the manager regards the demands and advice of his employees, so both the manager and employees are influenced as they are influential, albeit in varying measure. There are some employees, such as hunger and thirst, who cannot be fired because they keep the company, or self, in operation. Other employees, such as values and standards, would not be fired because they lead the company in the right direction. Then there are employees who do minimal work but do not impede the company. These influences, such as a fondness for chocolate, can be resisted if necessary, but the manager does not fire them without good reason. A free will is free in the same sense a manager is free to do his job -- unconstrained by factors inside and outside the company. We have free will when inappropriate influences do not hinder us.

A clue to determining what makes certain influences inappropriate lies in that which distinguishes man from beast and what man does to keep himself distinguished. An animal, driven only by basic desires, or appetites, cannot be considered a company in that it lacks purpose. It is completely controlled by the discomfort of its unsatisfied influences.¹ Having risen above such carnality, we possess refined influences rewarding us with progress rather than mere sustenance, for they are not something to be temporarily satisfied, but to be reached. Thus, only the human species has progressed of its own accord, independent of the assistance of evolution -- man did not have to change biologically to walk on the moon. The very traits which make us

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¹Gary Watson, "Free Action and Free Will," *Mind*, 96 (1987), 145-72.

human point towards the importance of progress: reason and foresight are the tools for progress; self-ownership and record-keeping give progress its significance; purpose and morality are intended guides along the paths of progress. We have the free will we desire only if progress, the capacity to pursue what is important to us, is possible.

Unlike animals, our identity is characterized not simply by our influences, but by a purpose that unifies those influences, for a company is known not for its employees, but its purpose. Lacking purpose, the only aim of an animal is to survive. However, a company must have another goal aside from avoiding bankruptcy. Companies are meant to profit just as we are meant to progress. While some companies may be similar in purposes, they are differentiated in how they choose to go about achieving their purpose, be it by means of honesty or fraud, by taking risks or exercising caution. It is significant that the manner in which we progress towards our purpose reflects our identity more than the purpose itself. Our identity then is not contingent on influences whose origins regress infinitely, but rests instead on our responses to those influences. We are not free if we cannot be true to ourselves.

Whether the purpose of life is personal or absolute, whether the absolute is this or that, we find that a sense of progress remains even if the answer evades us. When we build character, we progress as a person. When we work at something that is important to us, such as art or charity, we see progress in something apart from but often greater than ourselves. When we develop our relationships or careers, we progress in our status. Progress will result even from the simple accumulation of experience. We detect growth upon retrospection, for a sense of progress can persist without an explicit purpose. Self-fulfillment in progress is the most endearing value of our free will.

Only when our influences obstruct progress do we decry them as inappropriate and our freedom as unsatisfactory. For instance, alcoholics do not believe their drinking is a problem or take measures against it until that influence causes damage, perhaps in their ability to function. While the desire for alcohol is not likely to vanish completely under medication or AA meetings, the will resumes its jurisdiction when it can prevent such a desire from moving the agent. That is to say a sufficiently free will can render inappropriate influences ineffective.

When an inappropriate influence is truly irresistible, it can be attributed to mental illness. Such an agent lacks control of his self and therefore lacks freedom, because he cannot help what he does nor can he help that he cannot help what he does. Some might argue that influences like love are not a sign of mental illness but cannot be resisted and may bring us great pain.

Influences of this sort are appropriate altogether in view of the opportunities they provide for progress and may even be necessary to the degree that they make us human. Influences are meant to discomfort you so that you will move, hopefully forward. It is as Viktor Frankl says, “What man needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling of some goal worthy of him.”²

A free will must at least be free to act, but with a will free of all influences, we would not move. On the other hand, a will in complete control of all its influences, one that can remove an influence such as love from itself as easily as we remove the packaging from chocolate, would breed utterly nonsensical actions, if it moves at all. This almighty will is not allured by passions, not acknowledging of stimuli, not obligated by interpersonal relationships, not curbed by morality, not concerned with caution, and not bounded by sanity. In such control, it becomes

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²Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 166.

unpredictable and beyond reason. It is therefore impossible for us to possess such autocratic wills. Absolute freedom is simply isolation.

The free will we require is something less, free from inappropriate influences while constrained by appropriate ones, deeming progress possible and freedom meaningful. The worth of our life is in the progress we make. If we could achieve any desire immediately, we would have to be perfect gods.

III. Sufficient Freedom

We have freedom of will as a result of the degree of control we have over the self. This is the deep-self view proposed by Susan Wolf, in which higher-order desires, representing the deeper self, influence lower-order desires.³ An example of a higher-order desire is a desire for our desire to maintain our diet to be more effective than our desire to succumb to chocolate, or more simply, that we value our diet more than we value chocolate. Control over the deep self bestows upon us the gift of reasoning that prevents us from becoming Frankfurtian wantons, slaves to our strongest present desires and unable to fulfill our greatest desires if they were to ever be formed.⁴

Again, we cannot ask for control of our deepest self without losing the self entirely. This does not lead to the conclusion that we are helpless to be who we are. Just as employees have not always been a part of a company, our internal influences have not always been a part of us. It

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³Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility," *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 46-62.

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would be unreasonable to say we are not responsible for our employees for that reason, just as incompatibilists insist nobody can be morally responsible because nobody is *causa sui*.⁵

Our self-ownership is sufficient, for it allows us the ability of self-revision, so we cannot blame determinism for who we are or what we do.⁶ If the universe is determined, the future cannot be otherwise than what it will be due to natural laws governing past conditions, neither of which we can change. However, it is this consistency that endows the world with sense. A company would be lost in a market whose taste changes randomly and unreasonably, and would be equally as lost with employees that unreliable. Although who we are may have been determined, that does not mean who we are has been forced upon us. It would be petty to blame the choices of a company on a stockbroker's prediction, and pettier still to say that it is not characteristic of the company to change and refuse to try a different course when the current one is clearly failing. Our beginnings are never so overbearing, nor our present state so domineering that we have no say in whom we will become. Rather, our personal identity emerges from the constancy of our will, which cannot be if its constituent influences lack persistence. Thus, the impossible requirement of *causa sui* and the threat of determinism has been separated from the issue of free will.

⁵Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68 (1971), 5-20.

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⁶Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, 75 (1994), 5-24.

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⁷Charles Taylor, "Responsibility for the Self," *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 281-99.

The manner in which we treat ourselves speaks to the existence of our free will and the manner in which we treat others speaks to the adequacy of our free will. Even incompatibilists who deny free will exists live as if it does. It is the initial reaction of people to blame the thief for stealing and praise the hero for stopping the thief considering most people we encounter possess sufficient free will, apparent in the nature of general human interactions and reinforced by the free will we experience in ourselves, to justify our reactive attitudes.⁷ These reactive attitudes support the adequacy of our free will because they are often expressed accordingly, seeing that they are within a degree of our control. We can withdraw our reactive attitudes if they were ill-suited, perhaps if the thief turned out to have kleptomania and the supposed hero, ulterior motives. Incompatibilists cannot claim their free will is inadequate without forgoing praise and blame altogether. Such an impossibility shows that the freedom man possesses is enough.

IV. Conclusion

Free will, like intentions, hopes, feelings and even sentience, exists only internally so we have no way of proving to others that which we cannot bring outside ourselves. We are, however, able to induce its presence by our self-ownership and its adequacy by our reactive attitudes.

The tension from the relationship between the will and its influences prevents us from slipping towards the extreme of either freedom too limiting or freedom too overwhelming. This established balance creates enough room for a purpose to arise so that progress possible. The degree of free will we possess is sufficient for identification in our hopes, decisions and behaviors, and therefore meaning in our existence.

2013-14 Essay Contest Third Place:

James Drueckhammer

Libertarian Free Will Through Agent Causation

I am a senior in the class of 2014 at The Stony Brook School, an independent Christian school in Stony Brook, New York. I am currently studying College Level History of Philosophy, taught by Dr. Sean Riley. This class is being granted college credit through Molloy College.

"If I hadn't spent so much time studying Earthlings," said the Tralfamadorian, "I wouldn't have any idea what was meant by 'free will.' I've visited thirty-one inhabited planets in the universe, and I have studied

reports on one hundred more. Only on Earth is there any talk of free will.”
– [Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*](#)

Do humans actually have the ability to ultimately decide their own course of actions and possess free will? The philosopher Stephen Evans defines philosophical libertarianism as "the view that human beings sometimes can will more than one possibility" (Evans). According to this view, a person who made a particular choice freely could have chosen differently, even if nothing about the past prior to the moment of choice had been different. Thus, Libertarians believe that human beings possess free will. The philosopher Robert Kane has identified what he believes to be the four conditions of libertarian free will. The first condition is that an action must be done voluntarily and without coercion. An agent's decision to act must not be determined by either external or internal factors if this action is to be considered a free act. The second condition is the “Principle of Alternative Possibilities.” In order for an action to be done freely, the agent must have the possibility to act and act otherwise. The third condition is the existence of ultimate responsibility. An agent can be ultimately responsible for an action if and only if the agent acted freely. The fourth condition is the existence of self-forming actions. Self-forming actions are free actions in the distant past that contribute to an agent's character and values. When an agent acts out of habit, the agent traces ultimate responsibility back to self-forming actions. Although current habitual actions may seem determined by internal forces, such as an agent's character and morality, those habitual actions are self-determined, and thus are free due to the nature of self-forming actions.

Of these four conditions of libertarian free will, three are not compatible with determinism -- the doctrine that all events, including human action, are ultimately

determined by causes external to the will. The Principle of Alternate Possibilities is incompatible with determinism. In a determined world, no possible worlds exist in which an agent can act differently than how they were determined to act. If determinism were true, then self-forming actions would not exist because self-forming actions require the existence of alternative possibilities. If self-forming actions and the principle of alternative possibilities are not true in a determined world, then ultimate responsibility for actions is nonexistent in a determined world.

Compatibilists, who believe that free will is compatible with determinism, believe that only voluntary, non-coerced actions are necessary for the possession of free will.

First, I will argue for the existence of libertarian free will by describing the agent-causal theory of actions. This theory was first proposed by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* and has been developed further by many other prominent philosophers, including Timothy O'Connor. According to O'Connor, as a person begins the process of authoring a decision, he first represents to himself his possible courses of action while being aware of some of his desires and beliefs which may determine or influence those possibilities. For example, a college student may decide whether to attend class or to skip it in order to study for an upcoming exam. He has the desire to go to class in order to learn about the subject matter in that class and do well in that class. But he also has the desire to do well on his exam on a different subject, and believes that he will do poorly on the exam unless he studies during the time when he would normally be in class. Additionally, he has other beliefs about the virtues associated with attending class and the vices associated with skipping class, the relative importance of the two courses in his education, and other beliefs and values that he holds. These beliefs and desires give him reasons for attending class and

reasons for skipping class in order to study. So, he represents to himself these alternative courses of action: going to class versus skipping class, and he is perhaps aware of at least some of his relevant desires and beliefs that are related to these two alternatives. Next, the agent brings about an executive state of intention to act and choose one of his possibilities. "An executive state of intention to act is an intention that will bring about the intended action so long as it is not interfered with or abandoned" (Machina, 1). The resulting action is then caused by the agent's intention. Applying this theory to the student's dilemma about whether to attend class, the student will first represent to himself his two possibilities: attending class or skipping class. He then considers his beliefs and desires that are relevant to this situation. Lastly, he forms an effective intention to act in a certain way, and his action results from the formation of that intention (Machina1-2).

This agent causal theory demonstrates how an agent can choose whether to act or act otherwise, conferring an ultimate responsibility to the student for his decision to either skip or attend class. However, this theory does not provide an explanation as to why an agent should choose to form a particular executive state of intention and act upon it. If O'Connor could explain how certain factors, such as beliefs and desires, cause a person to act in a certain way, then libertarian free will would not be possible. These reasons for action will make an agent more likely to choose one course of action, but an agent's actions cannot be predicted with certainty as a result of an agent's reasons for acting. An agent might act differently at different times given the same set of circumstances and reasons. A determinist objection to the agent-causal theory is that an agent's reasons for acting determine how an agent will act, making libertarian free will nonexistent. This objection uses Galen Strawson's "Basic

Argument” to suggest that an agent's reasons for acting cause an agent's actions to be determined, making libertarian free will nonexistent.

Strawson’s Basic Argument states that, " in order for a person to be morally responsible for performing some action A, two criteria must be met. First, action A must belong to the class of rational actions" (Kelsey, 7). Action A must be done intentionally, as opposed to a habitual action or reflex made without thought on the part of the agent. The second criterion is that the agent must be self-determined in performing action A if she is to be held truly responsible for the action. According to Strawson’s definition, a person is self-determined if one has “consciously and explicitly chosen to be the way one is, mentally speaking, in certain respects, and... succeeded in bringing it about that one is that way” (Kelsey,8). Strawson believes that self-determinism, which is requisite for true moral responsibility, is impossible to achieve. He argues that agents cannot bring about their own reasons which affect their moral character and influence the decisions they make. Strawson's Basic Argument rests upon the beliefs that one's reasons for acting, such as beliefs and preferences, cause an agent to act one way or the other. Strawson assumes that our actions are caused by our reasons, so we cannot be self-determined in our actions unless we can somehow self-determine our reasons. (Kelsey, 8-13). For example, a woman named Nina notices that her neighbor left his car's headlights on. Nina knocks on her neighbor's door and tells him that he left his lights on, and he then turns his lights off to save the life of his car battery. We can say that Nina's reason for alerting her neighbor is that she wanted to stop her neighbor's car battery from losing its power. However, Nina may have reasons for not wanting to alert her neighbor. Maybe it is late at night and Nina wants to go to sleep without having to talk to her neighbor first.

Determinists would say that a causal link between Nina's reasons and actions exists because she acts in the way she prefers to act. Nina's reasons to alert her neighbor are her strongest reasons because Nina chooses to act on those reasons and not on any others. If those are her strongest reasons, then they will undoubtedly prevail and cause Nina to act as she does. If Nina evaluates all of her reasons in order to decide how to act, then it is assumed that Nina's reasons to alert her neighbor outweigh her reasons to do otherwise. If we know that the agent was not coerced, that she did not consider herself to be acting against her will, we can therefore conclude that whatever reasons Nina acted upon were her strongest.

But this strongest motive theory seems to be inadequate for determining which of an agent's beliefs and desires are stronger than the others. This theory relies upon a circular way of thinking; Nina alerted her neighbor because her reasons in favor of doing so were stronger than her reasons for not doing so, and we know they were stronger because they are reasons on which Nina chose to act. This explanation assumes that one set of reasons had to be stronger than the others, and that this set of reasons, by virtue of being the strongest, caused Nina to act in the way she did. The philosopher Carl Ginet has argued against this assumption, writing "the strongest motive only prevails by making it true by definition; the strongest motive means the motive that prevails" (Kelsey, 26). This definition cannot prove a causal link between reasons and actions. We cannot prove through experience that certain motives, such as ideologies and beliefs, will trump others, such as physical gratification. The notion of willpower exists because agents sometimes do what they do not feel they want to do most. Likewise, an agent displays a lack of willpower by doing what he wants to do, even when it is not in his best interest to do so. In light of these two examples, what

qualities can we say that an agent's strongest reason possesses, other than being the reason on which that agent chooses to act (Kelsey, 23-26)?

If an agent's reasons for acting do not cause the agent's action, the next major objection to libertarianism is the "Luck Objection" formulated by Thomas Nagel. This argument states that, if an agent's actions are undetermined, then luck factors into the agent's actions. If luck factors into an agent's action, then an agent does not act out of his own free will, since the effect of luck hinders the agent's ability to make his own decision (Schlusser, 1). However, by using William James' "Two Stage Model," luck and free will can be proven to be compatible and luck becomes a necessary condition for libertarian free will. James' model states that, when an agent is deliberating about how to act, multiple possibilities for action are generated. Some possibilities are generated due to prior experiences and action, and new possibilities are generated by chance. The agent then evaluates each option and ultimately chooses to act on which possibility he deems as being the best option (Doyle, 6-9). By using James' Two Stage model, luck can be viewed as a facilitator for libertarian free will, instead of a determining hindrance.

Through the use of the agent-causal theory developed by Aristotle, libertarian free will can be shown to exist. Strawson's Basic Argument can be refuted by proving the causal nature of reasons to be dubious. The Luck Objection can be refuted by William James' Two Stage model, which shows that luck facilitates libertarian free will instead of hindering it. This has proven that libertarian free will can hold up against two of the major arguments that attempt to prove that it does not exist.

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