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Meaning in Life Without Free Will¹

Derk Pereboom

1. In a recent article Gary Watson instructively distinguishes two faces or senses of responsibility. The first is the self-disclosing sense, which concerns the aretaic or excellence-relevant evaluations of agents. An agent is responsible for an action in this respect when it is inescapably the agent's own; if, as a declaration of her adopted ends, it expresses what the agent is about, her identity as an agent; it expresses what the agent is ready to stand up for, to defend, to affirm, to answer for (1996: 233-4). The second face of responsibility has had a more prominent role in debates about free will – it concerns control and accountability. Watson argues that when one is skeptical about this second face, one need not also be skeptical about responsibility as self-disclosure. I agree, and in my view, this helps us see why maintaining that determinism precludes responsibility as control and accountability need not also commit one to the view that determinism rules out responsibility in a way that threatens meaning in life. Part of the reason for this is that when responsibility as control and accountability is undermined, less of what we deem valuable needs to be relinquished than often believed. But in addition, it turns out that the kind of responsibility ruled out by determinism is not nearly as important to what is most valuable in human life as responsibility as self-disclosure. Indeed, it may be that an unfortunate fusing of these two notions underlies the concern that if determinism precludes responsibility as control and accountability, it also undermines what most fundamentally makes our lives meaningful.

There is one notion of responsibility as control and accountability that, in the incompatibilist tradition, is acutely threatened by general causal features that might characterize reality, such as determinism, and indeed, certain varieties of indeterminism. In my view, this is what most of the tradition in this debate has indeed called *moral responsibility*, and I will retain this terminology. By my characterization, for an agent to be morally responsible for an action is for it to belong to the agent in such a way that she would deserve blame if the action were morally wrong, and she would deserve credit or perhaps praise if it were morally exemplary. The desert at issue here is basic in the sense that the agent, to be morally responsible, would deserve the blame or credit just because she has performed the action, and not, for example, by virtue of consequentialist considerations. This characterization allows that an agent could be morally responsible for an action even if she did not deserve blame, credit, or praise for it — for example, if the action were morally indifferent.

In my view, when one judges a person morally responsible it need not be that one have a reactive attitude of some type directed towards him. Rather, to make a judgment of this sort is most fundamentally to make a factual claim about the kind of control the agent has. To defend this position adequately would involve turning back a non-cognitivist position on judgments about moral responsibility, a task I will not undertake. But here are two considerations in favor of my

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view. First, judging a person morally responsible for actions that are morally indifferent, or actions not morally indifferent but generally expected, such as feeding one's children adequately, need not be associated with any reactive attitude. Second, it seems possible to imagine rational but emotionless beings who yet have a concern for moral right and wrong, and who believe that agents are morally responsible. Such beings might judge immoral agents to be morally responsible without having any reactive attitudes, like indignation or moral resentment, directed toward them

Furthermore, I think that the notion of moral responsibility applies primarily to decisions. The view that moral responsibility for decisions is especially important is driven by the sense that it is fundamentally a matter of a kind of control, a kind of control agents would have primarily over their decisions, in conjunction with the fact that decisions are causally prior to consequences of decisions. Intuitions about "moral luck" cases support this view. In Thomas Nagel's example, two agents, A and B, are psychologically identical and each makes the decision to shoot an innocent person, and then carries out the decision (1979: 29). However, A's bullet fails to reach the intended victim because it hits a bird instead, whereas B's bullet kills him. A common intuition here is that A and B are equally blameworthy in a particularly significant respect, an intuition captured by the notion that responsibility for decisions is especially important.

Moral responsibility defined in this way differs from a further notion which, although it has a key role in moral practice, has not been most fundamentally at issue in the debate about determinism and moral responsibility. This is the notion of demanding legitimately that agents explain how their decisions accord with morality, and that they evaluate critically what their decisions indicate about their moral character (Bok, 1998). Incompatibilists have not maintained that determinism precludes the legitimacy of the demand to explain whether one's decisions accord with morality, and to assess what one's decisions reveal about one's moral disposition. Making these demands of agents might be justified by its effectiveness in improving the agent morally — we humans are indeed susceptible to causal influence by admonition of this kind. However, incompatibilists have not claimed that this notion of accountability is threatened by determinism — let us call it *moral accountability*.

2. The central thesis of the position I have defended (Pereboom 1995, 2001) is that we human beings do not have the sort of free will required for moral responsibility. In this respect I am allied with Spinoza, Priestly, Holbach, and more recently, Galen Strawson and Ted Honderich. First of all, I reject an alternative-possibilities type of incompatibilism, and accept instead a type of incompatibilism that ascribes the more significant role to an action's causal history. My view is that an agent's moral responsibility for an action is explained not by the existence of alternative possibilities available to her, but rather by the action's having a causal history of a sort that allows the agent to be the source of her action in a specific way. Following Ted Honderich (1988:

194-206) and Robert Kane (1996: 35), the crucial condition emphasizes that an agent must be the origin of her action in a particular way.

The grounding for this kind of incompatibilism includes the argument that certain Frankfurt-style cases rule out the notion that having alternative possibilities explains an agent's responsibility for action (Frankfurt 1969), and the argument that a deterministic causal history would make it impossible for the agent to be the source of her action in the way required. I believe that the best strategy for establishing the latter claim involves devising manipulation cases in which the agent is covertly induced to perform an action by some external cause, and for that reason is not morally responsible for her action, and then generalizing to absence of moral responsibility in more ordinary deterministic cases. I contend that no relevant and principled difference can distinguish an action that results from moral responsibility-undermining manipulation from an action that has a more ordinary deterministic causal history (Taylor 1974: 43-4; Kane 1996: 65-71). Now here the compatibilist might claim that we should take the inference in the other direction: because we believe agents to be morally responsible in the ordinary deterministic case, we should conclude that they are also morally responsible in the manipulation cases. But the direction in which I take the inference has the advantage that one can explain away the compatibilist's intuitions about the ordinary cases – by way of Spinoza's thought that we believe we are free only because we are ignorant of the causes of our actions (1985, 496-7). At the same time, I have yet to see a plausible compatibilist attempt to explain away the intuition that the manipulated agent is not morally responsible.

I also argue that exclusively event-causal indeterministic histories of decisions – i.e. those in which only events have a role in the causation of the decisions – are no less threatening to moral responsibility than deterministic histories, and since deterministic causal histories undermine moral responsibility, so do the event-causal indeterministic histories (Clarke 1997). If an agent's decisions were appropriately produced by a randomizing manipulator, then one would have the intuition that she is not morally responsible (van Inwagen 1983: 132-4, Mele 1999: 277). But there is no relevant and principled difference between such manipulated decisions and those that are indeterministically event-caused in a more ordinary way. Furthermore, if an agent's decisions are not produced by anything at all, then intuitively the agent is not morally responsible for them.

By my version of incompatibilism, decisions for which we are morally responsible cannot fall on the following continuum:

- (i) *alien-deterministic events* – events such that there are causal factors beyond our control by virtue of which they are causally determined, or
- (ii) *truly random events* — those that are not produced by anything at all, or
- (iii) *partially random events* — those for which factors beyond the agent's control contribute to their production but do not

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determine them, while there is nothing that supplements the contribution of these factors to produce the events.

This continuum exhausts the possibilities for decisions being caused, if at all, solely by other events. Hence, among available models for agency, to my mind only agent causation allows for moral responsibility, since it specifies that decisions might be caused not, if at all, solely by events, but by agents fundamentally as substances. I side with Clarke (1993, 1996) and O'Connor (2000) in claiming that the notion of control required for moral responsibility must be causal, and the agent-causal theory meets this specification. In my view, agent-causation is coherent as far as we can tell, but given evidence from our best physical theories, we have at best little reason to believe that we are agent-causes. We are therefore left with the view that we do not have free will of the kind required for moral responsibility.

I also argue that certain followers of P.F. Strawson (1962) are mistaken to think that the priority of practice insulates attributions of moral responsibility from scientific or metaphysical challenges. I contend that the best way to develop this point is by what R. Jay Wallace calls a *generalization strategy* — arguing from ordinarily accepted excuses or exemptions to the claim that determinism, for example, rules out moral responsibility (1994: 114-7). The excuses and exemptions that form the basis of this sort of argument would have to be widely accepted, so that they are plausibly features internal to the practice of holding people morally responsible. The kinds of exemptions that I exploit are, as in the cases alluded to above, due to manipulation. It is a feature of our practice that if people are brainwashed into committing crimes, we exempt or excuse them from moral responsibility. The kinds of intuitions about responsibility that these cases generate easily extend to the sophisticated manipulation cases — a survey of undergraduate classes will provide ample evidence for this claim. One might object that because we have not actually encountered agents who have been manipulated in these sophisticated ways, our intuitions about them are not part of our actual practice. However, it is not reasonable to limit the purview of a practice to actual situations, whether it is the practice of induction, say, or the practice of holding people morally responsible that is at issue. Rather, the practice should be understood to extend to possible cases that have not yet been encountered. Moreover, it is also a feature of our practice of holding people morally responsible that if no relevant moral difference is to be found between agents in two situations, then if one agent is legitimately exempted from moral responsibility, so is the other. And, I contend, no relevant moral difference can be found between agents in the appropriately constructed manipulation cases and agents in ordinary deterministic situations. So it is the practice itself, in particular central rules governing the practice, that makes it the case that “universal determinism” is relevant to moral responsibility after all.

According to the view that Strawson develops, the practices that surround holding people morally responsible are insulated from general metaphysical claims or scientific discoveries. There are two ways to view this insulation. On

the one hand, one might maintain that there are practical reasons to accept this insulation. For instance, one might argue that we need to hold that moral responsibility cannot be undermined by a general scientific discovery because our capacity to live meaningful and fulfilled lives would be severely hindered if we held otherwise, and the relevant sort of scientific discovery were made. I have no quarrel with the practical legitimacy of endorsing the insulation view for this sort of reason. But we need to examine whether abandoning the view that we are morally responsible would in fact have such bad consequences. On the other hand, one might think that we have epistemic, and not only practical reasons for regarding our beliefs about moral responsibility as insulated from general scientific discoveries. Is this view plausible? I would be uncomfortable with a similar claim about religious practice. Some have argued that in the light of the importance of religious belief, we have more than just practical reason for regarding it as insulated from scientific discovery, or from facts about overall evil in the world, but this view strikes few as especially attractive.

Perhaps there is position that accommodates the notion that our investment in our self-conception as morally responsible has epistemic force without embracing full-fledged insulationism. Fischer might at first appear to endorse insulationist perspective. He says:

I believe that we — you and I and most adult human beings — are morally responsible (at least much of the time) for our behavior. Further, I do not think that this very important and basic belief should be “held hostage” to esoteric scientific doctrines. For example, if I were to wake up tomorrow and read in the *Los Angeles Times* that scientists have decisively proved that causal determinism is true, I would not have any inclination to stop thinking of myself, my family and friends, and human beings in general as morally responsible. The precise form of the equations that describe the universe, and whether or not they correspond to universal generalizations, are not the sorts of thing that should be relevant to our most basic views of ourselves (as morally responsible agents and thus apt targets of reactive attitudes). (Fischer, 1999: 129)

But he then develops the specifically epistemic force of these remarks.

Our reactive attitudes should not be held hostage to an esoteric scientific discovery of the kind in question. That is, the reactive attitudes, and our view of ourselves as morally responsible agents, should be resilient in a certain sense. This resiliency idea is a major motivation for my acceptance of semi-compatibilism. It is part of the background against which I evaluate the complicated debates pertaining to Frankfurt-type cases, and it makes me more inclined to conclude that

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such cases do indeed establish that alternative possibilities are not required for moral responsibility. It also influences my evaluation of the question whether causal determinism in itself and apart from considerations pertinent to alternative possibilities rules out moral responsibility. (Fischer, 1999: 129)

What Fischer says here strongly suggests a reflective equilibrium approach, according to which a belief one has can legitimately have an effect on how one regards relevantly related arguments and evidence. Accordingly, a belief in moral responsibility can legitimately exert some force on how one evaluates various arguments that in some way bear on this belief. This general approach is attractive and plausible, with a few conditions. First, the picture should not be seen as revealing that one has epistemic justification for a belief simply because it is a belief one has, but rather as showing only that a belief has epistemic justification insofar as it can be integrated with other beliefs to play a genuine explanatory role. Second, merely wanting a belief to be true cannot all by itself give it epistemic justification. Not that the belief in moral responsibility runs afoul of these requirements, but they should function as reason to exercise caution in the degree of epistemic justification one assigns to the belief that we are morally responsible.

So how much weight should the belief in moral responsibility carry in the reflective equilibrium procedure? This is very hard to say, partly because it's difficult to separate the desire for the belief to be true from the sense that one is epistemically justified in holding the belief. But here's an interesting test case. Against agent-causal libertarians I've argued that if there were morally responsible agent causes, then it would almost have to be that microphysical events in the underlying constitution of freely deciding agents are no longer governed by the laws of quantum physics as we know them. People have sometimes responded by claiming that our belief in moral responsibility, given the reflective equilibrium procedure, would give us significant epistemic justification for believing that events in the brain indeed are not governed by the laws of quantum mechanics. But I doubt that there are many physicists who would grant that our belief in moral responsibility could provide significant epistemic justification, if any such justification at all, to doubt quantum mechanics. Indeed, quantum mechanics may be an especially well-confirmed theory, but perhaps this should make us careful about how much epistemic justificatory force we attribute to the belief in moral responsibility in a reflective-equilibrium context.

3. In my view, determinism (and indeterminism without agent-causation) is incompatible with our being moral responsible. But how important is this feature of our ordinary self-conception to living meaningful and fulfilled lives? Denying that we are morally responsible first of all demands giving up our ordinary view of ourselves as blameworthy for immoral actions and praisewor-

thy for those that are morally exemplary. One might think that this would result in a significant loss in justifiable methods for dealing with wrongdoing. However, it is possible to achieve moral reform and education by procedures that do not suppose that wrongdoers are blameworthy, and in ordinary situations such practices could arguably be as successful as those that do. Instead of treating people as if they were deserving of blame, we can draw upon moral admonishment and encouragement, which presuppose only that the offender has done wrong. These methods can effectively communicate a sense of what is right and result in beneficial reform.

But what resources would we have for addressing criminal behavior? Here rejection of moral responsibility would appear to be a disadvantage. A retributivist justification for criminal punishment would clearly be ruled out, for it assumes that we deserve blame or pain or deprivation just for performing an immoral action, while denying moral responsibility precludes this claim. We would therefore need to give up on retributivism — one of the most naturally compelling ways for justifying criminal punishment.

By contrast, the moral education theory of punishment is not threatened by the exclusion of moral responsibility specifically. Nevertheless, in the absence of significant empirical evidence that punishment of criminals would succeed in bringing about moral education, it would be immoral to punish them in order to achieve this result. In general, it is morally wrong to harm someone for the sake of realizing some good if there is insufficient evidence that the harm will result in securing the good. In addition, even if we had strong evidence that punishment could be effective in morally educating criminals, we should prefer non-punitive methods for realizing this aim — independently of whether we are in fact morally responsible.

Although the two most prominent deterrence theories are not threatened simply by the absence of moral responsibility, there are other reasons for calling them into question. The utilitarian version is subject to well-known objections — it would sometimes require punishing the innocent, there are circumstances in which it would prescribe punishment that is unconscionably harsh, and it would authorize using persons merely as means. I suspect that advocates of this sort of deterrence theory typically presuppose retributivism as justifying harming a criminal in the first place. But retributivism would no longer be available. I argue that the type of deterrence theory that justifies punishing criminals on the basis of the right to harm in self-defense is objectionable on moral grounds (Farrell 1985: 38-60). The right to harm in self-defense applies in a situation where someone poses an immediate danger, and even then it is morally permissible to inflict only what one would reasonably believe to be the minimum harm required to prevent harm (and this is plausibly subject to a proportionality constraint). But a justification for acting on a threat appropriately designed to protect against someone who is immediately dangerous does not carry over to acting on that threat after the crime has been committed and the criminal has been taken into custody, even if he would be dangerous when released. For the minimum harm required to secure protection from

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someone who is immediately dangerous is typically much more severe than the minimum harm required to secure protection from a criminal in custody.

A view that would work draws an analogy between crime prevention and quarantine. Ferdinand Schoeman (1979) contends that if it is legitimate to quarantine carriers of severe communicable diseases to protect others, then we also have the right to isolate the criminally dangerous to protect others. Now quarantine can be justified whether or not the carrier is morally responsible for being infected with a communicable disease. If a child is infected with the Ebola virus because it has been passed on to her *in utero*, quarantine may nevertheless be legitimate. Now suppose someone poses a danger to society by having demonstrated a sufficiently strong propensity to violence. Even if he is not in general a morally responsible agent, it would seem as legitimate to detain him as a carrier of a deadly communicable disease who is not responsible for being infected.

It is important to recognize, however, that it would be morally wrong to treat carriers of a disease more severely than is required to prevent the harm with which society is threatened. By analogy, it would be wrong to treat those with violent criminal tendencies more harshly than is needed to defuse the threat that they pose. Moreover, just as moderately dangerous diseases may only occasion justified responses less intrusive than quarantine, so propensities to moderately serious criminal behavior may only underwrite measures less intrusive than detention. Furthermore, I suspect that a theory modelled on quarantine could not suffice to justify criminal punishment of the sort whose legitimacy is most in doubt, such as execution or detention in our worst prisons. Indeed, it would require a degree of concern for the rehabilitation and well-being of criminals that would decisively alter the measures that now prevail. As society has an obligation to attempt to cure the diseased it quarantines, so it would have an obligation to try to rehabilitate the criminals it confines. Furthermore, when rehabilitation is not possible, and in the event that the protection of society were to require indefinite confinement, there would be no justification for taking measures that aim only to make the criminal's life miserable.

4. Suppose that we gave up thinking of ourselves as praiseworthy. What effect would that have on our achieving what makes our lives fulfilled, happy, satisfactory, or worthwhile — for realizing what Honderich has called our *life-hopes*? (Honderich 1988: 382) In Honderich's view, there is an aspect of our life-hopes that is undermined by a determinist conviction, but at the same time this conviction leaves them largely intact. I agree with this claim. But consider first the objection that because our life-hopes generally involve an aspiration for praiseworthiness, they would be undercut if we denied moral responsibility. In support, one might argue that life-hopes are aspirations for achievement, and since one cannot have an achievement for which one is not also praiseworthy, denying praiseworthiness would undermine our life-hopes. But achievement is not obviously connected to praiseworthiness in the way this objection assumes.

If someone aspires to success in an endeavor, and if she accomplishes what she hoped for, intuitively this result can be her achievement even if she is not praiseworthy for it — although the degree to which it is her achievement may be diminished relative to our ordinary assumptions. If an aid-worker hopes that her efforts will result in the alleviation of hunger in a region beset by famine, and they do, it seems clear that this outcome can be her achievement even if it turns out that she is not praiseworthy for what she has done.

Would denying moral responsibility occasion an attitude of resignation to whatever one's behavioral dispositions together with environmental conditions hold in store? First, given that we typically lack knowledge of how our futures will turn out, we can still reasonably hope for success in achieving what we want most even if we believe all of our decisions to be determined by our environments and dispositions. Here it may be important that we do not have complete knowledge of our environments and dispositions. Suppose someone has a disposition he believes might pose a problem for realizing one of his life-hopes. But he does not know for sure whether this disposition will in fact undercut his aspiration; it is epistemically possible for him that he has another disposition that will allow him to transcend the potential obstacle. For example, suppose that someone aspires to become an effective administrator, but is concerned that his reluctance to delegate tasks, rooted in a desire to control, will keep him from succeeding. He does not know whether his reluctance to delegate will in fact frustrate his life-hope, since it is epistemically possible for him that he will overcome this problem, perhaps due to a disposition for resolute self-discipline. As a result, he might reasonably hope that he will overcome his problem and succeed in his aspiration. If he in fact does overcome his reluctance to delegate and becomes a successful administrator, his achievement will not be as robust as one might naturally have believed, but it will be his achievement in a substantial sense nevertheless.

But how much of our life-hopes as we ordinarily conceive them would we have to forego if we gave up the belief that we are morally responsible? According to Saul Smilansky, even though determinism does allow for some basis for the sense of self-worth that derives from achievement or virtue, the determinist's perspective can nevertheless be "extremely damaging to our view of ourselves, to our sense of achievement, worth, and self-respect." As a remedy, Smilansky argues that we should foster the illusion that we have indeterministic free will (1997: 94, cf. Smilansky 2000). I agree with him that there is a kind of self-respect that requires an indeterministic foundation, and that it would be threatened if we were not morally responsible. Moral accomplishments would then not genuinely be an agent's own in a sense strong enough to sustain judgments of fundamentally deserved credit or praise, and if these judgments had to be given up, one kind of self-respect would be lost as well. But at the same time, there is a conception of moral worth, one that accompanies responsibility as self-disclosure, that could be retained. Agents can have moral worth by virtue of affirming, acting on, and standing up for moral values. No feature of determinism threatens the claim that one can be morally worthy in

this respect, and that one can legitimately respect oneself for being morally worthy in this way.

What will nevertheless be without adequate ground is respect for ourselves for being the morally responsible originators of this aretaic variety of moral worth. I question, however, whether Smilansky is right about how damaging it would be for us to give up this sort of self-respect, and whether his advocating the illusion of free will would then be justified. First of all, it is quite clear that our sense of self-worth, our sense that we are valuable and that our lives are worth living, is at least in part produced by features of our lives not dependent of our volitions, and thus also independent of free will. We place great value, both for others and for ourselves, on beauty, intelligence, and native athletic ability, and none of these features are produced voluntarily. At the same time, we also value voluntary efforts in the service of moral ends, and more so when these efforts express moral commitments on the part of an agent. Still, does it matter a great deal to us that the voluntary efforts are also freely willed? I suspect that Smilansky overestimates how much we care.

Consider the formation of moral character. It is highly plausible that good moral character is produced to a significant degree by upbringing. Indeed, parents very typically regard themselves as having failed if their children turn out to be generally unethical, and many take great care to raise their children so as to avoid this outcome. Accordingly, people with deep moral commitments often believe that they have this character largely because they were brought up in a certain way, and that they have their parents and teachers to thank for it. But those who come to this realization do not typically experience dismay as a result. People tend not to become dispirited upon coming to believe that their moral character is not due to their own efforts, and that they deserve little praise and respect for having this character. Rather, they feel fortunate and thankful for the upbringing they have had, and not that something significant is missing or has been lost.

Moreover, people do not often become dispirited when they come to realize that their success in a career was very much a result of factors over which they had little or no voluntary control, such as upbringing, opportunities in society, the assistance of colleagues, or good fortune. On the contrary, realizations of this kind typically occasion a sense of thankfulness, and almost never, if at all, dismay. Why then should we suppose that we would become dispirited if we gave up the belief that we are morally responsible for success in a career? But suppose that there are people who would become disheartened even upon coming to believe that professional accomplishment or moral character is largely due to upbringing. Then would it be justified or even desirable for them to maintain the illusion that they nevertheless deserve respect for producing their moral character? I suspect that most people would be quite capable of facing the truth on these matters, and that those for whom it would be difficult would for the most part have the resources to cope with the new understanding.

5. What effect would rejecting moral responsibility have on interpersonal

relationships? P. F. Strawson (1962) argues that justification for claims of blameworthiness and praiseworthiness terminates in the system of human reactive attitudes, and because moral responsibility has this sort of foundation, the truth or falsity of universal determinism is irrelevant to whether we are justified in regarding agents as morally responsible. These reactive attitudes, such as indignation, gratitude, forgiveness, and love, are required for the kinds of interpersonal relationships that make our lives fulfilling and meaningful, and hence, even if we could give up the attitudes — and Strawson believes that this is impossible — we would never have adequate practical reason to do so. Thus we would never have adequate practical reason to give up on regarding each other as morally responsible. On the other hand, if universal determinism did threaten to undermine the reactive attitudes, we would face the prospect of the “objective attitude,” a disengaged and calculating stance towards others that would jeopardize meaningful interpersonal relationships.

I think that Strawson is right to believe that an objective attitude would imperil good relationships, but I deny that we would adopt this stance or that it would be appropriate to do so if we came to believe universal determinism and we conceived it as posing a threat to the reactive attitudes. In my conception, determinism precludes moral responsibility, and for this reason it also undermines some of the reactive attitudes. For having some of these attitudes, such as indignation, for example, entails the presupposition that the person who is the object of the attitude is morally responsible. I claim, however, that the reactive attitudes that we have good practical reason to retain either would not be threatened by the truth of determinism or else have analogues or aspects that would not have false presuppositions. The complex of attitudes that could be legitimately retained do not amount to Strawson’s objectivity of attitude, and they would be sufficient to sustain the kinds of interpersonal relationships we value.

Arguably no attitude is more important for good relationships than love. There are various ways one might think that love would be jeopardized if moral responsibility had to be given up. One might venture, for instance, that loving another in the way that we most value requires that she have free will in the sense required for moral responsibility. But notice that parents love their children rarely, if ever, because they possess this sort of free will, or because they choose to do what is right by free will, or because they deserve to be loved because of their freely-willed choices. Moreover, when adults love each other, it is also seldom, if at all, for these kinds of reasons. The reasons and motivations we have for loving others are certainly complex. Considerations such as intelligence, appearance, style, and resemblance to others in one’s personal history all might have a part. However, suppose that moral character and action are especially important in occasioning, enriching, and sustaining love. Here it is important to see that denying moral responsibility does not imperil self-disclosing responsibility for moral action. One’s actions can yet reveal that morality is what one most fundamentally stands for. So even if there is a significant feature of love that is a deserved response to moral character and

action, it is unlikely that love would be undermined if one came to believe that these moral qualities did not come about through freely-willed decisions. For responsibility for one's moral action in the self-disclosing sense is attractive whether or not one is in addition deserving of praise or credit, and I suspect that in loving others for their moral qualities we care much more about self-disclosing responsibility than about moral responsibility.

One might argue, however, that we nevertheless desire to be loved by others as a result of their free will. Against this, it is clear that parents' love for their children — a paradigmatic sort of love — is often produced independently of the parents' will. Kane endorses this last claim, and a similar view about romantic love, but he nevertheless argues that a certain type of love we want would be endangered if we knew that there were factors beyond the lover's control that determined it. He says:

There is a *kind* of love we desire from others — parents, children (when they are old enough), spouses, lovers and friends — whose significance is diminished... by the thought that they are determined to love us entirely by instinct or circumstances beyond their control or not entirely up to them... To be loved by others in this desired sense requires that the ultimate source of others' love lies in their own wills. (Kane, 1996, p. 88; cf. Anglin, 1991).

But leaving aside *free* will for a moment, in which sorts of cases does the will intuitively play a role in generating love for another at all? When the intensity of an intimate relationship is waning, people sometimes make a decision to try to make it succeed, and to attempt to regain the type of relationship they once had. Or when one is housed in a dormitory or barracks with someone one didn't select, one might choose to make the relationship work. Or when one's marriage is arranged by parents, one may decide to do whatever one can to love one's spouse. But first, in such situations we might desire that another person make a decision to love, but it is not clear that we have reason to want the decision to be *freely* willed in the sense required for moral responsibility. A decision to love on the part of another might greatly enhance one's personal life, but it is not at all obvious what value the decision's being free and thus praiseworthy would add. Second, while in circumstances of these kinds we might desire that someone else make a decision to love, we would typically prefer the situation in which the love was not mediated by a decision. This seems true not only for romantic attachments, but also for friendships and for relationships between parents and children.

One might suggest that the will can have a key role in *maintaining* love over an extended period. Søren Kierkegaard suggests that a marital relationship ideally involves a commitment that is continuously renewed (Kierkegaard, 1971). Such a commitment involves a decision to devote oneself to another, and thus, in his view, a marital relationship ideally involves a continuously

repeated decision. A relationship with this sort of voluntary aspect might in fact be highly desirable. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see what is to be added by these continuously repeated decisions being freely willed in the sense required for moral responsibility, as opposed to, say, expressing what the agent really stands for.

Thus although one might have the initial intuition that freely-willed love is desirable, it is not easy to see exactly how free will might have a desirable role in producing, maintaining, or enhancing love. Another approach to this question involves considering how you would react if you were to discover that another's love for you was causally determined as a result of manipulation by some other agent. If your initial reaction is that it would be undesirable, perhaps it would be tempered by reminding yourself that love is at least in part produced by factors over which one has no voluntary control – physical attractiveness, moral attractiveness, pheromones, resemblance to loved ones in one's personal history – to name a few. But furthermore, suppose that the manipulation worked by determining the other person to be more sensitive to and to value your good characteristics. Would that be objectionable to you? Or, for that matter, what if the manipulation worked by determining the other person to be less sensitive to your bad characteristics? Perhaps that would be morally objectionable, but would that obviously undermine the value to you of the other's love? At very least, it would seem that it is not determination *per se*, but determination of some specific sort, that we would find objectionable.

Finally, suppose Kane's view could be supported, and that love that is freely willed in the sense required for moral responsibility was of value to us. Then we would value a kind of love whose possibility would be precluded by our lacking this sort of free will. Still, the possibilities for love that remain would seem sufficient for good interpersonal relationships. If we can still enjoy the love parents typically have for their children, or the kind romantic lovers ideally have for each other, or the love shared by friends who are immediately attracted to one another, or the sort that is enhanced by self-disclosing responsibility for moral action, then the possibility of fulfillment through interpersonal relationships is far from undermined. If these types of love can survive, then the general threat that determinism might be conceived to pose for good interpersonal relationships will have been largely defused.

Still, it would seem that giving up on moral responsibility would also result in abandoning the self-directed attitudes of guilt and repentance, and arguably these attitudes are required for good interpersonal relationships. Without guilt and repentance, one might contend, an agent would not only be incapable of restoring relationships damaged due to his wrongdoing, but would also be kept from regaining moral integrity. For arguably, besides the attitudes of guilt and repentance, we have no psychological mechanisms that can play these roles. But giving up on moral responsibility would appear to undermine guilt because this attitude essentially involves the belief that one is blameworthy for something one has done. Moreover, if guilt is undermined, the attitude of repentance would also seem threatened, for feeling guilty is not implausibly

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required for motivating repentance.

However, imagine that you behave immorally, but because you do not believe that you are morally responsible, you deny that you are blameworthy. Instead, you agree that you have done wrong, you are saddened your having behaved immorally, and you thoroughly regret what you have done (Waller 1990). Moreover, because you are committed to moral improvement, you resolve not to behave in this way in the future, and you seek the help of others in sustaining your resolve. It may be that this process assumes the moral accountability that Bok highlights – the legitimacy of the demand to explain whether one’s decisions accord with morality, and to assess what one’s decisions reveal about one’s moral disposition. But it would seem that moral responsibility is not required.

Gratitude also has a significant role to play in the kinds of interpersonal relationships we value, but this attitude might well presuppose that those to whom one is grateful are morally responsible for beneficial acts, and so gratitude would be threatened if we had to give up moral responsibility. At the same time, certain aspects of this attitude would not be challenged, and I contend that these aspects can play the role gratitude as a whole has in good relationships. Gratitude involves, first of all, thankfulness towards someone who has acted beneficially. True, being thankful toward someone often involves the belief that she is praiseworthy for an action. But at the same time one can also be thankful to a young child for some kindness, even though one does not believe that she is morally responsible. Even more than, one could still be thankful to a friend whose beneficent actions proceed from deeply held moral commitments. The aspect of thankfulness could be retained even if the presupposition of praiseworthiness is rejected. Gratitude also typically involves joy occasioned by the beneficent act of another. But a rejection of moral responsibility fully harmonizes with being joyful and expressing joy when others are considerate or generous in one’s behalf. Such expression of joy can bring about the sense of harmony and goodwill often brought about by gratitude, and so in this respect, abandoning moral responsibility does not produce a disadvantage.

Denying moral responsibility, therefore, does not seem to endanger interpersonal relationships after all. It might well jeopardize some attitudes that typically have a role in this domain, but there will typically be enough left over to provide what is needed. And love — the attitude most essential to good personal relationships — is not clearly threatened at all.

More generally, it appears that living genuinely meaningful and fulfilling lives is compatible with rejecting moral responsibility — what incompatibilists have typically thought to be threatened in a deterministic universe. For much of what we care most about in life, if it depends on a notion of responsibility, can be secured by responsibility as self-disclosure or by moral accountability. By keeping in focus the distinctions among these faces of responsibility, we could live in accord with a consistent conception of ourselves as agents whose decisions are ultimately produced by factors beyond our control, but who can nevertheless be deeply committed to moral values, and who can be responsive

to self-examination guided by these values. With this conception in place, I think we can absorb with equanimity the losses incurred by abandoning our view of ourselves as morally responsible.

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NOTE

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