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Can Libertarianism or Compatibilism Capture Aquinas' View on the Will?

Kelly Gallagher

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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Can Libertarianism or Compatibilism Capture Aquinas' View on the Will?

Can Libertarianism or Compatibilism Capture Aquinas' View on the Will?

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Philosophy

by

Kelly Gallagher
Benedictine College
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, 2010
Benedictine College
Bachelor of Arts in Theology, 2010

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University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

Dr. Thomas Senior
Thesis Director

Dr. Lynne Spellman
Committee Member

Dr. Eric Funkhouser
Committee Member

Abstract

The contemporary free will debate is largely split into two camps, libertarianism and compatibilism. It is commonly assumed that if one is to affirm the existence of free will then she will find herself in one of these respective camps. Although merits can be found in each respective position, I find that neither account sufficiently for free will. This thesis, therefore, puts the view of Thomas Aquinas in dialogue with the contemporary debate and argues that his view cannot be captured by either libertarianism or compatibilism and that his view offers a promising alternative view that garners some of the strengths from both contemporary positions without taking on their respective shortcomings.

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I. Introduction

Free-will has always been one of the central points of contention in philosophy and the debate continues to rage in the contemporary scene. I seek to enter into the contemporary debate, but do so on what might be considered strange grounds, for I seek to put the contemporary literature in dialogue with medieval thought, specifically the thought of Thomas Aquinas. In doing so, the purpose of this essay is threefold. First, to give a general overview of the contemporary free will debate by explicating some of the main views and some of the arguments for each, respectively. Second, to offer a critical assessment of said views and arguments and suggests that the contemporary framework restricts our way of thinking about free will, which has led to the stalemate we see in the current debate, especially between the advocates of libertarianism and compatibilism. Finally, to examine the view of free will espoused by Thomas Aquinas and propose it as an alternative view within an alternative framework that satisfies many of the typical concerns surrounding free will yet remain at issue in the contemporary debate.

To begin then it will be important to get a feel for the land before wading deep into the waters of the extremely complex and convoluted arguments of the debate. So, when categorizing the different views of free will, the most basic dichotomy is between compatibilism and incompatibilism. Both of these views stand in relation to determinism, i.e. the thesis that at any given time there is only one possible outcome for any given set of events. Incompatibilism argues that free will is *incompatible* with determinism, while compatibilism argues that free will is *compatible* with determinism. Although there are several diverse and

nuanced tokens of both incompatibilism and compatibilism, for present purposes it will be enough to highlight the more broad categories within each view. The incompatibilist camp is typically divided into two very distinct subsections – hard incompatibilism and libertarianism. While both views affirm that free will is incompatible with determinism, the difference rests upon their affirmation or denial of the existence of free will. The hard incompatibilist typically holds that human actions are deterministic and therefore free will does not exist. Conversely, the libertarian holds that human actions are not deterministic and that free will does exist.¹

There does not exist such a sharp distinction on the compatibilist side of the fence, at least with respect to the affirmation or denial of free will. The typical distinguishing factor then of the different tokens of compatibilism typically rest with the view one has about what exactly free will amounts to and what is required for moral responsibility. The issue of moral responsibility, however, is not limited to importance only within the compatibilist camp. In fact, combined with one's general metaphysical commitments and interpretation of scientific research, moral responsibility is probably the other most important (and for some philosophers the most important) ingredient in formulating some understanding of free will and its significance. As such, it will play a prominent role in the arguments that will be considered.

¹ The extent to which the individual hard incompatibilist or libertarian affirms the determinacy or indeterminacy of human actions varies. Also, the fact that most philosophers and scientists affirm the indeterminacy of the world does not preclude one from being a determinist with respect to human actions. One can affirm the indeterminacy of the world at the quantum level but still hold that, at the macro-level of human actions, events are deterministic.

Although this general outline is hopelessly incomplete and perhaps does more confusing than enlightening, the respective views and their differences shall become clearer as we work through the arguments for each. It is to this that we now turn.

II. The Contemporary Free Will Debate

A. Incompatibilism and Libertarianism

We turn now to consider the incompatibilist view by looking at an argument for it offered by libertarians. As previously noted, the libertarian believes that free will cannot be reconciled with determinism. The reason for this, argues the libertarian, is that, in order for free will to exist, agents must have some sort of causal influence on the world. In other words, the agent's actions and decisions must be, at least in part, up to her and not reducible to forces completely outside of her control. Furthermore, in order for there to be genuine moral responsibility, indeterminism must be the case, for only when an agent has some sort of causal influence on her actions can we ascribe praise or blame to her. If her actions can be completely reduced to forces outside her control then it would not be right to ascribe praise or blame to her since she contributed nothing to the action itself. The action would be, for all practical purposes, not up to her. To praise or blame her then seems to be unjustified. One of the most celebrated contemporary proponents of libertarianism, Robert Kane, has the following to say about libertarianism.

We libertarians typically believe that a free will that is incompatible with determinism is required for us to be truly morally responsible for our actions, so that genuine moral responsibility, as well as free will, is incompatible with determinism. Genuine free will, we believe, could not exist in a world that was *completely* determined by Fate or God, or the laws of physics or logic, or heredity and environment, psychological or social condition, and so on.²

This intuition about the importance of genuinely alternative possibilities for free will and moral responsibility and the ability to influence the world around us by our decisions is not

² John Martin Fischer *et al.*, *Four Views on Free Will* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 7.

limited to committed libertarians. In fact, several prominent philosophers who oppose incompatibilism admit its almost universal appeal as a common-sense way of thinking about some of the more basic elements of free will. John Martin Fischer, who favors a version of compatibilism, has this to say about incompatibilism.

Typically, we think of ourselves as morally responsible precisely in virtue of exercising a distinctive kind of freedom or control; this freedom is traditionally thought to involve exactly the sort of “selection” from among genuinely available alternative possibilities...When an agent is morally responsible for his behavior, we typically suppose that he could have (at least at some relevant time) done otherwise.³

In addition, Manuel Vargas, who champions a revisionist account of free will, which, for all practical purposes, falls on the compatibilist side of the fence (at least with regards to the metaphysical understanding of free will), presents a systematic and threefold case, which argues that ordinary thinking about free will strongly favors an incompatibilist understanding.

First, there are considerations grounded on the traditional philosophical arguments for incompatibilism. Second, there is a range of experimental data that suggests that ordinary thinking about free will and moral responsibility are at least partly incompatibilist. Third, reflections on cultural and social history also seem to favor incompatibilism.⁴

Now, even though all of the just-mentioned philosophers agree that our basic intuitions about free will are incompatibilist, Kane is the only one that argues that this common sense way of viewing free will is correct. The others offer us accounts for why we should either abandon or revise our “folk” understanding of free will in light of scientific insight, just as we have done away with our pre-scientific understanding of water and the necessity of the so-called phlogiston for combustion. We shall examine, however, these arguments later.

³ Fischer *et al.*, *Four Views*, 46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

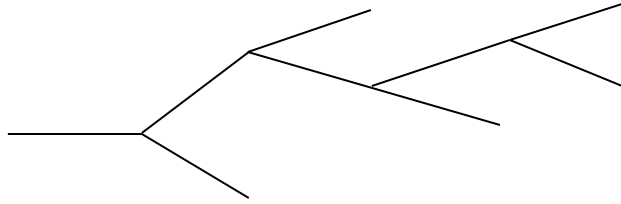


Image 1 "Garden of Forking Paths."

One of the more common images given to help explain the libertarian view is the "Garden of Forking Paths." (See Image 1) It is used to illustrate the way that we typically think about our decisions and the influence that we, as agents, have on our own lives. We arrive at the first fork in the path when we must make some mutually exclusive decision, e.g. should I study economics or philosophy. At this point we begin to deliberate between the pros and cons of each option and how the choice we make will affect the rest of our lives. So, when we make our choice, say to study philosophy, we start down a new path that will open up new options for us in the future (perhaps an annual summer vacation) and close others (like prospects of a lucrative salary) and the decision is a result of our own free will. It is important to note at this point that, for the libertarian, both options must have been genuinely possible options. We, as agents, could have chosen either option and, by making our decision, have causally contributed to our future, beyond the forces of physics, fate, God, etc. Concerning the Garden of Forking Paths, Kane notes, "This picture of different possible paths into the future is also essential, I believe, to what it means to be a person and to live a human life."⁵

In contrast to the Garden of Forking paths, determinism offers only a rigid and unflinching line. So, when deciding whether or not you should study economics or philosophy, it might seem as though both options are available to you, but in reality there is no possible way that you will study economics because, as it happens, the line dictates that you will end up

⁵ Ibid., 6.

studying philosophy. Another way of contrasting the views is to think of them as driving a car versus riding a train. When driving a car you have the legitimate option of turning right or left, or continuing straight. When riding in a train, however, the only possible path is the one laid before you by the tracks. Libertarianism argues that you are *driving*, i.e. causally contributing to the direction you take. While determinism simply offers you a ride, i.e. you do not get to decide or contribute anything to where you end up; it is decided by the tracks.

So far everything is pretty straightforward and *prima facie* nothing that has been said should seem very controversial. But, just because some of the basic tenets of the libertarian view resonate well with most people's intuitions about free will does not, by any means, settle the matter. To move beyond basic intuitions then we turn to examine one of the most influential contemporary arguments for libertarianism – the “Consequence Argument.” Here is the basic argument presented by Peter van Inwagen, one of its proponents.

If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born; and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore the consequences of these things (including our own acts) are not up to us.⁶

The basic idea is that if the universe is deterministic (for present purposes, let's limit ourselves to the determinism that would result from the laws of nature and avoid questions of God and fatalism) then, at any given point in history, the entire future set of events can be deduced, at least in principle, if not in practice (due to limited empirical resources or cognitive faculties or whatever else may have you). But, if this is so, then all human actions could be

⁶ Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 16.

deduced from a time before any human ever existed. Therefore, all human actions and their consequent results are not determined by us but rather by physical states of affairs that were set in motion long before we even existed. To see the argument more formally, we turn to a schematization of it offered by Kane.⁷

- 1) There is nothing we can now do to change the past.
- 2) There is nothing we can now do to change the laws of nature.
- 3) There is nothing we can now do to change the past and the laws of nature.
- 4) If determinism is true, our present actions are necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature. (That is, it *must* be the case that, given the past and the laws of nature, our present actions occur.)
- 5) Therefore, there is nothing we can now do to change the fact that our present actions occur.

From this argument, we see that the libertarian has not only the strong appeal of capturing some of our basic intuitions about free will but can also muster a very powerful argument to support these intuitions. After all, if every decision one ever makes is determined by say the big bang, it's hard to see how exactly anyone is free. In summary, "Since this argument can be applied to any agents and actions at any times, we can infer from it that *if determinism is true, no one can ever do otherwise*; and if free will requires the power to do

⁷ Fischer *et al.*, *Four Views*, 10.

otherwise than we actually do (as in the image of forking paths), then no one would have free will.”⁸

⁸ Ibid., 11.

B. Compatibilism

The previous section left us wondering how anyone might have free will if her actions were wholly determined by events that preceded her existence. We turn now to attempt to resolve that question. To do so, we will examine an account of compatibilism offered by John Martin Fischer. Fischer begins his account by highlighting the distinction between the forward-looking and backward-looking aspects of agency. The forward-looking aspects would include practical reasoning, planning, and deliberation, while the backward-looking aspects would include accountability and moral and legal responsibility.⁹ So, when an agent is deliberating about her future, she typically presupposes that there are multiple options that are genuinely open to her. Similarly, when ascribing praise or blame to someone, we typically presuppose that she could have done something else and that it is for this reason that the choice of action merits praise or blame. So, for all practical purposes, the ability to do otherwise plays the same role in forward-looking and backward-looking aspects of agency.

This ability-to-do-otherwise factor, however, is beginning to sound like libertarianism. It is at this point that the compatibilist distinguishes herself from the libertarian. The compatibilist understands the ability to do otherwise very differently than the libertarian. For the compatibilist, it is a conditional ability to do otherwise that is contingent upon the agent's will or choice. As Fischer says, "In both forward-looking and backward-looking contexts, it is appealing to suppose that the relevant sort of possibility or freedom is analyzed as a certain

⁹ Ibid., 48-49.

sort of choice-dependence. That is, when I'm deliberating, it is plausible to suppose that I genuinely can do whatever it is that I would do, if I were so to act."¹⁰

So, when the compatibilist says that an agent could have done otherwise in a given situation, for example – that she could have gone running as opposed to lifting weights, what is meant is that had the agent chosen to go running instead of choosing to lift weights then the agent could have done otherwise (and incidentally would have). This stands in contrast to the libertarian understanding of the ability to do otherwise, which maintains that the ability to do otherwise must imply that both options are legitimate metaphysical possibilities *before* the choice of the will. For the libertarian, because something is a viable option, we can choose it. For the compatibilist, because we have chosen something, it is our option. "On this view, I can do, in the relevant sense of "can," whatever is a (suitable) function of my "will" or choices: the scope of my deliberation about the future is the set of paths along which my behavior is a function of my choices."¹¹

In summary, we typically think of a person as responsible for an action if he or she could have done otherwise. And, for the compatibilist, the ability to do otherwise is contingent upon the agent's choice. With this understanding, then, the compatibilist is able to begin to argue that moral responsibility doesn't go out the door with determinism.

Given the assumption of the unity of forward-looking and backward-looking features of agency, the alternative possibilities pertinent to the attribution of responsibility are understood in terms of choice-dependence. That is, on this approach [i.e. compatibilism] an agent is morally responsible for a certain action

¹⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹¹ Ibid.

only if he could have done otherwise, and he could have done otherwise just in case he would have done otherwise, if he had chosen to do otherwise.¹²

Before moving on, we must note a worry with this conditional understanding of the ability to do otherwise. To do so it will help to state the conditional analysis of freedom (CAF) more formally. Thus, we say that “an agent S’s freedom to do X can be understood in terms of the truth of a statement such as, “If S were to choose (will, decide, and so forth) to do X, S would do X.””¹³ The worry is this. By rooting the freedom of an agent in the will, the CAF would render certain willings or decisions as free, which we would not (and should not) typically, consider free. This would include any sort of decision that is unequivocally influenced by some event or controlled by another through some sort of obtrusive manipulation. For example, say that John suffers from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as a result of his military service in Afghanistan. He is incapable of being around explosive-sounding noises without severe episodes of nervous breakdowns. As such, he has developed a phobia of places and events with said noises, for fear of having a breakdown. For all practical purposes, John is incapable of bringing himself to any place or event where there will be loud, explosive-type noises. The Fourth of July, therefore, is a real problem for John. As such, he has decided to soundproof his basement and shut himself in for the Fourth of July (and the day before and after), in order to avoid the explosive noises and inevitable breakdowns. Tying this example together with our CAF we can say that on the Fourth of July, if John were to choose to leave his basement then he would leave his basement. The problem, however, is that John would not

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

choose to leave his basement because he is psychologically unable to choose to leave the basement. So, the CAF is unable to account for how John remains free.

The previous example is a fairly plausible and natural case, which involves no mischievous manipulation. Say, however, that John never, in fact, served in Afghanistan but rather that these ideas were implanted in John's brain as the result of a severely sinister scientist. John's PTSD is the result, therefore, not of some natural strain of events but of the manipulation of an evil scientist. The fact remains, however, that John's psychological state is the same in both examples and the CAF, therefore, is found wanting in exactly the same way in both examples.

In the words of Fischer, "The general form of the problem [of the CAF] is that the relevant subjunctive conditional can be true consistently with the actual operation of some factor that intuitively...makes it the case that the agent is psychologically incapable of choosing (the act in question) and thus unable to perform the act." So, even though the CAF remains true, as a conditional, its ability to offer an attractive view of freedom is rendered useless because it is impossible for the antecedent condition of such examples ever to be realized. Furthermore, these examples, or at least the natural psychological disorders examples, would realistically be quite numerous. So, in these cases, the truth of the conditional remains as trivially true as the conditional statement "If I could run 70 mph then I would be as fast as a cheetah."

So, is the compatibilist account of freedom even able to get off the ground with such a strong worry rested against its basic understanding of freedom? Fischer acknowledges the

worry, but is doubtful that it keeps the compatibilist grounded. There are a few ways to alleviate the CAF worry that Fischer entertains before settling his case. First of all, the compatibilist could offer what might be called the “refined” conditional analysis. The refined analysis is supposed to garner all the strengths of the simple conditional analysis, but states one rather important caveat, namely that freedom can only be attained if the agent is not subject to some sort of controversial factor, e.g. brainwashing, direct manipulation, etc., that would render her incapable of choosing and thus acting.¹⁴ This refined conditional analysis could be stated as follows: “An agent S can do X just in case (i) if S were to choose to do X, S would do X, and (ii) the agent is not subject to clandestine hypnosis, subliminal advertising, psychological compulsion resulting from past traumatic experiences, direct stimulation of the brain, neurological damage due to a fall or accident, and so forth...”¹⁵

Although this caveat would certainly salvage the compatibilist notion of freedom, since any controversial factor that might threaten the agent’s freedom could be written off, at what price does it come? How far does the “and so forth” extend and what exactly should count as something that could be reasonably dismissed? It would be rather *ad hoc* for the compatibilist to posit for her criterion of dismissal simply that it threatens the compatibilist understanding of freedom. The problem with this revision notwithstanding, it does highlight something of the relevant notion of freedom that the compatibilist holds; namely the distinction between what might be called an unnatural determination (e.g. the result of some form of manipulation) and

¹⁴ Ibid., 51.

¹⁵ Ibid.

natural determination (per causal determinism). The basic idea behind this caveat is that “not all causal sequences are “created equal.””¹⁶

The basic compatibilist intuition behind any version of the CAF is that a distinction needs to be made between forms of determinism. “The compatibilist wishes to insist that not all causally deterministic sequences undermine freedom; a straightforward and “upfront” commitment of the compatibilist is to the idea that we can distinguish among causally deterministic sequences, and, more specifically, that we can distinguish those that involve “compulsion” (or some freedom- and responsibility-undermining factor) from those that do not.”¹⁷ Thus, the final rendition of the CAF could be modified to: “(ii’) the agent is not subject to *any* factor that would uncontroversial (that is, without making any assumptions that are contentious within the context of an evaluation of the compatibility of causal determinism and freedom) render an agent unable to choose the act in question (and thus unable to act).”¹⁸

In summary, the CAF gives us a good look at how the compatibilist typically understands freedom. In addition, it offers a potential way around the Consequence Argument. It is not without its worries, however. The compatibilist’s case rests upon the intuition that “not all causal sequences are created equal.” They argue that there is an obvious distinction between somebody who is determined to do some act via brainwashing and a person whose normal causal history, within the framework of causal determinism, determines her to a particular action. Now, the libertarian might grant that, *prima facie*, a distinction might be made but that

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 52.

¹⁸ Ibid., 51.

upon further inspection a difference cannot be found. On this point, then, the libertarian and compatibilist will be at a stalemate. Fischer has argued that although libertarians have reason to doubt the CAF, their worries don't destroy its merits. Since these worries are ultimately pushed back to how each view respectively understands freedom, Fischer argues that the compatibilist has just as much right to move forward and offer a positive account of freedom on compatibilist grounds than does the libertarian on libertarian grounds. It is to Fischer's positive account that we now turn.

C. Guidance Control Semi-Compatibilism

Fischer begins his case by addressing the highly influential consequence argument discussed earlier. He notes that, although a few theories have been given about how its conclusion might be evaded, he is inclined to believe its soundness. He seeks, therefore, to argue for a form of compatibilism that holds that moral responsibility is compatible with causal determinism, even should that causal determinism destroy any hope of alternative possibilities and the freedom that accompanies such possibilities. This is semicompatibilism. “The doctrine of semicompatibilism is the claim that causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility, quite apart from whether causal determinism rules out the sort of freedom that involves access to alternative possibilities.”¹⁹

The first step in understanding this version of compatibilism is to make the distinction between what Fischer calls “regulative control” and “guidance control.” Regulative control is the power we typically believe an agent has of selecting from among different and genuinely viable options – for example, should I work out or watch Netflix this afternoon. If the agent had the legitimate ability to select either working out or watching Netflix then by choosing she would have exercised regulative control. Guidance control, on the other hand, though similar to regulative control, insofar as the decision made comes from the agent’s will, does not allow for genuinely available alternatives. The two are best understood, perhaps, by contrasting each other through an example. The one Fischer gives is that of driving a car.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., 56.

²⁰ Ibid., 56-57.

Suppose a man was driving a car and the car was functioning without any problems. The man drives to a stop sign and can turn to the left or to the right or proceed forward. Suppose then that the man were to choose to turn right and then does so. By choosing to turn right and subsequently turning right, the driver has exercised regulative control. Suppose now that another man was driving a different car. This car, however, unbeknownst to the driver, has a faulty steering apparatus, which renders the car only capable of turning right. The man with the faulty car arrives at a stop sign and after deliberating which direction to go decides to turn right and does so. This man has not exercised regulative control, argues Fischer, because he did not choose from among genuinely available options (the car could only have gone right), but he did exercise guidance control, since he did, in fact, willfully choose the action free from any form of coercion – it wasn't the result of a spasm, or mind control, etc.

With these two forms of control in place, Fischer argues that, although causal determinism would very likely eliminate regulative control, since all of our actions would be the result of a prior and determined sequence of events, it does not preclude guidance control; and this is all that is needed for freedom and moral responsibility. To support this thesis he draws insight from a particularly famous Frankfurt-style counterexample. The example is as follows. There is a man named Jones who enters a voting booth and decides at the last minute to vote for the Democratic candidate. What Jones is unaware of, however, is that a tiny microchip has been planted in his brain by a progressive scientist who wants to ensure that Jones votes for the Democratic candidate. The scientist, therefore, closely monitored Jones' brain activity and was to intervene should he appear to be considering a non-Democratic candidate. In Jones' case, though, the scientist did not have to intervene at all, since Jones, of his own accord,

selected the Democratic candidate. Given the Frankfurt-style counterexample, Fischer notes that “it seems that Jones freely chooses to vote for the Democrat and freely votes for the Democrat, although he could not have chosen or done otherwise: it seems that Jones exhibits guidance control of his vote, but he lacks regulative control over his choice and also his vote.”²¹

The main point of this example is to highlight an intuition about the nature of freedom that is as equally plausible as and counters our previous libertarian intuition that alternative possibilities are needed for freedom, which was shown by the garden of forking paths. After all, in this case, Jones really couldn’t have done otherwise, yet he was not coerced, by any means, to make the choice that he did. It would seem, therefore, that it was a free choice. Furthermore, since it was a free choice, it seems that Jones is responsible for it and any moral implications that it might have.

To make the case for moral responsibility clearer, since the moral implications of voting aren’t as immediately visible as in other cases, consider another Frankfurt-inspired example. A man seeks to assassinate the president and prepares to snipe the president while he is making a public address. Unbeknownst to the assassin, however, he has a small microchip planted in his brain, just like Jones. The microchip was planted there by a disgruntled scientist who lost his government-funded research grant and wishes to eliminate the president. Similar to Jones’ case, the scientist will only intervene if he sees the assassin backing out of his plans;²²

²¹ Ibid., 57.

²² Again, arguments have been made about whether or not by the time the scientist recognizes the agent backing out of his plans the agent has already made a choice, but for the sake of the argument we will assume the microchip will intervene before the agent has made any conscious choice. This assumption saves the example from claims that the agent really did

otherwise, he will let the course of events unfold naturally. The assassin proceeds with his assassination plans and kills the president. The scientist, therefore, did not have to activate the chip and manipulate the assassin. Just like Jones' vote, the assassin seemingly freely chose to kill the president and actually did so. The question, then, is whether or not the assassin is morally responsible; after all, he could not have done otherwise. Just as in the case of Jones, the assassination example is supposed to show how a person can freely do something yet not have access to alternative options. And, given that the persons acting are free, they should be morally responsible for their actions.

Examples such as these, argues the compatibilist (in this case, Fischer), are supposed to show that genuine access to alternative possibilities are not necessary for freedom and moral responsibility. Or, at the very least, that if freedom and moral responsibility are not granted in these cases then it is not because of the lack of access to alternative options.

I would note that the distinctive contribution of the Frankfurt-examples is to suggest that if Jones is not morally responsible for his choice and behavior, this is *not* because he lacks genuine access to (robust) alternative possibilities. After all, in the example Black's set-up is sufficient for Jones's choosing and acting as he actually does, but intuitively it is *irrelevant to Jones's* moral responsibility. That is, we can identify a factor – Black's elaborate set-up – that is (perhaps in conjunction with other features of the example) sufficient for Jones's actual kind of choice and behavior, but it plays no actual role in Jones's deliberations or actions; Black's set-up could have been subtracted from the situation and the actual sequence would have flowed in exactly the way it actually did. When something is in this way irrelevant to what happens in the actual sequence issuing in an agent's choice and behavior, it would seem to be irrelevant to his moral responsibility.²³

exercise freedom by freely choosing to cancel his plans and is subsequently controlled and not actually acting on his own.

²³ Ibid., 60.

In summary, Fischer is making the point that, under the auspice of causal determinism, which we are assuming for the sake of providing a compatibilist account of freedom that can evade the conclusion of the consequence argument, examples can be given that provide us with the intuition that an agent can be free and morally responsible even should she lack robust alternative possibilities. Jones and the assassin are both such cases. Furthermore, if people are to deny that Jones and the assassin are free or responsible, it is up to them to provide some explanation of why they are not and what exactly it is that is required for freedom and responsibility. For seemingly it couldn't be that Jones and the assassin lack regulative control or access to alternative responsibilities, and this is what we would expect the libertarian to argue, since the Frankfurt-style counterexamples show that the constraints upon Jones and the assassin are causally irrelevant. "So the distinctive element added by the Frankfurt-type examples, under the assumption of causal determinism, is this: if the relevant agent is not morally responsible, it is not because of his lack of regulative control. Alternatively, we could say that they show that it is not the lack of genuine access to alternative possibilities (regulative control) in itself (and apart from pointing to other factors) that rules out moral responsibility."²⁴

We now conclude Fischer's presentation of compatibilism. He has argued that his version of compatibilism, semi-compatibilism, is an account that can offer a theory of freedom and moral responsibility even if causal determinism holds. By making the distinction between regulative control and guidance control, he has ceded that causal determinism, as demonstrated by the consequence argument, eliminates regulative control, but that it does not eliminate guidance control. By capitalizing on Frankfurt-style counterexamples, he has argued

²⁴ Ibid.

that guidance control is enough for genuine freedom and moral responsibility. Should, however, others wish to argue against the Frankfurt examples and claim that they do not secure freedom and moral responsibility, Fisher has at least shown that the burden of proof has been shifted to them and that they must provide an alternative account of what constitutes freedom and its relationship to moral responsibility, since it cannot simply be access to alternative possibilities.

D. Evaluating the Debate

Having surveyed the libertarian and compatibilist views, I would like, at this point, to offer a diagnosis of the ongoing debate. In short, it seems as though the libertarians and compatibilists have arrived at a stalemate and the prospect of reconciling the two are bleak. The reason for such pessimism is twofold. First of all, both camps have a different understanding of freedom and can conjure compelling intuitions to support their respective understandings. Secondly, both camps are well aware of the arguments for the other side and can muster adequate counter-arguments, at least strong enough counter-arguments that allow them to maintain their view (albeit perhaps slightly revised). Does this mean, however, that progress cannot be made in the free will debate? I argue no, but that in order for any progress to be made, one must step outside of the libertarian-compatibilist framework of the debate and open up the possibility of another tradition. In the remaining sections of this paper I will first offer a brief analysis of the libertarian-compatibilist debate and highlight what I think are the strengths and weaknesses of each side. Following this, I will delineate Thomas Aquinas' understanding of free will. To conclude, I will put his view in dialogue with the libertarians and compatibilists, arguing that his view can capture the strengths of each previously highlighted, yet does not suffer their weaknesses.

To begin with the strengths of the libertarian view, it is worth noting the force of the consequence argument. As Fischer has noted, assuming causal determinism holds at the level of human actions, the consequence argument eliminates regulative control. So, should it be the case, contra Fischer, that regulative control is required for free will and moral responsibility,

then the consequence argument, although not proving libertarianism, would effectively demonstrate incompatibilism. Does Fischer's defense of semicompatibilism, however, evade the consequence argument? I argue that it does not.

We remember that there were certain counter-examples that severely threatened the Conditional Analysis of Freedom, and that it is the CAF that is supposed to allow the compatibilist to skirt the consequence argument. The revised CAF, was therefore introduced by appealing to the intuition that there are different types of causal sequences and that not all equally threaten freedom and moral responsibility; specifically that there is a difference between coercion and what might be called natural causal determination. The whole of Fischer's case, therefore, rests upon his claim that "not all causal sequences are "created equal.""²⁵ I argue that they are.

Prima facie, Fischer's claim that not all causal sequences are created equal seems spot on. Upon further reflection, however, it seems to me that the strength of this intuition fades if we assume causal determinism, as Fischer himself does. After all, there are typically two reasons we make a distinction between coercive and non-coercive cases. First of all, coercive cases do not allow for alternative outcomes. If somebody is forced to do something then that act will be done – whether or not the intention of the act is successful, e.g. a person is forced to shoot the president and the intention of the forcer is that the president be killed, but, perchance, the shot does not kill the president. It remains the case, nevertheless, that the victim was still forced to shoot the president. Secondly, and more importantly, in a coercive case, the act does not come primarily from the coerced agent; rather it comes from the

²⁵ Ibid., 51.

coercer.²⁶ The agent that is coerced is passive in the action, in the same way that an instrument is passive to the act of its user.

If causal determinism holds, however, then neither of these conditions can be met for any agent (in fact, I am hesitant to even call causally determined beings agents at all, for reasons I shall elaborate below). First of all, alternative outcomes are not possible because this would require regulative control. And secondly, the action of the “agent” would be the result of the culmination of external events that have aligned in such a way to produce said action. They would simply be the function of a process of events, over which the agent in question has no control. But, if the agent has no control over it, then how can it be the agent’s action? Fischer would obviously say that one could have guidance control without regulative control, but guidance control seems to be simply a psychological phenomenon, and one that *happens* to the agent, i.e. the agent is completely passive in her experience of the psychological phenomenon.

Take, for example, Fischer’s example of driving the faulty car. The appeal of this case is that the agent really couldn’t have gone the other way because of the faulty steering mechanism but that that is irrelevant because the agent freely chose to go right. But, the reason this case has its intuitive appeal is because we naturally think of the driver as a libertarianly free agent in the first place, who could have attempted to turn whichever way. Granted, if he chose any way other than right he would have been thwarted, but this is beside

²⁶ I’m thinking of coerced in a strong sense, where the agent that is coerced is actually controlled – what Aristotle would call violent motion, not simply coercion in the way that one might be blackmailed to do something. For in the blackmail case, although the ultimate act is highly influenced by external agents, it remains the action of the agent in question.

the point. If we take the same example, yet posit causal determinism, then the agent could not have chosen to turn any way but right – it was necessitated by prior states of affairs. So, again, but in a different light, the fact that the steering mechanism is faulty is irrelevant. It could have been functioning perfectly and the agent still would only have been able to go right, given the determined, prior psychological states of affairs. The fact that the driver wanted to turn right is irrelevant. It is only a psychological mode that was itself determined to occur, given prior states of affairs. So, any way you look at it, the driver’s desire to go right, left, or straight was determined to happen and his actual turning right was also determined to happen. Guidance control then is simply a psychological mode, not a metaphysical notion of control.

To see this point in another context, consider Pereboom’s “four-case argument” against compatibilism. In this argument, Pereboom presents four different scenarios that result in Plum murdering White and argues that Plum is not morally responsible in any of them. The weight of the argument is to challenge the compatibilist to show how Plum might be morally responsible in at least one of them but not all of them. Ultimately, Pereboom argues that the salient feature of each case, which precludes Plum’s moral responsibility, is that “he lacks the control required for moral responsibility due to his action resulting from a deterministic causal process that traces back to factors beyond his control.”²⁷ Given, therefore, that this feature holds in physical determinism, the control required for moral responsibility would be compromised. Let us turn then to examine each case.

²⁷ Ibid., 97.

Case 1: Plum is created by neuroscientists who manipulate him via radio technology to have certain desires, etc. These constant manipulations have resulted in Plum's rationally egoistic character. Plum's character then produces a first and second order desire to kill White, as a result of reasons-responsive deliberation. Ultimately Plum kills White.²⁸

In case one, Plum's actions satisfy the necessary compatibilist conditions, but he is intuitively not morally responsible. The reason for this intuition is that his actions were determined by the neuroscientists and their behavior was beyond Plum's control. The compatibilist conditions, therefore, would seem to be found wanting, as they are insufficient for moral responsibility.²⁹ The compatibilist might object that the reason moral responsibility is compromised is that Plum's behavior is the direct result of the neuroscientists; "he is locally manipulated."³⁰ To see why this objection doesn't hold, consider case two.

Case 2: Plum is a normal human being, except for the fact that he was programmed by a team of neuroscientists at the beginning of his life to respond to reasons in a certain manner. This programmed reason-response behavior has cultivated in Plum the character such that in his current situation he develops the first and second order desires to kill White, which he does.³¹

The situation is almost the same as the first, except that the manipulation of Plum was done at the beginning of his life. So, he was not "locally manipulated." Yet, our intuition remains that he is not morally responsible, given that his behavior is a result of the programming he received as a child, over which he had no control. Contra the objection to case one, Pereboom states,

²⁸ Ibid., 94-95.

²⁹ Ibid., 95.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 95-96.

“Whether the programming takes place two seconds or thirty years before the action seems irrelevant to the question of moral responsibility.”³² Consider now case three

Case 3: Plum is a normal human being and was never manipulated by scientists. He did, however, undergo rigorous training as a youth, which has left him with a certain character such that in his current situation he develops the first and second order desires to kill White, which he does. Furthermore, the training he underwent happened before he had the capacity to question it or filter the effects it had upon him.³³

So, this situation seems even less intrusive as the second and certainly less than the first, but for all practical purposes of examining free will and moral responsibility it is the same. After all, the reason that Plum kills White is due to the training he received as a child and he had no control over the effects this training has upon him. To summarize the thrust of the first three cases, Pereboom states:

If the compatibilist wants to claim that Plum is morally responsible in Case 3, he must point to a feature of these circumstances that would explain why he is morally responsible here but not in Case 2. However, it seems that there is no such feature. In each of these examples, Plum satisfies all of the prominent compatibilist conditions for morally responsible action, so a divergence in assessment of moral responsibility between these examples cannot be supported by a difference in whether these conditions are satisfied. Causal determination by factors beyond his control most plausibly explains his lack of moral responsibility in the second case, and we seem forced to conclude that Plum is not morally responsible in Case 3 for the same reason.³⁴

³² Ibid., 96.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Case 4: Plum is a normal human, brought up in normal circumstances. But, it turns out that physical determinism is true, and Plum, as a completely physical being, is just as bound by physical laws as everything and everyone else. As a result of deterministic laws, therefore, Plum has developed a certain character such that in his current situation he develops the first and second order desires to kill White, which he does.³⁵

If free will and moral responsibility are to be compatible with determinism then it is in this case, i.e. case four, that we should find it. The challenge for compatibilists, however, is to show what is unique about case four compared with one through three and how that allows for free will and moral responsibility. The only apparent difference, however, between case three and four is that the factors that determine Plum's crime do not come about from other agents. No explanation has been given, though, about how this should be considered relevant. Instead, the most plausible explanation for why Plum isn't culpable in case four is the same given in cases one through three, namely that he didn't have control because his behavior and actions were determined by forces outside of his control. The more general principle to be taken from this four-case example, and which complements the consequence argument is that, "if an action results from a deterministic causal process that traces back to factors beyond the agent's control, then he lacks the control required to be morally responsible for it."³⁶

It is arguments such as these that lead me to conclude that compatibilism is false and cannot secure a genuine account of free will or moral responsibility. Libertarianism, on the other hand, has problems of its own. The feature that grounds free will and moral

³⁵ Ibid., 97.

³⁶ Ibid.

responsibility for the libertarian is the ability to do otherwise, understood in in such a way that endorses the garden of forking paths (as opposed to the conditional analysis). Although this is intuitively appealing, the Frankfurt-style counterexamples that we have examined, weigh heavily against it. The strong appeal of the Frankfurt examples is that the factors that eliminate alternative possibilities – and hence, free will and moral responsibility for the libertarians – are causally irrelevant to the agent’s actual decision and action. So, how the ability to do otherwise in these examples is supposed to factor in to our evaluation of the agent’s action is mysterious to say the least. All things considered, then, the arguments against compatibilism lead me to conclude that incompatibilism is the case. I hesitate to agree, however, granted our Frankfurt-style counterexamples, that that which guarantees freedom and moral responsibility can be reduced to one’s ability to do otherwise. Thus, I am extremely dubious of libertarianism.³⁷

With these points in mind, I think an account of free will that could capture the strong appeals of certain aspects of both libertarianism and compatibilism might offer a promising alternative to the current theories available. That is, if an incompatibilist theory could be offered that roots freedom in the agent’s mode of volition, as the compatibilist would have it,

³⁷ Libertarianism comes in many flavors. I am not necessarily dubious of all of them but it would go beyond the scope of this paper to examine and evaluate multiple accounts. For all practical purposes, then, the libertarianism that I am skeptical of is the form that advocates some robust account of the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP). For example, Robert Kane advocates the importance of what he calls Ultimate Responsibility, UR, over the PAP. He states, “I think it [UR] is even more important to free will debates than AP, or alternative possibilities. The basic idea of UR is this: *To be ultimately responsible for an action, an agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient cause or motive for the action’s occurring.*” (Fischer *et al.*, 14). Concerning APs, he states, “This condition of Ultimate Responsibility, or UR, does not require that we could have done otherwise (AP) for *every* act done of our own free wills. But it does require that we could have done otherwise with respect to *some* acts in our past life histories by which we formed our present characters. I call these earlier acts by which we formed our present characters “self-forming actions,” or SFAs.” (Fischer *et al.*, 14).

rather than external factors that provide the ability to do otherwise, as the libertarian would have it, thus overcoming tricky Frankfurt-style counterexamples, then it would seem possible that many of the recurrent worries of the contemporary free will debate might be overcome.

III. Aquinas' Understanding of the Will

A. The Will as a Rational Appetite

I believe that an account as outlined at the end of the previous section is, in fact, possible, and that it is found in the view of Thomas Aquinas. It is to an exposition of his view that I now turn. Before beginning, however, I would like to make a few preliminary remarks concerning the nature of this project. The point of this section is not to argue independently for Thomas' metaphysics and thus conclude that his account of free will is the most reasonable. Instead, I will simply explicate his view and explain how it functions within his overall metaphysical structure. I will then put this view in dialogue with the views previously outlined, weighing its strengths relative to them. The goal of this is simply to offer an alternative way of approaching the free will debate. If I am right about the stalemate of the current debate and readers find Thomas' account appealing, then perhaps we might find the motivation to rethink some of our more basic commitments in the philosophy of nature and metaphysics. Such a rethinking of our basic commitments might open the doors to a reexamination, under the light of a different tradition, of not only the free will debate but other problems in contemporary philosophy as well.

For Aquinas, the root of freedom is found in the nature of the will, as opposed to the act of choice, what he calls *electio*, which he understands as simply one of the operations of the will. In order to expand Thomas' view more clearly, we will first tackle his understanding of the nature of the will, which he calls a rational appetite. Only with this in mind will we be able to examine the role that *electio* plays in the movement of the will. Following this, we shall examine two objections that might be brought against the notion of *electio*, namely the worry

of intellectual determinism and the worry of arbitrariness (these, in fact, are worries for any account of choice, however, not only Thomas'). Finally, we will conclude our section on Thomas' understanding of free will and move to put it in dialogue with the previously examined views of libertarianism and compatibilism.

The will, Thomas claims, is a rational appetite.³⁸ In order to understand what exactly this means, we do well to examine appetites in general. An appetite is a desiderative power of the soul that is triggered by something external and moves the agent to act. For Thomas, there are three distinct appetites, the natural appetite, the sensible appetite, and the rational appetite.³⁹ Each of these appetites, as passive powers, has a distinct object that comes to move them. This, in fact, namely the diversity of objects that move one to act, is one of the ways in which we come to recognize the distinction of powers.⁴⁰

The object of the will, says Thomas, is the good.⁴¹ What this means is that the will, as a *rational* appetite, is moved by something universal as opposed to something particular. The senses, for example, have perception of particulars – they feel, taste, smell, etc. this particular thing or that particular thing. Noses, for example, don't smell sweetness, they smell honey; and not even honey in general, but the particular bit of honey that is in front of them. The intellect, on the other hand, perceives the universal.⁴² So, after the nose smells this particular honey, the

³⁸ ST I-II.8.a1. For a thorough account of Aquinas' treatment of the will as rational appetite, see David Gallagher (1991).

³⁹ ST I-II.8.a1

⁴⁰ David Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, v. 29, 4 (1991): 561.

⁴¹ ST I-II.8.a1 (see especially ad 2).

⁴² ST I.86.a1

intellect perceives it as a smell of sweetness, which is a universal and abstract concept. It is in virtue of having this universal perception that the intellect is then able to make judgments. E.g., that honey, which smells sweet, might be similar to jelly, which also smells sweet. So, saying that the will is moved by the good is to say that it is moved by goodness itself.

A simple and obvious objection can be brought against this charge, i.e. that goodness itself (as a universal) does not exist but only good things (particulars). So, if appetites are powers that are moved into action by something, how might the will, as an appetite having a universal object, be moved into action at all, given that all action is concerned with particulars? By addressing this particular (not universal!) worry, Thomas actually sets the stage for a further development of his notion of the will. He states,

Even if the intellectual appetite is led toward things which are singulars outside the soul, it is nonetheless led toward them under some universal notion (*secundum aliquam rationem universalem*) – as when it desires something because it is good. Hence, in the *Rhetoric* the Philosopher says that there can be hatred with respect to a universal, as when “we hate every type of thief.” Similarly, through the intellectual appetite we can desire immaterial goods that the sensory power does not apprehend – e.g., knowledge, virtue, and other things of this sort.⁴³

So, although the rational appetite does move us towards *particular* externals, it does so under the formality of some *universal*. For example, one who is dieting might have a desire for healthy food, but healthy food is a universal and does not exist as such. Rather, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes, etc. exist. So, in virtue of the desire for healthy food, one is moved to eat a salad, which one recognizes under the formality of healthy food. Furthermore, any of the

⁴³ ST I, 80.2.ad 2. All direct quotes from *Summa Theologiae* come from the Freddoso translation. www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/TOC.htm.

particular formalities, under which particular externals might be willed, will be seen always under the more general formality of the good, given that the will is moved by goodness. Returning to our previous example, the salad is willed under the formality of healthy food, but healthy food itself is able to be desired because it is recognized under the formality of good. It is for this very reason that we are able to will particular actions that are intrinsically evil. Adultery, for example, is wrong by definition. As such, nobody can will it for its own sake. In other words, adultery *qua* adultery, as an intrinsically evil act, has no goodness and, therefore, cannot be desired. On the other hand, when considering adultery under some formality other than adultery, we can easily find some aspect of goodness. Adultery, as a sexual act, could be considered under the more general aspect of pleasure. Then, when considering pleasure itself, it is very easy to recognize it as a good, thus the pursuit of an adulterous act as good under the formality of pleasure. Ultimately, as we shall see later, it is this intrinsic ordering of the will, as an appetite, to the universal good that allows for its freedom.

Another way of understanding Thomas' conception of how the will operates is by comparing it with how the intellect operates. He states, "It is necessary that just as the intellect adheres by necessity to its first principles, so too the will adheres by necessity to its final end, which is beatitude. For as *Physics* 2 says, the end plays the role in matters of action (*in operativis*) that a [first] principle plays in speculative matters (*in speculativis*)." ⁴⁴ Now, Thomas is not saying that the intellect, because it adheres necessarily to first principles, has a completely determined operation. Nor, for that matter, is he saying that the operation of the will is completely determined, even though it adheres necessarily to its final end. He continues,

⁴⁴ ST I, 82.1. See also *De Malo* VI, ad 10.

Now some intelligible things do not have a necessary connection to the first principles, e.g., contingent propositions, the denial of which does not imply the denial of the first principles. Propositions like these are such that the intellect does not assent to them by necessity. On the other hand, there are some propositions which are necessary and which have a necessary connection with the first principles, e.g., demonstrable conclusions, the denial of which implies the denial of the first principles. These propositions are such that the intellect assents to them by necessity once it recognizes the necessary connection of the conclusions to the principles by way of a demonstrative deduction; however, it does not assent to them by necessity before it recognizes the necessity of the connection by way of the demonstration.⁴⁵

So, we see that, for the intellect, some things are necessary and some things are contingent. First principles are what ground demonstrative conclusions in speculative matters because of the necessary connection that the conclusion has to the principle. The reason that first principles are necessary for demonstrative knowledge is that it is impossible to have an infinite regress in the justification of our conclusion. For example, suppose we know Z because of Y and we know Y because of X. Now, if we only know X because of W and this goes on infinitely then we would never be able to say that we know (demonstratively) any of the propositions (Z, Y, X, W, etc.) because we are always justifying each proposition by something previous. If, however, we arrive at some first indubitable principle, we have a foundation for subsequent knowledge. So, as long as there is a necessary connection between the first principle, P, and a subsequent proposition Q, then we could have demonstrative knowledge of Q, assuming, of course, that we see the necessary connection. This could continue as long as there is a necessary connection between each subsequent proposition and that connection is known. We remember, however, that many propositions do not have a necessary connection

⁴⁵ ST I, 82.2.

with a first principle and hence cannot be demonstratively known. These are contingent propositions. So, given that contingent propositions cannot be demonstratively proven through deduction, the intellect does not assent to them by necessity.

The will, argues Thomas, functions surprisingly similarly.⁴⁶ Just as first principles ground the speculative demonstrations of the intellect and begin its very operation, so the final end, i.e. beatitude,⁴⁷ is the foundation of the movement of the will, without which the will's operation would not even begin.⁴⁸ For example, suppose that I will Z and I will this as a means to Y, which itself is a means to X, and so on. If everything I will is simply a means to an end, but there is no final end, then I will never begin to act because I haven't sufficient motivation to even begin my intermediate willings.

It could be objected that we don't, in fact, need first principles or a final end to begin our speculation or willings. Now, although other epistemological and metaphysical accounts certainly propose theories as to how this might work, this is not the case for Thomas. To get a better idea of why he does not think that either of these operations can proceed to infinity, we should consider the difference between the motion of dominoes and that of a train. When you have a series of dominoes that are falling over, it is enough to appeal to the previous domino to explain the fall of any particular domino and this works *ad infinitum*. Trains, however, don't

⁴⁶ *De Malo* VI, ad 10.

⁴⁷ We see here Aquinas' adherence to the Aristotelian understanding of action, which is rooted in our natural desire for *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* is often translated into English simply as happiness, but more properly would be rendered human flourishing. Aquinas captures this with the term *beatitude*, which we do well to understand as capturing the idea of human flourishing.

⁴⁸ ST I.82.a1.

function this way. If you have a series of moving train cars, it is not enough to explain the motion of a particular train car by appealing to the causal efficacy of the previous train car. The reason this is not sufficient is that the previous train car is only acting efficaciously upon the subsequent train car insofar as it is also being acted upon concurrently by a previous train car. Its causal efficacy is not its own. Each previous train car is what Thomas would call an *intermediary* mover as opposed to a *primary* mover. So, you can only explain the motion of one by appealing to each and every previous one (not like with the dominoes). But, if this goes on infinitely then there will be no way to explain the motion of any of them. So, there must be a *primary* mover to get the subsequent movers moving and sustain their motion. Each train, in other words, needs an engine car, and without the engine car pushing the rail cars, the rail cars cannot function as the intermediary movers that push the subsequent cars. Needless to say, then, Thomas thinks that the intellect and will function more like trains than dominoes. The first principles function as the engine car, so to speak, in demonstrative conclusions, while the final end does so in acts of willing.

Tying this all together, Thomas argues that the will, although intrinsically ordered towards the final end, is not determined in its action because its particular willings do not have a connection, as necessary means, to the final end and thus are contingent. And, as we saw earlier, even those actions that are necessarily opposed to the final end, i.e. evil actions, are still able to be willed because of the will's universal formality, which allows it to consider those actions under a formality that is not opposed to the final end. Furthermore, considering the distinction between what I have called "domino" motion and "train" motion, we begin to see

that it is the final end that allows the operation of the will to begin (and sustain) in the first place and without which, willing, argues Thomas, would be impossible.

B. The Act of *Electio*

Having given an overview of Thomas' metaphysics on the nature of the will, we turn our attention now to the role of choice (*electio*) in the will. We have already seen that for Thomas the will can only will things insofar as they appear to it as a good. The intellect, however, is that which presents things to the will as good. Thus, on Thomas' account, the intellect and will have an inseparable relationship. This relationship is most intricately connected with regards to the act of *electio*. *Electio* is the act of the will that chooses a certain course of action, which it recognizes as good, as the means to some particular end.⁴⁹ As we saw previously, the salad was chosen as a means to healthy eating.

So, in the multi-step process of willing, the agent has a natural desire for the good, which motivates her action from the get go. Granted this desire, the agent forms some more concrete end; say to get a job in a lucrative profession. This goal then initiates a process of deliberation to discern how effectively to achieve the goal. The agent ultimately decides that she ought to go to college to get a degree and that it would be good for her to study economics and business so that she might have diverse options in the business world upon graduation. In this brief example, there are many choices (acts of *electio*) that are made. First of all, the agent chooses that a lucrative profession would be a good thing to have. Thus, in this particular choice, she views money making under the form of the good because money is extremely useful in helping us attain other things that we desire (travel, possessions, security). Having

⁴⁹ ST I-II.13, a1. This is not to say, however, that we do not choose (*electio*) certain ends as well. It is, in fact, these chosen ends that allow us to choose certain means to those chosen ends (see ST I-II.13.3 ad 2). This point will become clear in the following paragraph.

chosen this as a concrete end, she begins to weigh different options of how she might attain that end. So, before choosing college as her decided means, she perhaps entertains the thought of a professional acting career or of going to Vegas with her savings in hopes of winning big, and perhaps she briefly entertains the thought of joining a team of conmen and pulling off the perfect heist. Although she recognizes some good in each of these, e.g. more payoff for less work combined with more immediate gratification, she ultimately decides against them because the risk of not actually getting the payoff in each is much too high for her liking. Finally, she must decide what she ought to study. With her goal of making money, she could choose a number of different majors that would lend themselves to her cause. She decides upon economics and business, however, after having a drawn out conversation with her advisor, who highlights the benefits of having a diversifiable set of knowledge and skills.

Now, this process of deliberation and choosing seems to be the way things actually go and I doubt many people will disagree with the overall analysis. The question remains, however, of what's going on in the background and whether or not the agent freely chose the actions that she did. In other words, were her acts of *electio* determined in some way? For Thomas, at least, we have to say no. We recall from earlier that if an action does not have a necessary connection with the final end or if it can be viewed in some way as non-good then it need not be chosen. So, given that the choices the agent has made can all be viewed as non-good, e.g., that they don't get her money now, and also because none of them are necessary means to the final end, she could have "elected" to choose otherwise.

To summarize, *electio*, on Thomas' account, is the specific act of the will that chooses one particular course of action as the means to some proposed end. It is the intellect that proposes both the end and the means, however, to the will. Thus, the intellect and will share an inseparable relationship in Thomas' account of action. It is this relationship that grounds Thomas' claim that the will is a rational appetite, which is why, for Thomas, free will cannot be reduced to the act of *electio*. It is the rational appetite's natural inclination toward the good that provides motivation for acts of *electio* in the first place. Finally, Thomas thinks that agent's choices, or acts of *electio*, are not determined because *electio* selects one mean from among many and every particular mean is able to be viewed as a non-good, at least in some respect, which is a sufficient reason, Thomas thinks, to provide grounds for not choosing it.

C. Intellectual Determinism and Voluntaristic Worries

We turn now to address two related worries for Thomas' account of *electio*, i.e. that it ultimately ends either in a form of determinism that we might call psychological or intellectual determinism, or in some brand of voluntarism. The worry of intellectual determinism, in short, is that our intellect ultimately comes to one course of action and then subsequently offers that one action to our will as the course of action to follow. This would seem to have intuitive force against Thomas' theory, especially given the prominent role of the intellect on his account. After all, if it is the intellect that proposes courses of action to the will then we know, at the most basic level, that the will's ability to choose is only as good as the intellect's ability to propose. And if the intellect only proposes one action, in what sense does the will choose? The image that comes to mind is the horse following the elusive carrot of the carriage driver. It seems that the horse can go wherever he wants, but he only will follow the carrot. As the driver is the one that moves the carrot, it is the driver, and not the horse, that is actually deciding where the horse will go. Even if it is objected that the will need not consent to the best course of action as proposed by the intellect, and that it could instead do something else, the response is simply that if the will does not consent then it is because something else was instead proposed to the will, by the intellect, as the best course of action at the particular time of willing. It is the Socratic worry all over again. Why would we ever do what we know is not best?

This is a strong worry. But we remember that no finite good is sufficient to determine the will. This is because the will is a rational appetite, whose object is the good, which is a

universal. Thus, only something that is good in every respect could necessarily move the will. So, when considering some finite good, it is enough to consider it under the formality of something in which it is not a good to nullify the desire to pursue it. For example, if you wish to avoid studying, do not consider how it will benefit you on the exam, but instead how it detracts you from hanging out with your friends. The worry is really flushed out, however, when we consider how we choose to consider things under different formalities. Given that every act of the will is preceded by some intellection, it would seem that the only reason we can choose to will something under some other formality is that the intellect proposes it as good to view something under another formality. We return, thus, to a process of deliberation where we ultimately recognize one good as the best and subsequently consent to that action. But again, this does not help us get choice.

It seems then that due to the will's dependency on the intellect that it will never be able to escape the worry of intellectual determinism. The only viable option for choice, therefore, would seem to be to reject the will's dependency on the intellect. That is, we must affirm the freedom of the will by claiming that it can reject the option placed before it as a result of the intellect's deliberation. But this is clearly not Thomas' position. How might he find the middle road, as it were, then? Elucidating the same worry, noted Thomist, Garrigou-Lagrange, uses Leibniz and Scotus, as representatives for the extreme positions of intellectual determinism and voluntarism, to highlight the tension in the free will debate. He states,

Is this middle course possible? Is it possible to affirm against Scotus the principle of Intellectualism which is the subordination of the will to the intellect, without going so far as to admit Leibnizian Determinism? If the will by its definition is subordinate, must we not say that all its acts are determined by the intellect?

The possibility of an intermediate position is denied by the advocates of both extreme views in virtue of the same principle, that Determinism is the inevitable consequence of intellectualism.⁵⁰

How might we make sense of Thomas' "middle position"? Is it even possible? Clearly Thomas does not follow Scotus' voluntarism. It is foundational to his account that the will is a rational appetite, i.e. that it flows out of the intellect. But he does not think his position collapses into a Leibnizian intellectual determinism because he vehemently affirms the undetermined nature of human actions. The answer to understanding Thomas' middle position lies in the insufficiency of any particular, finite good to move the will.

As we have noted, the only thing that can sufficiently move the will, i.e. necessitate its pursuit, is something that is good in every aspect, i.e. a universal good. In this life, however, no particular good can satisfy this criterion. Every good is a finite good. Even after our deliberation, therefore, we still know the "best" course of action as non-good, in a certain respect, and thus it is not sufficient to move our will.⁵¹ The question, then, is what exactly happens such that we do pursue a particular course of action? Thomas' answer to this is quite simple: we choose.⁵²

Consider Thomas' account of deliberation. Following Aristotle, he claims that we act as a result of a practical syllogism, i.e. we proceed from a universal premise in which we recognize some goodness to a particular premise in which we recognize some particular thing as good,

⁵⁰ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance, *God, His existence and His nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies, Volume II*, 5th ed, trans. Dom Bede Rose (St. Louis: B. Herder Book, 1955), 310.

⁵¹ ST I-II.13.6

⁵² ST I-II.13.1 (see also article 6).

which ultimately allows us to choose it. Furthermore, in the process of deliberation there might arise several syllogisms each of which might become rather complex. Anybody who has had to make a serious choice recognizes this. We begin weighing the pros and cons of each action and for every good thing we find in some particular option we typically can find some bad thing about it as well. For example, this job pays much more, but it requires more hours and travel. On the other hand, this job pays less, but I could spend more time with my family. Let's view this in a slightly simplified schema in order to see how the process of deliberation is broken down on a practical syllogism account.

Family-oriented Job

- 1) It is good to spend time with my family
- 2) It is good to be able to afford many things
- 3) This job provides me much time with my family
- 4) Therefore, this job is good
- 5) This jobs does not pay well, such that I cannot afford many things
- 6) Therefore, this job is not good
- 7) Therefore, this job is good and not good

Lucrative Job

- 1) It is good to be able to afford many things
- 2) It is good to spend time with my family
- 3) This job pays well, such that I can afford many things
- 4) Therefore, this job is good
- 5) This jobs does not provide me much time with my family
- 6) Therefore, this job is not good
- 7) Therefore, this job is good and not good

In this process of deliberation, neither job option is sufficient to move the will because both are recognized as goods and non-goods. Furthermore, both jobs are still being evaluated at a universal and speculative level, i.e. the syllogism is not yet concerned with action, instead the jobs are still being considered under the formality of the good. This is the speculative-

practical syllogism, which is simply evaluative. Ultimately, the agent must ask herself what she is to do here and now. Typically, this question is referred to as the “fitting” question, i.e. what is fitting for me to do, in these particular circumstances (here and now)? This is the practico-practical judgment. It is important to note, though, that no matter how unequal the two goods might be, the will will always retain a certain indifference between the goods because of the non-good that each has.⁵³ “However unequal the two parts may be, the practico-practical judgment which is concerned with the exercise of the act, inasmuch as it depends entirely on the intellect, remains in a sense indifferent.”⁵⁴

So, at this point, there is a certain indifference of the will with respect to the goods placed before it. It recognizes them both as good and not good at the evaluative level but we are left still with the practical question of what I do here and now? Which action is fitting? Such is the case in every process of deliberation, however, because every good about which we’ve deliberated is a finite good. In order to settle on one particular course of action, then, the will must intervene. In its intervention it moves the intellect to specifying its object, i.e. it wills the intellect to focus only on an object’s good, and thus determines its own action. Again, Garrigou-Lagrange states,

An intervention of the will is necessary for overcoming this indifference of judgment, and this intervention could not be itself infallibly determined by the intellect, since the only purpose of the intervention is precisely to determine the intellect. That is why a man, placed twice in the same circumstances, can one

⁵³ I use the word “indifference” to remain consistent with its use in Garrigou-Lagrange, but in this context it simply means undetermined. It is not indifference, necessarily, in the sense that there is not more reason to do one or the other (as a result of deliberation or simply non-rational desire, e.g. the passions).

⁵⁴ Garrigou-Lagrange, *God*, 322.

time act and the other time not act. Liberty is deduced from the relation which our will bears to the universal, i.e., to reason.⁵⁵

Having made this point, there is one final objection that we must raise. It might be said that the decision to choose one option as opposed to the other is arbitrary, especially since Thomas thinks that we can choose something that, all things considered, is a much lesser good because we can view it, in a certain aspect, as non-good. So, even though his solution preserves him from intellectual determinism, it has come at the cost of reducing human choice to arbitrariness, claims the objector. It is not clear, however, that Thomas' account of choice does reduce it to arbitrariness. First of all, we must specify exactly what criterion we are using to define arbitrary. For the person that is hoping to uphold a Burden's Ass, hyper-rationalist, Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason, then perhaps one could accuse Thomas' account of choice as arbitrary. On the other hand, this high of a standard for what constitutes arbitrariness leads to intellectual determinism, which, we have argued, ultimately eliminates choice by turning all acts of assent into acts of consent. So, such a standard should be rejected. But Thomas' account is not arbitrary in the sense of random or acting independent of reason, such that we get Scotus' voluntarism. As we have just shown, Thomas argues that the will cannot act independently of the intellect. The will is a rational appetite. The reason Thomas gives that the chosen action is not arbitrary is that it is pursued because it is recognized as good, which is what attracts the will and, therefore, is sufficient to make it an object of choice.

To see in another way how Thomas walks the middle road between intellectual determinism and voluntarism, recall the comparison that he makes between the intellect and

⁵⁵ Ibid., 307.

the will. In matters of deduction, the intellect proceeds from first principles and deduces necessary conclusions, such that if the intellect sees the connection between the first principles and subsequent conclusion, it cannot but adhere to the truth of it.⁵⁶ The will, similarly, necessarily follows the final good (in this life, beatitude); it is the first principle, so to speak.⁵⁷ Now, if some necessary connection is found between a particular course of action and beatitude, then that particular action, necessarily, will be done. We have already spoken, though, about how this shouldn't worry us into thinking that Thomas is a determinist because the only good that could necessitate the action of the will is the universal good, which he claims is God, and only if the universal good is recognized wholly as the will's end, which Thomas claims only happens in the beatific vision.⁵⁸ So, just as the intellect cannot have demonstrative knowledge of contingent truths, the will cannot be necessitated towards finite goods, which makes the choice of them contingent, as opposed to necessary, actions. Asking for a reason other than choice as to why we select x as opposed to y would be to seek demonstrative knowledge, but demonstrative knowledge cannot be had of contingent propositions. On the other hand, we can give a sufficient reason as to why we selected x – namely that x is good. The only answer that can be given as to why we selected x *as opposed to* y, however, is choice. To deny this is to assume the determinist position.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ ST I.82.1 – 120.

⁵⁷ ST I.82.1 – 120.

⁵⁸ At this point, we can at least say that Thomas is not a determinist with respect to human actions outside of heaven. He does not think, however, that actions in heaven are determined either, but a treatment of how this is so would go beyond the present scope of this paper.

⁵⁹ The idea that a sufficient but not determining reason or reasons can be given to adequately make sense of choice is developed and defended in the contemporary literature by Timothy

We began this section by showing what Thomas understands the will to be, i.e. a rational appetite. As a rational appetite, the will has an inseparable connection with the intellect. This connection is most clearly understood when we consider how the intellect understands universals and presents particulars to the will under these universal formalities. The will, although necessitated towards the good, is free with respect to its choice because all finite goods are compounds of good and non-good, and are thus insufficient to move it. Given that no finite good is sufficient to move the will, the will intervenes to determine the intellect to a particular good, which enables the will to subsequently pursue it. This is the act of *electio*. Finally, we have considered objections that claim that Thomas account of the will ultimately leads to a form of intellectual determinism and that the only way to escape such a fate is by advocating a voluntaristic view of the will. We have argued against the determinist claim by restating that no finite good is sufficient to determine the will and thus an intervention of the will is necessary in order to produce action. We have argued against the voluntarist position by clarifying the standard for what counts as arbitrary. Given that every act of the will follows the

O'Connor. In his work Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will, he give four general conditions that, he claims, are "enough to explain an action in terms of antecedent desire." He states, "The agent acted then in order to satisfy his antecedent desire that Θ if 1. prior to this action, the agent had a desire that Θ and believed that by so action he would satisfy (or contribute to satisfying) that desire; 2. the agent's action was initiated (in part) by his own self-determining causal activity, the event component of which is the-coming-to-be-of-an-action-triggering-intention-to-so-act-here-and-now-to-satisfy- Θ ; 3. concurrent with this action, he continued to desire that Θ and intended of this action that it satisfy (or contribute to satisfying) that desire; and 4. the concurrent intention was a direct causal consequence (intuitively, a continuation) of the action-triggering intention brought about by the agent, and it causally sustained the completion of the action." (Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will*, (New York: Oxford, 2000), 86). Such a view, O'Connor claims, "allows the reason to influence the agent's *producing* the outcome, while not (directly and independently) causing it." (O'Connor, *Persons*, 88-89).

intellect because the intellect is that which proposes things to the will as good, and that the good is what moves the will, in every act the will is seeking that which it has reason to.

IV. Aquinas in Dialogue with Contemporary Theories of Free Will

Before we began our section on Thomas' view of the will, we presented arguments both for libertarianism and compatibilism. I turn now to put Thomas' position in dialogue with those views. We recall that the consequence argument provides a strong case for the incompatibilism of free will and determinism (as well as moral responsibility). The reason it has such strong intuitive appeal is because it shows that if determinism holds then every single action of ours can be completely explained by forces outside our control, and if this is the case then in what sense are these actions ours? Capitalizing on this argument, libertarians seek to preserve free will and moral responsibility by grounding freedom simply in the ability to do otherwise, understood in such a way as to affirm some form of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities. Yet with certain Frankfurt-style counterexamples, compatibilism is able to garner some intuitive appeal against the libertarian view. After all, why should causally irrelevant circumstances affect how we evaluate one's freedom?

We were left with the question, then, of how exactly one should view free will if these are our only options. It seems as if we simply have to choose either to side with our common sense intuitions about moral responsibility and, therefore, side with libertarianism, despite the inability to explain, from a metaphysical point of view, why exactly the ability to do otherwise grounds freedom, or to reject our common sense intuitions about moral responsibility in order to side with more basic metaphysical intuitions regarding the necessity of evaluating only causally relevant factors when assessing one's volitions and, therefore, side with compatibilism. Finding the previous disjunction unsatisfactory, I propose Thomas' view as a third option. In his

view, I argue that we find an incompatibilist position that can avoid the seemingly arbitrary-ability-to-do-otherwise worry of the libertarians. Such a position is able to capitalize on both the consequence argument and Frankfurt-style counterexamples.

First let us show how Thomas' view, unlike the libertarians, isn't troubled by the Frankfurt-style counterexamples. We remember that the libertarian position places freedom in one's ability to do otherwise. The Frankfurt-style counterexamples, however, inhibit this ability to do otherwise by placing external impediments upon the agent, such that she cannot do otherwise. For Thomas, however, freedom of the will is not rooted in one's ability to do otherwise. Instead, it is rooted in the will's nature as a rational appetite, which has a natural inclination towards the good. So, as long as the will is pursuing something that it recognizes as good, proposed by the agent's intellect, then it retains its freedom. So, in the case of Jones voting, he recognized voting for the Democratic candidate as good and then pursued it. The fact that a progressive scientist would not have allowed him to do otherwise is irrelevant because Jones chose this action freely and of his own accord.

Suppose the scientist had had to activate his switch, however, in order to ensure Jones' vote for the Democratic candidate. For Thomas, this would no longer be considered a free act of the will. The reason for this is because the intellect and will are inseparable. Now, presumably the only way the scientist's switch would work is if it somehow affected the intellect or the will. If it overcomes the will then this is simply an act of coercion, in the same way that somebody being forcibly thrown off a bridge is coerced. So, Jones might internally recognize that he is voting for the candidate that he doesn't wish to vote for but is powerless to

stop himself from casting his ballot as such. In this case, though, the action is clearly not freely willed. On the other hand, if the switch overcomes Jones' intellect and determines it to some form of the good, under which the Democratic candidate is considered, then we run into the same problem. Since the will flows out of the intellect and the intellect was not free in this case (it was coerced), the subsequent willing is also considered coerced. Remember that for Thomas, the will is what must determine the intellect to a particular good, but in this case, it was the scientist that actually determined the intellect, so Jones was not actually willing at all. Instead, he was merely a puppet for the scientist. It would be the same if the scientist had created a Jones android and controlled it by remote.⁶⁰

There would be one way, however, for the scientist to highly influence Jones to vote for the Democratic candidate without taking away his capacity to will. The scientist could impart all sorts of beliefs into Jones' mind as to why the Democratic candidate is a good candidate. In this case, when Jones begins his deliberation about which candidate to vote for, the odds are

⁶⁰Eleonore Stump argues similarly for the inability of standard Frankfurt-style counterexamples and subsequent analogues to threaten Thomas' view of free will, while at the same time applauds their strength against libertarian views that advocate a robust form of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities. She states, "In the standard Frankfurt-style counterexamples, the absence of alternative possibilities doesn't preclude an agent's acting on his own unimpeded intellect and will in the actual sequence of events. In the analogue counterexamples, the presence of an alternative possibility doesn't stem from any ability that the agent's own intellect and will have in the actual sequence. What the standard and analogue counterexamples together show, I think, is the correctness of Aquinas's position. In order to determine whether or not an agent is free, it is important to determine whether the intellect and will on which he acts are his own, not whether alternative possibilities are present or absent for him. For Aquinas, human freedom depends on human cognitive capacities and on the connection of the will to those capacities. Consequently, as long as human acts of will originate in those faculties, those acts count as voluntary and free, even if the agent couldn't have done otherwise in the circumstances or the act of will is necessitated by natural inclinations of intellect and will." (Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas' Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will", *The Monist*, vol. 80, no.4, pp. 576-597). See pages 592-594.

stacked highly in favor of the Democratic candidate. Ultimately, though, it will be Jones who determines his intellect, and thus his action, to some candidate by considering him or her under some determined aspect of the good.

So, by grounding freedom in the nature of the will, as opposed to the ability to do otherwise, Thomas' position is not threatened by the Frankfurt-style counterexamples. I would like, at this point, to offer one final argument against rooting freedom in the ability to do otherwise, as the libertarian would have it. The argument is drawn from the philosophy of religion and invokes certain intuitions we have regarding the nature of freedom in a traditional view of the blessed afterlife. It is typically thought that once you make it to Heaven there is no going back. That is, it would be impossible for one to choose to leave Heaven. Typically, this is thought to be the case because the Heavenly dwelling place is our true *patria* – it is that for which we were made. This is echoed in Augustine's famous statement, "Thou has made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."⁶¹ So, when asked why one cannot leave Heaven, one need simply respond, why would you? There seems to be no reason at all as to why one would leave Heaven. To do so, therefore, would be wholly irrational. But, if libertarian free will is to be preserved then there must be the ability to do otherwise and therefore, to use possible world speak, there must be some possible world in which somebody does leave Heaven.

⁶¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F.J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 2. In fact, the theme of resting in God and this life being a pursuit of some final goal, i.e., beatitude, abounds in Augustine. For example, in *City of God* XIX.17 he claims that we are sojourners on this earth journeying to the promised land of heaven.

This situation, however, seem to be false. The reason for this is because the agent has no reason whatsoever to do what she does. It seems to be not only an irrational decision but an arational decision; but humans, as rational beings, cannot make arational decisions.⁶² Now, one need not believe in some Heavenly afterlife to affirm the merit of these types of thought experiments. It would be enough to ask the question, can some agent, Sally, do some action, x, if she has no reason whatsoever to do x and instead has every reason to do some other action, y? The libertarian must say yes, but to do so implies that it is a voluntaristic view of freedom, which, as we saw earlier, when examining Leibniz and Scotus' positions, reduces it to an arbitrary view of freedom. It seems overwhelmingly obvious that we, as humans, act for reasons. Even if those reasons were the worst imaginable, they are reasons nonetheless. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that a view of freedom that doesn't take this into account is not a good view of freedom. As such, we should reject libertarianism *simpliciter*, as a plausible view of free will.

Similar to the Frankfurt-style counterexamples, these thought experiments are not worries for Thomas' position, who claims that the reason we have free will at all is because it flows out of reason. The will is a rational appetite that only pursues things because it recognizes them as good, thanks to the intellect. If the intellect cannot, therefore, find some particular reason to pursue something, then it would be impossible for the will to pursue it. Regarding the will's ability to do otherwise, we remember that it always retains the ability to do otherwise if the objects presented to it are finite goods because every finite good is able to be

⁶² Except perhaps when in a state in which their reason is not functioning, e.g. drunkenness, madness, etc. I am skeptical, however, to what extent we even can call the actions done under these influences decisions.

viewed as non-good, at least in some respect. But, as the object of the will simply is the good, i.e., goodness, if it is presented with a good that cannot be understood to be non-good in any way, then the will will, of necessity, pursue it. So, returning to the previous philosophy of religion examples, if someone were to stand before God in Heaven and recognize Him as such, then there would be no way for her to choose to leave Heaven because the object of the will has been found. The will was not made to do otherwise; it was made for the universal good. Once it has the universal good, therefore, to choose contrary to it would be to go against its nature.

V. Conclusion

I have shown what I think to be good reasons for rejecting both libertarianism and compatibilism. Compatibilism fails because it reduces free will to a mere mode; a sort of identification with the actual volitions that occur. Although there is something to be said about identifying with one's own volitions, the only reason that we do, in fact, identify with those volitions, for the compatibilist, is because we were, in fact, determined to identify with those volitions. So, free will is reduced to an unraveling of events and we just happen to have some predetermined epiphenomenal first-person seat to the show. Libertarianism, on the other hand, by rooting freedom in the ability to do otherwise, ultimately reduces freedom to a reason-independent voluntarism. Willings thus become arbitrary on this view.

I have argued that Thomas' position offers a nice middle road between the two divergent views of libertarianism, and compatibilism.⁶³ By rooting freedom in the nature of the will, as a rational appetite, we can assume the strengths of the compatibilist position, which argues that free will must have something to do with the agent and her mode of volition, as opposed to irrelevant external factors. We do not, however, have to take on the drawback of that compatibilist position, which reduces freedom to a mere mode. This is where Thomas' position captures the strength of the libertarian view, which allows for choice. So, given that

⁶³ Trying to argue against libertarianism or compatibilism, as a whole, is difficult because how exactly each is defined depends on who you ask. Thus, when I say that Thomas walks a middle ground between the two positions, I understand the respective views as follows. Libertarianism is defined as a view that posits freedom in the ability to do otherwise, as understood by a robust form of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities. Compatibilism is defined as a view that posits freedom in the agent's uncoerced volitions, understanding causal determinism not to be a coercive influencer. This view typically appeals to the ability to do otherwise, but not understood as implying some form of the PAP, rather understood as a conditional analysis.

the will is ordered towards the good, as such, it will always retain its ability to do otherwise, as long as the goods presented to it are finite (which shouldn't be a worry in this life) because it can always view them under some formality of non-good. The good news is that the ability to do otherwise is a consequence of the nature of the will and not what grounds freedom. Since this is the case, Thomas' position can escape the Frankfurt-style counterexamples, as well as the philosophy of religion examples that we examined. To conclude, Thomas' position on free will is able to walk right down the middle of the dichotomy presented in the contemporary free will debate, garnering the intuitive appeals of both the libertarian and compatibilist positions, without taking on their respective worries.

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