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Freedom of Excellence: A Thomistic View of Free Will and its relationship to the Contemporary Free Will Debate

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THE SAINT PAUL SEMINARY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Freedom of Excellence

A Thomistic View of Free Will and its relationship to the Contemporary Free Will Debate

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Divinity

Of the University of St. Thomas

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in Theology

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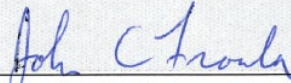
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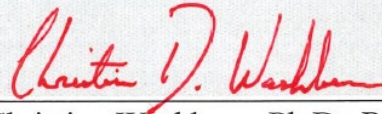
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This thesis by Keith Willard fulfills the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Theology approved by John Froula Ph.D. as Thesis Advisor, and by Christian Washburn Ph.D. and by John Martens Ph.D. as Readers.



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Chapter 1. Introduction

“We know our will is free, and there’s an end on’t”¹

It has been five hundred years since Martin Luther dueled with Desiderius Erasmus and the Catholic Church over the issue of man’s freedom. Erasmus asserted that even in our fallen state, “...from the time of the apostles down to the present day, no writer has emerged who has totally taken away the power of freedom of choice save only Manichaeus and John Wyclif.”² Luther in response denied that the will “... did anything or nothing in matters pertaining to salvation.”³ Luther’s charge merited specific rebuttal in the Council of Trent’s statement, that while free will without divine grace cannot enable a man to live justly and merit eternal life:⁴

If anyone says that man's free will moved and aroused by God, by assenting to God's call and action, in no way cooperates toward disposing and preparing itself to obtain the grace of justification, that it cannot refuse its assent if it wishes, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive, let him be anathema.⁵

With the secular influences of the Enlightenment the context of free will slowly changes from the question of whether fallen man had true freedom in the face of an omnipotent God to the question of whether it is even sensible to talk about freedom in a worldview dominated by the issue of deterministic laws. Thomas Hobbes would define free will as “the absence of all the

¹ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1769, (AETAT. 60. Project Gutenberg), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1564/1564-h/1564-h.htm>

² Desiderius Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will*, in *Luther and Erasmus : Free Will and Salvation* trans. E. Gordon Rupp. Philip S Watson, (Library of Christian Classicism Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 43.

³ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, in *Luther and Erasmus : Free Will and Salvation*, trans E. Gordon Rupp. Philip S Watson, (Library of Christian Classics, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 116.

⁴ *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum Et Declarationum De Rebus Fidei Et Morum* Forty-Third Edition, eds Heinrich Denzinger. Peter Hünermann. Helmut Hoping. Peter Hünermann. Robert Fastiggi. and Anne Englund Nash., (Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2001), 1552.

⁵ Denzinger, 1557.

impediments to action that are not contained in the nature and intrinsic [sic] quality of the agent.”⁶ Under the overwhelming influence of a materialistic framing of the concept, the current secular philosophical views of freedom include those who question whether consciousness is itself real much less human freedom.⁷

Against these developments, Catholic teaching has maintained its commitment to the fundamental importance of human freedom with its inextricable entanglements with grace and the reality of the lived life. Servais Pinckaers’ approach to human freedom as “freedom of excellence” contra “freedom of indifference” is the focal point of this thesis. It utilizes Thomistic views of freedom to reframe contemporary Catholic conversation, and even clear terminology from the accumulation of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment debris.

We will argue as its major thesis that in Pinckaers’ formulation of freedom of excellence, with its explicit re-adoption of metaphysical principles such as man’s final end and a denial of *sola materia*, is not only consistent with Thomistic approaches to freedom but also a more satisfying theory of human freedom than those found within the contemporary philosophical debate. Further, we will demonstrate that such a theory of freedom is compatible with 20th and 21st century developments in science, mathematics and the neuroscience of human behavior relevant to questions of human consciousness and freedom.

We follow Pinkaers⁸ in rejecting the theory of freedom of “indifference” centered on an autonomous will choosing between equally attractive or equally unattractive alternatives. His

⁶ Thomas Hobbes and John Bramhall, *The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance: Clearly Stated and Debated between Dr. Bramhall, Bishop of Derry, and Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*. (Early English Books Online. London: Printed for Andrew Crook. 1656), 38.

⁷ Steve Ayan, “There is No Such Thing as Conscious Thought” December 20, 2018. Scientific American online. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/there-is-no-such-thing-as-conscious-thought/#>

⁸Servais Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012).

work can be taken narrowly as a critique of this view of freedom—a view that is closely related to the current libertarian view of the will—but we will argue that Pinckaers’ critique and counter proposal is a far more fundamental move. Freedom of excellence is more than simply a different theory of how to establish freedom rooted in our volition. It enlarges the focus of freedom from the atomic decision involved in a single human act to include the effects arising from the integration of that act and the full sequence of subsequent acts that feed back into the very being of the individual. It is in the connections—the feedback between act, the will and the intellect that affects future actions—where we should focus when we ask what freedom is, and that is the domain of Pinckaers’ freedom of excellence.

We will take Pinckaers’ freedom of excellence in two directions, forward in time to engage with the contemporary free will debate and its intersection with science including relevant material from the neurosciences, and backward in time to investigate its foundations in Thomas Aquinas. In taking Pinckaers forward we will argue that contemporary philosophical approaches have been undermined by the abandonment of the metaphysics of man’s final ends, the felt need to maintain a false homage to an exclusively materialistic basis to man’s being, and the failure to fully assimilate the fundamental limitations of the concept of determinism. We will demonstrate that freedom of excellence is inconsistent with a modern libertarian view of freedom, incompatible with an exclusively materialistic view of the mind, but *is* compatible with current understanding of the physical universe and specifically the neurosciences.

In taking Pinckaers backward, his claims that freedom of excellence is rooted in Aquinas theories of the human act will be examined in detail. We will demonstrate that freedom of excellence is indeed founded in Aquinas and is strongly associated the role played by virtue in the establishment of inclinations and habits in the Christian life. Aquinas’ view of the will and its freedom should be seen as neither simply voluntaristic nor intellectualist. It is not a simple

attribute of the human soul but is properly seen as constitutive of the entire human being. Its capacity enlarges as man approaches his final end—the process of sanctification as it is known in the west or divinization as it is termed in the east—the restoration of the image of God resting in the beatific vision of God.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the contemporary philosophical theories of man's freedom in which libertarian and compatibilist theories dominate. The major critiques of each position presented are from a contemporary perspective in which an underlying exclusively material and deterministic universe is presumed. Determinism is identified as *the* critical framing semantic dominating the discussion between libertarian and compatibilist. The key libertarian requirement of *same past, different future* is contrasted with the compatibilist's *same past, same future*. The libertarian seeks to find some way to find a crack in a determinist world view by seeking a role for randomness in our mental processes whereas the compatibilist redefines what freedom to mean to be merely feeling free, while celebrating the deterministic machinery that necessitates what we think and how we decide. Chapter 2 concludes with the observation that the conflicting contemporary theories of man's freedom are at an impasse.

Chapter 3 introduces Pinkaers' formulation of freedom of excellence in preparation to the anticipating it as a solution to this impasse. Pinckaers formulates freedom of excellence in the context of refocusing 20th century Catholic moral teaching on Thomas' teachings on virtue. He argues that a proper understanding human freedom extends beyond a focus on the atomic act of the will; that the appropriate scope for understanding human freedom lies in the entire series of acts because individual actions fold back and effect changes (for good or for ill) the very machinery of the will. Pinckaers' argues for the role of habit and then virtue—especially the moral and theological virtues--in understanding how human freedom is preserved and enlarged in the reception and exercise of these virtues in our life.

Pinckaers' exposition relies on readers sharing his deep understanding of Aquinas accordingly, Chapter 4 supplements Pinckaers' presentation with a concise tour of Aquinas' view of the relationship between freedom, the will, intellect, habit, virtue and ultimately our divine life of grace. Aquinas frames his discussion explicitly in terms of our final ends. He demonstrates a rich and nuanced view of the will in terms of its complex interplay with both the intellect and the entire being of the human, its feedback between the consequences of an act and its subsequent effect of future acts. This integrated view of the will encompasses the roles of habit, inclination and virtue. Aquinas fits these concepts together in a dynamic process that includes human interaction with divine participation and cooperation via the reception and exercise of these divinely infused virtues, in an integrated view of an individual moving towards their final end.

Chapter 5 asks questions about the status of an individual's freedom at the point when they achieve their final end in the beatific vision. Is such a person still free to sin and if not, why not and are they then still free? We review several traditional responses to these questions and argue that Aquinas' assertion for man's maximal freedom in this state is a natural conclusion of our freedom of excellence. Freedom of excellence is indeed irreversible with regard to sin, and its irreversibility is intrinsic and natural to that state contra Ockham's teaching that only by a constantly applied divinely supplied extrinsic constraint is man prevented from nilling God. Concluding the chapter, we argue that there are physical analogs that can aid in our understanding how such intrinsic irreversibility can make sense.

Chapters 2 through 5 set the stage for the central arguments of the thesis. In Chapter 6 we argue that freedom of excellence fully addresses the impasse identified in Chapter 2. We review the developments in science, especially in the neurosciences, that bear directly on the question of man's freedom and provide the physical machinery responsible for the materialistic

and deterministic presumptions of the libertarian and compatibilist arguments of Chapter 2. We demonstrate that none of this evidence is incompatible with a freedom of excellence, including so-called criterial causation and even random events, due to the intellect's ability to reflect and to use comprehension of its final end as a compass to guide subsequent actions. We argue that personal identity in its most meaningful sense cannot subsist in a purely materialistic metaphysical framework. And we argue that the appropriate response to that conclusion is not the existential despair that afflicts many of the brightest and best of contemporary philosophers, but it is instead to expand our metaphysical foundations. We show how the concept of determinism, so central to arguments between libertarians and compatibilists, is emptied of much of its traditional meaning considering recent developments in chaos theory.

We conclude by setting freedom of excellence firmly in the context of our final end. We assert that those decisions most central and most important to us as human beings are incompatible with either a libertarian or compatibilist theory but are at the core of the concerns of freedom of excellence. The choices of fidelity to spouse, to friend, to fellow soldier are choices we want to make again and again and result from virtues we acquire in part as gifts, and then practice in our daily life. Herein lies the true locus of freedom. We conclude with an attempt at capturing a snapshot of what it could mean to achieve our final end and imagine the state of true freedom that accompanies it.

Chapter 2. A Tour of Contemporary Views of Free Will

What is generally meant by free will from the contemporary view

Boswell: "The argument for the moral necessity of human actions is always, I observe, fortified by supposing universal prescience to be one of the attributes of the Deity." *Johnson*: "You are surer that you are free, than you are of prescience; you are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please, than you are of any conclusion from a deduction of reasoning. But let us consider a little the objection from prescience. It is certain I am either to go home tonight or not; that does not prevent my freedom." *Boswell*: "That it is certain you are either to go home or not, does not prevent your freedom; because the liberty of choice between the two is compatible with that certainty. But if one of these events be certain now, you have no future power of volition. If it be certain you are to go home to-night, you must go home." *Johnson*: "If I am well acquainted with a man, I can judge with great probability how he will act in any case, without his being restrained by my judging. God may have this probability increased to certainty." *Boswell*: When it is increased to certainty, freedom ceases, because that cannot be certainly foreknown, which is not certain at the time; but if it be certain at the time, it is a contradiction in terms to maintain that there can be afterwards any contingency dependent on the exercise of will or anything else." *Johnson*: "All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it."⁹

James Boswell and Samuel Johnson illuminate a transition in the Enlightenment's concerns regarding human freedom away from the concerns of Erasmus and Trent. After the Protestant fracturing, philosophical development regarding freedom became separated from its moral context and increasingly focused on the issue of whether freedom can exist at all in largely materialistic universe. This development was accompanied by a diminished metaphysics that radically altered the structure of discussions surrounding human freedom. We are not concerned with the details of this process but will survey the principle current philosophical views of human freedom and how it can be understood to exist.¹⁰ A characteristic of the current debate is an almost complete lack of consensus regarding the state of the will, freedom, the mind or even the reality of human consciousness. We will spend less time on those views that are self-

⁹ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1761. Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1564/1564-h/1564-h.htm>

¹⁰ This chapter covers the major approaches discussed in the literature represented in summary form from sources such as Robert Kane *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, (Oxford University Press, 2005)

limiting,¹¹ and focus attention on contemporary discussions that assert humans do in some sense possess free will.

Personal Responsibility and Freedom.

Neither Greek nor Jewish and early Christian writers focused on the explicit issue of what made a decision free but were instead concerned with what actions the individual should perform and be held responsible for—both before man and God. Early Greeks such as Aristotle held that a broad spectrum of actions were ‘up to us’; but the basis for this view varied widely especially in later antiquity. Stoics saw an orderly universe following laws in a careful predetermined path whereas the Epicureans believed in a universe founded on randomness where the atoms themselves could “swerve” in a chaotic unpredictable dance of chance. But both agreed that many acts were still ‘up to us’ and they grounded the basis of freedom and morality in the consciousness of the individual.¹² But what does it mean for something to be ‘up to us’ if the action is simply the unfolding of a predetermined path or resulting from the vagaries of chance?

For the Christian believer, the question of freedom was further complicated by the understanding that human nature was tainted by the Fall. Theologically the Church teaches that, while man needs external assistance to enable free moral choices to follow and obey God, man’s ability to freely choose can still be presumed. With Martin Luther and especially John Calvin, the issues of God’s omnipotence and transcendence were central. Can there be room for human freedom if every movement occurs as consequence of God’s direct action? Can there be room

¹¹ What is the point in responding to a philosopher who does not believe he possesses consciousness and that his self-awareness is an illusion?

¹² Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, *Sather Classical Lectures*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 41.

for a meaningful freedom if the choices of man are known in advance—indeed known from before the very beginning of time?¹³

With the Protestant approaches ascendant in the Enlightenment, thinkers like David Hume eliminated of the concept of final causes in nature from philosophic thinking, and with Immanuel Kant there arose paradigms influenced by scientific revolution. Isaac Newton frames questions of freedom within a physicalist, materialistic view of the universe. Concerns about the relationship of freedom to the machinery of the universe replace concerns regarding the relationship of human freedom to the Divine. Arguments about theological determinism are replaced by physical determinism. Facing the loss of the metaphysics of final ends, Thomas Hobbes redefines freedom as the ability of an individual to act as one wishes in an attempt to maintain compatibility with the now merely material universe.

Contemporary approaches to determinism and liberty

Table 1, adapted from Robert Kane,¹⁴ provides a useful way to categorize the diversity present in contemporary approaches. It demonstrates that the core issue is the challenge presented by the post-Enlightenment view of a world running according to definite rules—the *deterministic* world. The column and role highlighted contrasts the positions held by a freedom of excellence.

¹³ Boethius' reconciliation of the issue of Divine foreknowledge and human freedom in its classical formulation represents the mainstream Catholic understanding. This view characterizes God, and therefore his knowledge, as being beyond space and time. For Calvin, his conflation of language about God's foreknowledge and therefore lack of human freedom implies a God whose knowledge is part of the time flow. The embedding of God in spacetime taken to its logical endgame has led some libertarian free will Protestants to propose the doctrine of Open Theism, where God is denied the possibility of any more foreknowledge than that in principle available to a very smart supercomputer operating in current time. See Clark Pinnock, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Robert Kane, "Libertarianism" in *Four Views on Free Will*, eds. John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derek Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas, (Great Debates in Philosophy. Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 4.

Table 1.

	<i>Is commonsense thinking about free will and moral responsibility correct?</i>	<i>Is free will compatible with determinism?</i>	<i>Is moral responsibility compatible with determinism?</i>	<i>Do we have free will?</i>	<i>Is this freedom we want?</i>
Libertarianism	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Compatibilism	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Hard Incompatibilism	No	No	No	only as an illusion	No
Universalist, Panpsychism, Open Individualism	Yes in part.	Yes	Not applicable — only a single universal agent	Yes	No
Freedom of Excellence	Yes	External to the mind there is no determinism Internal to the mind there is “coherency”	Argues the question is ill posed. Metaphysics presumes at minimum some dualistic view of man	Yes Both at an individual decision and most centrally, based on cumulative effects of choices.	Yes

For contemporary thinkers, reduced to a materialistic metaphysic, a key question regarding freedom is how the uncaused choice make sense in a deterministic materialistic-only universe?¹⁵ But if those choices are caused then does not the existence of a deterministic causal chain leading up to the decision preclude holding individuals responsible for those “caused” decisions? The last column asks sharply the question—is this the freedom that we want? This is a question we will return to time and again as we look at theories of freedom. We will take brief note of both the hard incompatibilism and the universalist consciousness views but primarily focus on the two approaches that claim to defend man’s freedom, specifically his free will, in their separate ways.

¹⁵ Causality for the modern is most closely associated with the efficient cause of Aristotelean four causes; material cause, formal cause, efficient cause and final cause. We argue for the damaging effects on our modern understanding of human freedom resulting from an alienation of final causes.

Free Will as Illusion—the Hard Incompatibilism

For philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, the human mind was reducible to that of a machine, albeit a complex machine.¹⁶ This line of reasoning has led some contemporary scientists to assert that free will does not exist and if we think we possess it, we are suffering from an illusion of our brains. One of the most famous taking this position was no less than Albert Einstein.

If the moon, in the act of completing its eternal way around the earth, were gifted with self-consciousness, it would feel thoroughly convinced that it was travelling its way of its own accord on the strength of a resolution taken once and for all. So would a Being, endowed with higher insight and more perfect intelligence, watching man and his doings, smile about man's illusion that he was acting according to his own free will.¹⁷

For Einstein, his commitment to a universe that runs according to fixed laws overrides his own internal experience. He is willing to exile his personal perceptions to the land of illusion.

Contemporary proponents of free will worry that diminishment in societies' belief in individual autonomy opens the door for those desiring to leverage forms of social determinism in order to create utopia.¹⁸ Such yearning is on display in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* where lower-class workers under the influence of drugs can do what they want, but what they want is constrained: such as playing miniature golf on weekends before returning to their assembly line work each Monday.¹⁹ Alternatively, in the world of B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*, citizens live in a utopian rural commune sharing duties of farming and raising children but are able to pursue the arts and sciences in their abundant leisure time. But as Frazier, protagonist of the book and founder of *Walden Two* is proud to admit—individuals can do whatever they want

¹⁶ Kane, "Libertarianism", 8.

¹⁷ Albert Einstein quoted in D. Home and A. Robinson, "Einstein and Tagore", *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2(2), 1995.

¹⁸ Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford, England, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-4.

¹⁹ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Harper's Modern Classics. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950).

because they have been behaviorally conditioned for those desires since birth.²⁰ Frazier defends this approach because he believes science has eliminated the option of individuals envisioning themselves as the author of their actions. According to Frazier, we may *think* we could be originators of our wills but in the end this idea is simply an incoherent concept. Instead, Frazier put in place a system constructed to maximize, from his perspective and that of his fellow ruling class, the happiness of the individual subject to the constraints of the scientific world.²¹ This view of human nature eliminates as irrelevant the concept of freedom, especially one that comprehends a role for a self-reflective reason that interacts with the will and the world around it to yield a choice.

Frazier argues for a sophisticated conditioning program to yield both the desired conduct and feelings in individuals. Humans are simply more complicated versions of domesticated animal stock. Society needs to keep the sheep healthy and contented but need not be concerned with notions of individual agency. Among the drawbacks of this approach is that it eliminates the role for regret, grief, frustration, or meaningful self-reflection that would lead to a recognition when one performs an evil act. It substitutes “I could not help it” or “I did not mean it” for the possibility of genuine repentance.²² Even from a naturalistic perspective, this radically restricts opportunities for positive change—even change Frazier might otherwise laud.

²⁰ B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two*, (Macmillan Paperback, New York: Macmillan, 1962), 115.

²¹ Any similarities the reader might see regarding the ruling class of *Walden Two* and today’s ruling elites should be resisted. Else one might end up being required to attend mandated re-orientation training. Of course, in this country such a requirement couldn’t possibly come to pass.

²² Gerrity Benignus, *Nature, Knowledge and God; an Introduction to Thomistic Philosophy*, (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1947), 273-274.

Free Will as evidence of panpsychism

Erwin Schrödinger, one of the founders of quantum mechanics, resolves the dilemma arising from his subjective experience of freedom, that he saw in conflict with a deterministic universe, by the adoption of panpsychism:²³

My body functions as a pure mechanism according to the laws of nature. Yet I know by incontrovertible direct experience, that I am directing its motions of which I foresee the effects, that may be fateful and all-important, in which case I feel and take full responsibility for them....The only possible inference from these two facts is ...that I—I in the widest meaning of the word, that is to say, every conscious mind that has ever said or felt “I” —am the person, if any, who controls the ‘motion of the atoms’ according to the laws of nature.²⁴

This leads to Schrödinger to believe that his subjective experience is grounded in a singular universal consciousness. Thus, his infamous declaration “...hence I am God Almighty,”²⁵ a view he apparently held his entire life.

The view that there is a singular monadic consciousness pervading all of reality and that our empirical experiences are but the epiphenomena of this cosmic entity, like all solipsistic theories of being, has the quality self-consistency. But it is not an explanation for the reality of freedom per se and abandons the concept of the individual free will. In the case of Schrödinger, it could at least be understood as an attempt to explain the subjective qualia of freedom while diffusing the responsibility for its actualization into the aether.

It should be noted that panpsychism is not a 20th century development but appeared in medieval times as Averroes’ theory of monopsychism that Albert the Great, Robert Kilwardby,

²³ Panpsychism is a form of solipsism where, like solipsism, there is only a singular consciousness. But in solipsism “you” are the only consciousness, and everything else including the external universe exists only in your mind. Whereas in panpsychism the universe is the singular consciousness and we all merely participate in it—a slightly less narcissistic view than classic solipsism.

²⁴ Schrödinger quoted in *Schrodinger, Life and Thought*, Walter John More (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 400.

²⁵ Schrödinger quoted in *Schrodinger, Life and Thought*, 401.

St. Bonaventure and Thomas all inveighed against.²⁶ Thomas, in *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, attacks monopsychism as at odds with traditional philosophic teaching and because the mind is dependent on the body.²⁷

For the hard incompatibilist and the panpsychic freedom is either eliminated or transformed into the unrecognizable. The remaining sections of this chapter will survey views of human freedom that actively argue for freedom's existence but differ in regard to how it can be understood and constituted with a strictly deterministic solely material universe.

Libertarianism

Contemporary libertarian philosophy takes the position that materialism is true and that even if determinism is largely true free will exists. Most libertarians resolve this tension by constraining the role of determinism in regard to free will decisions. Furthermore, we will see that the contemporary position of libertarian freedom aligns closely with Ockham's 'freedom of indifference' or the 'choice of contraries' that will be introduced in Chapter 3.

Libertarians describe the world in terms of alternatives for an individual to choose between as they pass through time. At any decision point where free will could be exercised the libertarian would require alternate choices be available. The picture of how this unfolds is seen in Kane's famous Garden of Forking Paths.²⁸

²⁶ Ralph McInerny, *Thomas Aquinas Against the Averroists On There Being Only One Intellect*, (West Lafayette, Ind: Purdue University Press, 1993), 8.

²⁷ McInerny, 147-152.

²⁸ Kane, "Libertarianism", 10.

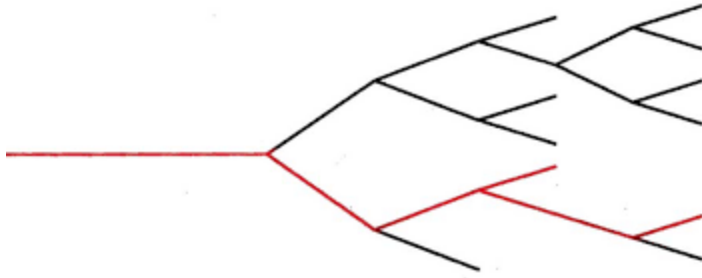


Figure 1.

The minimum characteristic at a decision cusp is the existence of at least two alternatives to decide between. This could be two equivalent alternatives like picking between Crest or Colgate toothpaste or it might be the decision to either do or not do an immoral act. For the libertarian, all the issues underlying freedom boil down to the matters confronting the individual at that particular decision cusp.

Libertarians tend to frame their arguments against their chief philosophic rival, compatibilism, which is the view that free will exists but is compatible with a deterministic universe. A compatibilist would assert that in a deterministic universe, if an individual were given a do over in the same universe at the same point in time, like in the movie *Groundhog Day*, they would make the same choice again, and achieve the same result. This can be reduced to the pithy principle *same past, same future*²⁹. In this kind of universe, no matter how often Bill Murray relives his single day, the day must end the same each time.³⁰

²⁹ Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will Fundamentals of Philosophy*, (Oxford, England. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 33.

³⁰ While many philosophers adhere to such a principle it evidently does not make for a good movie plot. Both in *Groundhog Day* and in the Tom Cruise movie *Live Die Repeat, The Edge of Tomorrow*, the protagonists live, learn and ultimately free themselves from the constraints of their forced temporal repetitions.

The Libertarian Dilemma



<https://www.classcentral.com/course/edx-libertarian-free-will-neuroscientific-and-philosophical-evidence-12605>

Figure 2.

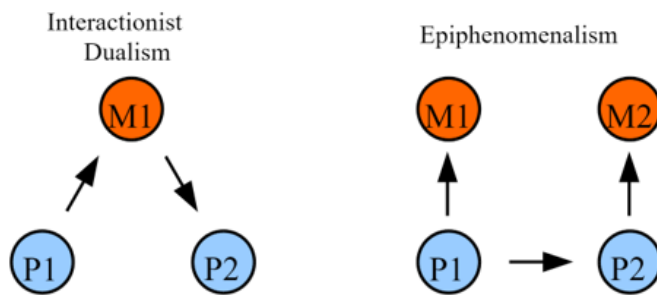
The libertarian transforms this principle into its opposite: *same past, different possible futures*. Libertarians would laud the changed future that Bill Murray eventually achieves in *Groundhog Day* as a demonstration of true human freedom. To put this thinking in agency-specific language, Kane articulates *The Indeterminist Condition*—the agent should be able to act and act otherwise (choose different possible futures), given the same past circumstances and laws of nature.³¹ For libertarians like Kane, if there is a causal (in the modern, not scholastic, sense) chain of events leading to a given choice to go left or right in Figure 2. then that decision would be unfree—thus the quest for an “indeterminate” explanation that breaks the causal chain. But if there exists an indeterminant explanation for such a choice why would that decision be considered free? And why would such a decision even be a desideratum? Compatibilist critics call this question the libertarian coherency challenge,³² and we will look at the several ways libertarians have responded.

³¹ Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 38.

³² Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room : The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*. (New ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT Press, 2015), 1-21.

Immaterial Mind

Perhaps the oldest model that holds the potential for evading a deterministic universe is the notion of an immaterial mind. Specifically, a view of the mind that is separate from the physical substrates (i.e. the brain) but that can interact with the material body at the point of decisions and action initiation. A sketch of two of the many ways mind and body might relate in this approach are given in Figure 3³³ where P stands for physical states, M for mental states.



adapted from https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Mind%E2%80%93body_dualism

Figure 3.

For the interactionist dualist, the physical and mental states are distinct with the mental states freed from the physical laws governing the physical states. But the interactionist believes the two kinds of states can interact. The challenge with this theory is to explain the basis for interaction. For the epiphenomenalist dualist, there are both mental and physical states, but they act as distinct worlds where state progression in each is mirrored with progression in the other without interaction between the two worlds.³⁴

³³ We should note these are varieties of Cartesian dualism. A distinct variety less familiar to the modern is Aristotelian hylomorphic dualism held by Aquinas which we will briefly detail in Chapter 6.

³⁴ Epiphenomenalism allows for a distinct mind but asserts that it is a mere side effect of the body and only reflects states and events occurring within the physical state. It is unclear what is accomplished by this proposal.

The most notable of recent proponents for a form of dualism to explain the mind and its freedom were the philosopher Karl Popper, and John Eccles, Nobel Laureate in neurophysiology. They prefer describing themselves as triallists with their categorizations of reality into three worlds.³⁵ World 1 is the world of physical objects and states; the world of physics and biology, and the material substrates humans build upon that world such as machines, books and works of art and music. World 2 are the states of consciousness; it includes the world of subjective knowledge, the experience of perception, thinking, the emotions, dispositional intentions, memories dreams and creative imagination. And their World 3 is the world of knowledge in the objective sense; it includes world of philosophical, scientific, mathematical, historical theories and thinking about such.

Dualist theories are supposed to provide the body with a get-out-of-jail-free card enabling the will to break the chains of deterministic causation. But critics assert dualism is just kicking the can down the road:

The dualist approach to free will makes a fundamental philosophical mistake. It sees a problem and tries to solve it by throwing another kind of ‘thing’ into the arena... [but] If we cannot understand how human beings are free [in a libertarian sense], we cannot understand how [a disembodied mind] can be free either.³⁶

We note that such a critique carries the implicit presumption that explanations for a decision voids the possibility of such a decision being free. In Chapter 3 we will argue that this presumption is not accepted, and we will demonstrate in Chapter 6 the necessity of at least a form of dualism in support a meaningful notion of personal identity.

Noumenal Self

Kant accepted the Newtonian mechanistic physics of his day and its deterministic implications. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* he bows to Descartes’ turn to the subject leading to

³⁵Karl Popper, John C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain* (New York: Springer International, 1977), 36.

³⁶Simon Blackburn quoted in Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 42.

the development of positivism.³⁷ But he believed in the reality of human freedom and in its necessity for moral agency. His solution was to compartmentalize the world of space and time to the domain of science and reason,³⁸ and the world of the things as they are “in themselves” to the noumenal domain.³⁹ He concluded free will belonged to the latter and could not be explained by the rules of the world of space and time that are constrained by the laws of nature. In contrast, to act in accordance with moral laws was for Kant a self-legislating act: we can choose to obey or not.

Kant’s noumenal-self explanation led to both theological and philosophical subjectivism.⁴⁰ His grounding the basis of belief in the moral needs of man did not result in either a satisfactory explanation of either freedom or a solid foundation for moral agency. But instead, it led to an understanding of dogmas not as statements of fact but as formulas expressing a need or experience of man.⁴¹

³⁷Benignus, 328.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4280>.

³⁹ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5683>.

⁴⁰ Benignus, 330.

⁴¹ Benignus, 330-331.

Agent causation

“A staff moves a stone, and is moved by a hand, which is moved by a man”⁴²

Agent causation theory of freedom asserts that the normal physical causation chains are epistemically incomplete. Roderick Chisholm is the contemporary philosopher most associated with this approach.⁴³ Chisholm concedes that for ordinary entities deterministic causation rules, but argues that agent caused event chains are of a different order of causality. He categorizes the movement of the staff on the stone as *transeunt* causations, and the movement of the hand by the man as *immanent* causation.⁴⁴

If we consider only inanimate natural objects, we may say that causation, if it occurs, is a relation between events or states of affairs. The dam’s breaking was an event that was caused by a set of other events—the dam being weak, the flood being strong, and so on. But if a man is responsible for a particular deed, then...there is some event [his deed or action]...that is caused, not by other events or states of affairs, but by the agent, whatever he may be...If what I have been trying to say [about immanent causation] is true, then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us when we act is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing—or no one—causes us to cause those events to happen.⁴⁵

For agent-causation, free actions caused by the agent are *not* a circumstance, an event or a state of affairs—instead agents are a distinct category—a thing or substance or a part of a substance with a continuing existence. Free actions are agent-caused and hence undetermined by events. Those supporting agent-causation would point out the priority of immanent causation by asserting it is only by understanding our own causal efficacy that we can we grasp the notion of

⁴²Aristotle, *Physics*, VII, 5, 256a, 6-8, trans. R.P. Hardie, R.P. and R.K. Gaye, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.html>.

⁴³ Roderick Chisholm, *Person and Object: A Metaphysical Study* (London: Routledge, 2004), Chapter II.

⁴⁴ At least one key difference between a Chisholmian agent and a human agent in the Aristotelean sense is that the Chisholm considered his agent purely material.

⁴⁵ Chisholm, 34.

cause at all since “the notion of cause may very plausibly be derived from the experience we have ... of our own power to produce certain effects.”⁴⁶

Agent-causalists argue that the cause of a free choice is neither prior events, thus avoiding determinism, nor random occurrences but the choice is caused immanently by the agent themselves. Chisholm accepts the conclusion this leads to an infinite regress of agent-causation, which for contemporary philosophy is an unpalatable outcome.⁴⁷ We will point out in Chapter 6 that this infinite regress is a fundamental aspect of self-consciousness. While agent causation has not attracted many modern philosophers, we will reclaim aspects of agent-causation with Thomas’ view of the will as its own self-mover, albeit in a secondary sense, as God is the ultimate cause of every created motion.⁴⁸

Depending on Chance

Libertarians, attempting to avoid a strict deterministic causal chain leading to a decision, seek ways to enlist chance as part of the decision process. In this approach the ultimate free decision is influenced one way or another by a random event. The incept for this idea would be the case of a decision where it was difficult to choose between two options either because of almost equal attraction or almost equal repulsion.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Richard Taylor quoted in “Human Freedom and the Self” in *Free Will*, 31.

⁴⁷ Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 50.

⁴⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 6, trans. English Dominican Province, 632-633.

⁴⁹ In Chapter 3 Ockham’s “freedom of indifference” will be introduced. It is possible to interpret the “indifferent” choice as an early attempt to enlisting equal randomness as a key ingredient in a free decision—at least for a decision that is a close call. If we define a probability distribution for a choice between two outcomes, the point at which the choice is “too close to call” is the point where the choice is equally likely. This point turns out to also be the point of maximum entropy and corresponds mathematically with the point of maximum disorder in the system—see Thomas Cover “Chapter 12, Maximum Entropy”, *Elements of Information Theory* (2 ed, Wiley, 2006). The point of maximum freedom is therefore the point of maximum disorder. An outcome that suggests something has gone wrong with this proposal.

There has been a cottage industry among physicists and philosophers⁵⁰ proposing that mental events (and free will) could follow from a variety of quantum effects such as quantum domain entanglement and nonlocality.⁵¹ However, most neuroscientists consider it improbable for quantum effects to occur given the “warmth”⁵² of the brain, although the possibility has not been entirely foreclosed.⁵³ While it is barely possible that quantum effects may be part of our brain’s functioning, the role it could play in free will appears limited to providing a source of randomness in the neural machinery. What does such a spontaneous event accomplish? If these undetermined mental “nudges” occur and are not under the control of the human agent is this the kind of freedom we want?

Kane’s proposals in this area represent the most nuanced of attempts to incorporate chance as an enabler of free decisions. He prunes from consideration all but a small handful of decisions where there is the possibility of free will, conceding the rest as predetermined by the laws of the universe. He focuses attention on those decisions by which we make ourselves into the kinds of persons we are, namely the “will-setting” or “self-forming actions” that are required for ultimate responsibility. “These undetermined self-forming actions occur at those difficult times of life when we face competing visions of what we should or should not become...[Examples would be] when we are torn between doing right or acting from ambition,

⁵⁰ S. Hameroff, “Biological feasibility of quantum approaches to consciousness” in *The Physical Nature of Consciousness*, ed. P. van Loocke, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins), 1-62; Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind: A Search for the Missing Science of Consciousness*, (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁵¹ Quantum entanglement is an experimentally verified phenomenon where paired particles state remains dependent on one another. This means that even if they are separated widely in space measuring one particle determines the state of the other. The explanations for this verifiable occurrence trespass on issues such as faster than light communication, and even reverse time causality. Hameroff and Penrose use these phenomena to explain how microscopic effects could have macroscopic consequences.

⁵² Literally warmth. Quantum coherence and entanglement is easiest to produce at extremely low temperatures—like within a degree Kelvin of absolute zero (~459.67 °F).

⁵³ Peter Tse, *The Neural Basis of Free Will: Criterial Causation*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013), 245.

or between acting on powerful present desires versus acting on long-term goals.”⁵⁴ Kane identifies as the key characteristic of these occasions that we are faced with tension and uncertainty in our minds about what to do:

It is at such times that our brains [move away from] thermodynamic equilibrium...[there is] a stirring up of chaos in the brain that makes it sensitive to micro-indeterminacies at the neuronal level...What we experience internally as uncertainty about what to do on such occasions would then correspond physically to the opening of a window of opportunity that temporarily screens off complete determination by influences of the past.⁵⁵

Kane further proposes that, consistent with recent advances in neurosciences, such decisions might involve competing neural networks of interconnected neurons circulating signals in feedback loops, each processing information for one alternative.⁵⁶ He then appeals to chaos to act as an amplifier of randomness that will result in one of the networks “winning”. And in either case he argues that whichever outcome succeeds the individual will view the decision as “theirs.” For Kane such a choice should be considered neither “inadvertent”, “accidental”, “capricious”, nor “merely random”, because in all these cases the choice will be willed, and it will be experienced as willed by the person making it.⁵⁷

While Kane has minimized the footprint of the libertarian argument, it reveals several very unsatisfactory features when put under the microscope. First, he is claiming for freedom only those decisions where there is essentially a close call between two choices, a limitation we will not accept for the freedom of excellence. Second, the decision regarding this close call is understood as originating as a non-conscious event that has been amplified into a preference by some random neural process and is explicitly described as *not* the result of a deliberative choice. Finally, Kane’s validation of it being a free decision is that the person has mental experience of

⁵⁴Kane, “Libertarianism”, 26.

⁵⁵Kane, “Libertarianism”, 26.

⁵⁶Kane, “Libertarianism”, 28.

⁵⁷Kane, “Libertarianism”, 29.

having adopted the final preference and final decision is therefore “their” decision. We will see this “ownership” argument is also claimed for compatibilism, but we assert such reasoning is fails to extend beyond Boswell’s “We know our will is free, and there’s an end on’t.”⁵⁸

Compatibilism

Compatibilists assume a deterministic and strictly materialistic universe, but argue that free will exists. Not surprisingly their definition of free will differs from the varieties of libertarianism. A compatibilist argues that freedom is the ability of an individual to act as one wishes. So, if a person acts as they wish they possess free will. This argument was articulated by Hobbes:

He is free to do a thing, that may do it if he have the will to do it, and may forbear if he have the will to forbear. And yet if there be a necessity that he shall have the will to do it, the action is necessarily to follow; and if there be a necessity that he shall have the will to forbear, the forbearing also will be necessary⁵⁹

This argument was further elaborated by David Hume:

What is meant by liberty when applied to voluntary actions? We cannot surely mean that actions have so little connection with the motives, inclinations, and circumstances that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other, and that one affords no inference by which we can conclude the existence of the other. For these are plain and acknowledged matters of fact. By liberty, then we can only mean a power of acting or not acting according to the determinations of the will; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may. Now this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to everyone who is not a prisoner and in chains. Here then is no subject of dispute.⁶⁰

⁵⁸The argument that when a person makes a decision (regardless of its cause) they take ownership of it is made by libertarians, and compatibilists alike and is also coherent with freedom of excellence. But from the perspective of freedom of excellence it is an obvious consequence of having an intellect.

⁵⁹ Thomas Hobbes and John Bramhall, *The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*, (Early English Books Online. London: Printed for Andrew Crook 1656), 42.

⁶⁰ David Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding; with a Supplement, An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature*, Edited with an Introduction by Charles W. Hendel. (The Library of Liberal Arts, 49. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), VII, Part I, 104.

Compatibilism thus argues that: 1) we must have the power or ability or desire to do what we want; and 2) we need an absence of constraints such as physical coercion or compulsion that would prevent us from doing what we want.

Thomas had already raised an objection to this argument: “it is not whether we bring about what we will, but whether our will is free.”⁶¹ There are acts of individuals who are brainwashed or addicted that we and the compatibilist might wish to exclude from being considered free. But how would a compatibilist differentiate the causes leading to such a state from acts from the ordinary deterministic workings of the universe? If some are unfree due to deterministic causes how can a compatibilist argue any are free?

Compatibilists concede that conditioning processes as seen in *Brave New World* or *Walden Two* are examples of deterministic processes that undermines the ability of individuals to exercise free will. They concede that persons, other *agents*, whether behavioral engineers or snake oil salesman, are using these techniques as means to their ends. But they would assert that nature and its deterministic laws are not such agents. As evidence that determinism can co-exist with individual freedom and thus individual responsibility a compatibilist would point to one of the Frankfurt examples.⁶²

Let us imagine that there is a Mr. Smith who is considering for whatever reason whether or not to kill a Mr. Jones. But consider another entity, a controller external to the situation, that is able to recognize Mr. Smith’s intention before the decision is actuated and has the wherewithal to prevent Mr. Smith’s killing Mr. Jones but will otherwise not interfere with Mr. Smith’s

⁶¹ Quoted in Chisholm, 66. Chisholm does not give a reference and I have been unable to verify this quote in Aquinas’ primary materials, particularly in *ST*, I, q. 82 and 83.

⁶² Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” *Free Will* ed Gary Watson, 2nd ed, (Oxford Readings in Philosophy, Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 172.

decision making.⁶³ Under this scenario Mr. Smith will be unable to kill, but Frankfurt argues that if Mr. Smith decides not to kill it will be a free will decision, and that this will be operating in a completely deterministic setting. Harry Frankfurt constructed this and variations on this scenario as an attack on the libertarian principle of alternate possibilities (PAP) that is:⁶⁴

(1) An agent is responsible for an action only if said agent could have done otherwise.

(2) An agent could have done otherwise only if causal determinism is false.

(3) Therefore, an agent is responsible for an action only if causal determinism is false.

Frankfurt argues that since we intuitively laud the outcome where Mr. Smith decides not to kill, and that because his decision to not kill is not coerced even though the deterministic rules of the scenario would have prevented the alternative, therefore PAP is false. Since PAP is false, the opposite must be true, agents can be free and morally responsible in a completely determined scenario.

The most basic criticism of this argument is that Frankfurt is simply begging the question. There is nothing in the scenario that prevents Mr. Smith from either making the decision to kill or not to kill: it is just that he will be prevented from the act of killing. Frankfurt cannot argue such an inhibition affects the internal decision making one way or another, it only affects the external outcome. Therefore, this example is irrelevant with regards to whether Mr. Smith's decision making was free or was unfree.

⁶³ These 'controllers' are simply devices for establishing the scenario. Issues of how the controller can read Mr. Smith's intentions or how it could interfere with Mr. Smith's actions are irrelevant to the line of the argument.

⁶⁴ Frankfurt, 829–39.

Compatibilists argue that determinism should not be confused with fatalism—the view that whatever is going to happen is going to happen. John Stuart Mill makes this distinction because *we* participate in forming who we are:

A fatalist believes...not only that whatever is about to happen will be the infallible result of the causes that preceded it, but moreover that there is no use in struggling against it; that it will happen however we may strive to prevent it...thus fatalists believe that a man's character is formed *for* him and not *by* him. This is a grand error. He has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character...His character is formed by his circumstances...but his own desire to mold it in a particular way is one of those circumstances, and by no means the least influential.⁶⁵

Compatibilists such as Dennett argue that determinism does not mean that we are machines like watches or insects responding automatically to the stimuli of our environment. Instead, we are beings—formed by the blind hand of evolution to be sure—that reason and deliberate, reflect on our values, and make plans. In none of these things does determinism make free will untrue. It is these capacities and not the lack of determinism that makes us free.⁶⁶ However, these assurances of freedom ring hollow in the libertarian view since, for the compatibilist, each of these capacities, including reason itself, is formed deterministically by environmental factors beyond our control.

Compatibilism is a “quagmire of evasion” according to William James and a “wretched subterfuge” according to Immanuel Kant, but aspects of its arguments are attractive and deserve salvaging. Dennett rightly acknowledges the many amazing aspects of our mental characteristics contributing to the reality of freedom. We will demonstrate in Chapter 6 that compatibilism's most serious deficiencies arise from its metaphysical poverty, especially the elimination of final ends and an insistence on a purely material universe.

⁶⁵ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, Book VI, Chapter II, § 3
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27942/27942-pdf.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Daniel C. Dennett, *Elbow Room : The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: MIT Press, 2015), Ch 4

Current Philosophical Impasse

Peter Tse has declared the philosophical arguments regarding human freedom at an impasse.⁶⁷ Strawson is pessimistic regarding a solution. “The principal positions in this debate are clear...No radically new option is likely to emerge after millennia of debate.”⁶⁸ We have reviewed the major positions regarding free will in contemporary philosophical thought and must agree with each position’s critics in finding them unpersuasive explanations for human freedom.

We are now ready to propose a quite different approach to what free will and freedom means. But to appreciate this proposal it will be necessary to turn the clock back: back before the scientific revolution, before the Enlightenment, before we lost the anthropology and the metaphysics needed to untangle Tse and Strawson’s Gordian knot.

⁶⁷ Tse, 3.

⁶⁸ Tse, 3.

Chapter 3. Freedom of Excellence: Pinckaers' View of Moral Theology

We now turn away from the post Enlightenment world of Chapter 2 and return to the world where the metaphysics of Erasmus and Luther are still relevant. Here we will find a more complete and satisfying theory of human freedom that Servais Pinckaers calls freedom of excellence. This view of freedom re-emerges from its Thomistic roots as a consequence of his work aimed at revitalizing the foundations of moral theology by restoring the proper balance for the role of virtue. This chapter will focus on developing Pinckaers' formulation of freedom, with a deeper exploration of its Thomistic foundation in Chapter 4.

An Adequate Anthropology

Pinckaers' approach to human freedom starts with an anthropology which focuses on two key aspects. The first is a refusal to accept the rupture between human and divine, freedom and grace, natural and supernatural that has been the un-reflected legacy of the Enlightenment. This refusal to be swallowed up by the modern "turn to the subject" allows him to maintain a critical space for the role of human participation with the divine, even in the presence of corruption caused by sin, and to insist that this natural harmony between human and divine is the goal of God's restoration of His image in us. It is in the outworking of God's grace that leads us to what is most concretely and truly human.⁶⁹

Pinckaers' second anthropological theme is a refusal to atomize the moral act. He defines this atomization when a theory of freedom focuses only on the individual discrete action, an action disconnected from its past or its future. He uses terms such as "experience" to include more than simply a memory of past actions but the full span of impressions, emotions, and

⁶⁹ Pinckaers, 90.

accumulated memories under the umbrella of intelligence in the context of moral science.⁷⁰

Moral reasoning is not simply reasoning over *a priori* principles, but the recognition that moral actions affect the very being of the individual in a way that conditions future actions.

Pinckaers reemphasizes the integrative role of the virtues in his anthropology by tying together individual human action into the longitudinal horizon of experience. He then moves to the foundational context of defining virtue, Christ's Sermon on the Mount, using Paul as an interpretive filter. Paul's teaching arose from the intersection of Jewish views of morality grounded in the covenant with God, and with Greek philosophy that was anchored in the pursuit of wisdom. But Paul recasts these elements in light of the "New Law" of the Gospel and in the historical reality of the person of Jesus Christ. The morality of the Christian is now realized in personal union with Christ through the fully expressed virtues of faith and love:

This moves the heart beyond the visible horizons, beyond suffering and death to where Christ is seated with the Father...this hope creates a new dimension with the human heart where the moral life unfolds...Henceforth every virtue, each action of the believer will be modified from within by this relation of faith and the life of the risen Christ.⁷¹

For faith gives birth to a change in the very personality of the believer and not just a forensic change of status. Pinckaers argues that Paul holds up the humility of Christ obedient, crucified and risen, calling us a to life in Christ, to become imitators of Christ, making us dependent on the faith, hope and charity that binds the believer to Christ.⁷²

In this Pauline context, Pinckaers finds that the expectations expressed by Christ in the Sermon of the Mount are for all Christians. He rejects the view that Christ's description of human behavior is an expression of an ideal for the few—the religious⁷³—but not relevant for

⁷⁰ Pinckaers, 92.

⁷¹ Pinckaers, 116.

⁷² Pinckaers, 121.

⁷³ This is a reference to the consecrated religious.

the practice of the ordinary believer.⁷⁴ Pinckaers uses Augustine's commentary on the Sermon⁷⁵ to reclaim for moral theology the role of happiness rather than obligation as key to understanding the Sermon.⁷⁶ He argues that if we understand ethics as simply a matter of obligation then we cannot assimilate the lessons the Sermon has for us. "The Lord's teaching penetrates the depths of human nature far too intimately to be viewed as a body of strict commands imposed by an external law."⁷⁷ It concerns the works the Holy Spirit wishes to accomplish in all of us through the power of His grace with our 'humble and docile' cooperation: "The Sermon gives us what the Spirit promises and calls us to hope before telling us what to do."⁷⁸ Therefore, Pinckaers holds the Sermon on the Mount as *the* model of moral teaching addressed to all, beginning with the gift of the Beatitudes in fulfilment of the Old Testament, deepening the precepts of the Decalogue, and penetrating to the heart where actions are conceived, and virtues formed.⁷⁹

A Thomistic Framework

If we think of the Sermon on the Mount as the formal cause of Pinckaers' teachings on Christian ethics, Thomas Aquinas' teaching is the efficient cause in the sense that it is Thomas' systematic formulation that provides Pinckaers' theory of freedom the detailed structural description of human personhood. While some later theologians blame Aquinas for a moral theology based on natural law shorn of its connection to scripture and tradition, Pinckaers' refutes this claim.

Pinckaers argues that in Aquinas' moral teaching there are three towering peaks: our journey in search of happiness which culminates in the vision of God, the way of the theological

⁷⁴ Pinckaers, 136-37.

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount with Seventeen Related Sermons*, trans Dennis Kavanagh, (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 1951).

⁷⁶ Pinckaers, 141.

⁷⁷ Pinckaers, 160.

⁷⁸ Pinckaers, 160.

⁷⁹ Pinckaers, 165.

virtues which render God present to us, and finally the evangelical or New Law which is the high point of all legislations issuing from the wisdom of God and communicated to human beings.⁸⁰ Should these peaks be separated from one another we are left with “a moral teaching that is focused only on human acts, a smattering of passion, and a small sampling a virtue...[in this] we have witnessed the decapitation of St Thomas.”⁸¹

Pinckaers views as the capstone of Aquinas’ teaching in the *prima secundae* and *secunda secundae* of the *Summa* his treatise on the evangelical law. Aquinas starts with the grace of the Holy Spirit engendering faith, hope and charity in the human intellect and will. These graces enlarge the natural virtues ruled by reason: first prudence and justice, then fortitude or courage and temperance. Aquinas follows Augustine and Gregory the Great in having the Spirit add to each virtue a gift that perfects it.⁸² This ordering toward supernatural happiness is augmented by infused moral virtues that are added to the acquired virtues to fit us to a supernatural end. “These qualities penetrate to the interior of the natural virtues, enabling them to act in view of supernatural happiness.”⁸³

Pinckaers viewed the received ‘manualist’⁸⁴ tradition of his earlier years as conceiving of moral law as only an expression of the divine will, centered in natural law and expressed in the Decalogue but deemphasizing Aquinas’ articulation of the evangelical New Law. Pinckaers

⁸⁰ Pinckaers, 172.

⁸¹ Pinckaers, 171.

⁸² Pinckaers, 178, *ST*, I-II, q. 68, a. 1, 877-888.

⁸³ Pinckaers, 179.

⁸⁴ As Brian Besong describes in “Reappraising the Manual Tradition.” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 89, no. 4, 2015: 557–584, that since Vatican II many Catholic moral theologians have been antagonistic to the prior practice of priests use of ecclesiastically-approved manuals or handbooks whose contents chiefly involved general precepts of morally good and bad behavior as well as the extension of those precepts to particular cases. One source of antagonism was from theologians such as Charles Curran, Bernard Häring, and James Keenan, who dissented from the moral conclusions defined by the Magisterium appearing in these manuals. A second source of opposition arose from the orthodox branch of the ressourcement movement of the *Nouvelle Théologie*. Servais Pinckaers was of this latter group. His objections were not due to disagreement with the conclusions of the manuals but their loss of an explicit anchoring in the virtues.

describes Aquinas' view of the law as a work of wisdom, first engaging the intelligence and then the will.⁸⁵ The Old Law, centered in the Decalogue and expressed in natural law, finds its full expression in the evangelical law of the New Testament.⁸⁶

Aquinas, following in Augustine's footsteps, frames the meaning of the evangelical Law by the distinction between interior and exterior actions, concluding that there is no new teaching in the Sermon at the level of exterior actions:

The entire teaching of the Sermon centered on the regulation of the interior acts, of the will, intention, love and desire. While the evangelical law had an external origin in Christ's revelation, as a grace of the Holy Spirit it penetrates to the interior of the person becoming the very source of the virtues.⁸⁷

Calling attention to Aquinas' conception of ethics as focused mainly on virtue and only secondarily on precepts, was part of Pinckaers' quest to renew of the foundations of moral theology. Precepts function as the guidepost to what was necessary to make virtuous action possible, but as virtue increases the need for precepts decreases. "*This is precisely why the New Law is called the law of freedom...the action of the Spirit through the virtues creates within us a spontaneous, personal movement toward good acts.*"⁸⁸ This in turn opens a wider field for freedom's initiative within a corresponding less explicit role for precepts. Pinckaers asserts this makes the New Law non-reducible to either natural law or the Decalogue.⁸⁹ But if this is the view of Aquinas, who appears to be systematizing but otherwise consistent with Augustine as well as Paul and the witness of Christ in His Sermon, then how did this view become lost or at least deemphasized by the time of the

⁸⁵ Pinckaers, 181.

⁸⁶ Pinckaers, 181, *ST*, I-II, q. 106, a. 4 p 1106-1107.

⁸⁷ *ST*, I-II, q. 108, a. 3, trans. Pinckaers 182.

⁸⁸ Pinckaers, 185.

⁸⁹ Pinckaers, 185.

era of the manuals? It is in answering this question that Pinckaers develops his view of freedom.

Freedom of Indifference

Pinckaers traces the root cause back to the scholastic divide between Dominican and Franciscan interpretations of the definition of Peter Lombard's proposition that "Free will is that faculty of reason and will whereby one chooses the good with the help of grace, or evil without the help."⁹⁰ Aquinas understands this freedom as proceeding from reason and will which unite in the moment of the choice, and are rooted in the inclinations to truth and goodness.⁹¹ While Aquinas affirms the primacy of the intellect, he defines the first and formal element of the beatitude in terms of the intellect, the Franciscans maintained primacy of the will and substituted love for intellect as the formal element of beatitude. Mahoney argues that the fusion of Aquinas with Franciscan nominalism becomes one of the standard "Thomistic" views that undergirds the later theology established by figures such as Francisco Suárez.⁹²

While Mahoney considers nominalism to come to fullness with Suarez, Pinckaers points to William of Ockham for its inception. For Ockham, freedom was radically autonomous, separated from all that was foreign to it: reason, sensibility, and natural inclinations as well as external factors. Pinckaers argues that further atomization occurred as this view of freedom became embedded into western theological and philosophical thought: freedom was separated from nature, law and grace; moral doctrine from mysticism; reason from faith; and the individual from his societal community.⁹³

⁹⁰ Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum Liber Secundus*, XXIV, Chapter 3, quoted in Pinckaers, 331

⁹¹ Pinckaers, 331, *ST*, I, q. 83, 417 but as Pinckaers notes it is preceded by q.79, and q.80 for good reason.

⁹²John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford, OX : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1987), 226.

⁹³ Pinckaers, 337.

Ockham held that freedom preceded reason and will in such a way as to move them to their acts. “I call freedom the ability by which I am able indifferently and contingently to posit diverse courses, such that I am able to cause or not to cause the same effect, with no difference existing somewhere else outside this power.”⁹⁴ Pinckaers summarizes this view: “Thus freedom consisted in an indetermination or radical indifference in the will regarding contraries, in such a way that actions were produced in a wholly contingent way.”⁹⁵ Thus *freedom of indifference* is the ability of the will to be indifferent to opposite choices and is the primary understanding of freedom that underlays modern views as “a conscious pressure of self upon self” that Pinckaers argues ultimately leads to the self-willed man of Nietzsche.⁹⁶

Pinckaers holds Ockham responsible for creating a breach between freedom and the natural inclinations. This breach led to the development of moral theories of obligation rather than a moral science anchored in virtue. This is in contrast with Aquinas’ moral theory in its natural predisposition toward beatitude and the perfection of the good as our ultimate end.⁹⁷ For Aquinas, a person can never be prevented from desiring this end. But for Ockham, being is now subject to the contingent choice of freedom instead of an individual being ordered towards beatitude. Inclinations have been displaced to a lower level of activity which leads to an almost complete reversal of their role:

The consideration of the nature and spiritual spontaneity of the human person was banished from the horizons of thought. Inclinations appear as a threat to the freedom and morality of actions because they are interior and influenced us from within.⁹⁸

⁹⁴Ockham, *Quad* 1, q. 16 quoted in Thomas Osborne, *Human action in Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, & William of Ockham* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press. 2014), 52.

⁹⁵ Pinckaers, 332.

⁹⁶ Pinckaers, 332.

⁹⁷ *ST*, I, q. 60, a. 1, 297-298.

⁹⁸ Pinckaers, 333.

The nominalistic freedom of indifference leads to a fundamental rupture in the source of action in the human soul. Not only is the relationship between the will and the natural inclinations transformed but its relationship to human sensibility is as well. While Aquinas held that the passions could acquire a positive moral value, for freedom of indifference passions diminish the scope of freedom giving rise to rigorism.⁹⁹

In addition to the diminished role of the natural inclinations, Pinckaers argues that the very idea of *habitus* is opposed to the freedom of indifference, for in *habitus* there is a stable determination of action.¹⁰⁰ The stronger a *habitus* grows the more it influences subsequent actions and the more it would seem to reduce freedom of indifference's scope. We will see in Chapter 3 that for Aquinas, *habitus* relates to the rational choice of what appears to be good and thus reinforces human freedom.¹⁰¹

We then see how the virtues came to be deemphasized in the manualist tradition. Pinckaers concedes the manualists make nominal room for the virtues, but he asserts that under the influence of freedom of indifference, ethicists came to treat virtue as simply a label, a logical category that enumerates moral obligations but left only Law as their organizing principle.¹⁰² In diminishing the role of the inclinations and *habitus*, nominalism fractures the continuity of act

⁹⁹ Pinckaers, 335.

¹⁰⁰ Pinckaers, 336.

¹⁰¹ The claim of a direct minimization of *habitus* in Ockham may be unfair, see Magali Roques, "Ockham on Habits" in *The Ontology Psychology and Axiology of Habits(Habitus) in Medieval Philosophy*, (Springer, Switzerland, 2018), 263. Ockham does push the role of *habitus* away from the intellect, and shift predisposition of willing usually associated with *habitus* to the term inclinations, which he then calls the "act before the act" see Oswald Fuchs, *The Psychology of Habit according to William Ockham*,(St Bonaventure Franciscan Institute, 1952), 70. But more importantly he severs the causal relationship that Aquinas asserts between the interior and exterior act—they merely occur at the same time. (see Osborne, 199). When combined with his view that an act is only bad because of divine command, we see a further separation in the role *habitus* can play regarding virtue, see Osborne, 180.

¹⁰² Pinckaers, 336.

with act. In contrast, for Pinckaers inclinations and *habitus* establish a pattern of acts that ‘have continuity ordered to finality’:

Human acts were linked from within the interior and formed an organic whole where the present flowed from the past and opened into the future...On the contrary if freedom depends in its entirety on an indifferent choice between contraries then each of our actions is an atomic act, separated in any meaningful sense from all antecedent or posterior actions.¹⁰³

Continuity is shattered, each act becomes an isolated atom—a monad of activity. It is like viewing a person’s life through a series of strobe light flashes where nothing in between the flashes is considered important and in which the individual events have no real connection... It is the atomic age of moral theology.¹⁰⁴

This is a view of personhood that disintegrates its component elements. Free action follows upon free action without unifying principles fusing them into an essential whole. Consideration of final ends still plays a role in the calculus of individual actions but given its anchoring in a single act it cannot avoid a foreshortened view of finality. As Ockham scholar G. de Largarde puts it:

...if the human person’s basic dignity lies in the power to act at any given moment in the way he chooses, then personality is something we cannot grasp. Only the successive, varying actions of the person matter...actions continue with its bizarre, uncoordinated contours. Human discontinuity is one of the basic tenets of Ockham...and this leads directly to a moral system in which only actions are taken into consideration.¹⁰⁵

Pinckaers does not mince words regarding the implications of this development:

Make no mistake: the demolition—and the word is chosen with precision—of St. Thomas’ moral teaching by Ockham and the [subsequent] nominalists was no unfortunate accident, no regrettable error stemming from weakness of intellect and of moral concepts. We can see in it the direct, clearly deduced, and fully deliberate result of placing humanity in a center position. This was the core of freedom of indifference... Beneath freedom of indifference lay hidden a primitive passion—we dare not call it natural: the human will to self-affirmation, to the

¹⁰³ Pinckaers, 337.

¹⁰⁴ Pinckaers, 336.

¹⁰⁵ G. de Largarde, *La naissance de l’esprit laïque au déclin du moyen âge*, (Vol 6. L’individualisme ockhamiste, Paris 1046), 46-47 quoted in Pinckaers, 338.

assertion of a radical difference between itself and all else that existed.¹⁰⁶

Freedom of Excellence—what we want from freedom

Dennett in his influential book *Elbow Room*, observes that an adequate theory of freedom is inevitably tied to the kind of free will we need, and specifically want.¹⁰⁷ To help with more clearly identifying the kind of freedom that we need and that we should want, we will start with Pinckaers' example of learning to play the piano.¹⁰⁸

Anyone, whether they know how to play or not, is 'free' to bang out notes on the piano. But to play the piano with excellence is not accomplished in the single isolated act of the will but arrives at the end of a long journey that consists of countless individual acts. It starts with a child that possesses a basic musical predisposition such as an attraction to play and the physical potential to succeed. With the aid of a teacher and regular practice exercises a child learns the rules of the art. Lessons and practice can be viewed as a constraint on the freedom of indifference, but with effort and perseverance the child progresses in rhythm, accuracy, sight reading and musicality. But growing in musicianship is far more than merely avoiding breaking the laws of music. With abilities forged over many years of practice, growth, and learning the emergent musician possesses an enlarged musical freedom, a "freedom of excellence." This freedom enables the exploration of the musical world not previously open to him or her, and in fact could not have even been imagined when they first approached the instrument and were only 'free' to bang notes on it.

Moving from the arts to the moral order, Pinckaers considers the virtue of courage. The virtue of courage enables us to act when otherwise setbacks would weaken our resolve. Contrast

¹⁰⁶ Pinckaers, 338.

¹⁰⁷ Dennett, *Elbow Room*, Chapter 7

¹⁰⁸ Pinckaers, 355.

the courageous with the coward: the coward can boast that he is as free as the wind but Pinckaers would describe him as closer to being a slave because he does not know how to resist pressures or circumstances as he ought.¹⁰⁹ But it makes no sense to think about choosing courage as a choice among possible alternatives as you would in a freedom of indifference. The development of courage is progressive, acquired through repeated victories of self-conquest. It is seen by example, then personally appropriated, and grows through dogged effort to render service and overcome.¹¹⁰

These examples demonstrate the core differences between the freedom of indifference and the freedom of excellence. Freedom of excellence emerges as an outcome of the harmonious and continuous interaction between our interior and exterior worlds contra an atomic monadic will. Freedom of excellence is rooted in our basic inclinations and primal moral sense that Aquinas asserts are universal: the sense of the true and good.¹¹¹ Pinckaers describes this freedom as finding its inception in the morality of attraction rather than obligation. He draws on the analogy of a child growing into adulthood to describe the unfolding of this freedom: first in discipline, then in the development of virtue, and finally in the development of moral maturity, following the three stages of Aquinas.¹¹²

Like the child beginning to learn the piano, moral education begins with grappling with the ‘discipline of life’ rooted in the moral laws. At this point we might perform actions for their immediate reward, or to avoid punishment. But even in this stage we should understand our role as ‘beginners in the order of charity’.¹¹³ Pinckaers would agree with Ockham and the later voluntarists that the role of the law at this stage is to help offset those inclinations that are

¹⁰⁹ Pinckaers, 357.

¹¹⁰ Pinckaers, 356.

¹¹¹ *ST*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, 1009.

¹¹² Pinckaers, 359.

¹¹³ *ST*, II-II, q. 24, a. 9, 1275-1276.

opposed to charity. But he would insist, along with the mystics, that this is merely a first step along the journey, necessary in order that God may act and reveal himself more fully in our next steps. The second stage is characterized by a deepening of what Pinckaers calls ‘an active interiority’; it is this stage where the virtues are formed organically with a personal intention to act in accord with the good of these virtues. Again, unlike the atomic language of a freedom-of-indifference based morality, there are no grand isolated acts that characterize this stage. Instead, this stage unfolds little by little, act by act as we grow in virtue.

It should be said that the notion of virtue does not consist in the superlative with respect to itself, but with respect to its object, because by virtue a man is ordered to the utmost of a power, which is to act well; hence, the Philosopher says in *Physics 7* that virtue is the disposition of the perfected to the best. However, one can be more or less disposed to this optimum, and in this respect, virtue receives more or less.¹¹⁴

What formerly guided us—the desire of reward, or fear of punishment—yields to the love of virtue for its own sake. Equally important for Pinckaers is the exterior relationships we form in this stage in the friendship and love for others.¹¹⁵ Instead of the virtues being unnecessary and un-causal for freedom, they are at the very core of what we mean by true freedom.

Pinckaers describes this development “as a personal capacity for action which is the fruit of a series of fine actions, a power for progress and perfection”.¹¹⁶ This is the core of Pinckaers entire argument:

Virtue is contained within a timespan and within the action performed, and within the timespan virtue develops the person and his actions; it transforms the passing moment. While freedom of indifference holds us fixed within the instant, moral progress requires our perseverance in the active intention that orients our life toward a goal, a higher reality that gives it its full value. No progress can be made without the ongoing, patient and courageous effort that directs all our successive actions in one direction, the goal we long for and love supremely.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus, Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, q2, a.11 ad. 15, trans. Ralph McInerney, (St Augustines Press, South Bend Indiana, 1999).

¹¹⁵ Pinckaers, 363.

¹¹⁶ Pinckaers, 364.

¹¹⁷ Pinckaers, 364.

It is with the second stage that we are ready for the Sermon of the Mount, which the Fathers describe as penetrating through the external actions of the Law into the heart.¹¹⁸ Pinckaers likens this stage to the ‘illuminative path of the mystics’, in whose contemplative life and practice of the virtues through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, “infuses freedom and strength into the soul, directing us ever more powerfully to God, while deepening our attachments to our neighbors in effective pure love.”¹¹⁹

The third stage is that of moral maturity, the adulthood of the moral life consisting of the mastery of excellence and creative fruitfulness. This is the freedom that Aquinas describes in the beginning of the *prima secundae*,¹²⁰ as spiritual maturity by the perfection of love of the Father and Christ, and the contemplative life ordered to the vision of God. It leads to man becoming “[the] perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph 4:13)¹²¹ It is a self-mastery that presumes moral education and development of the virtues within us. Pinckaers describes the role of the virtues acting like a sheaf of interior energies that allow us to draw together our faculties, ideas, desires, and feelings and direct them to their higher end: “This deepening interiority does not isolate us but draws us into the world to lead us to a vocation, whether great or humble, in service of family, city, and Church.”¹²² This corresponds to the *perfecti* of Aquinas, the New Law of St Paul, which Pinckaers summarizes as the grace of the Holy Spirit working within us through faith and love.

¹¹⁸ Pinckaers, 365.

¹¹⁹ Pinckaers, 366.

¹²⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 180, a. 4, 1927-1928.

¹²¹ *The Holy Bible, The Vulgate Bible*, Douay-Rheims Translation.

¹²² Pinckaers, 366.

Chapter 4. Finding Freedom of Excellence in Aquinas

Pinckaers asserts that a proper understanding of freedom of excellence arises from a correct understanding of Aquinas. He presumes the reader is both familiar with and agrees with his interpretations. We will explore Aquinas in regard to these arguments and demonstrate that Pinckaers' interpretations are justified. Pinckaers also argues the wrong turn taken in the understanding of human freedom after Aquinas was due to the views of Ockham and his subsequent interpreters,¹²³ but examining that argument in any further detail is beyond our scope.

We will demonstrate that Aquinas view of the relationship between the will and the intellect possesses a complex interplay which extends to the habits, inclinations and finally the virtues. We see in Aquinas support for the notion that freedom grows because of the positive change that occurs in both the intellect and the will subsequent to appropriate human acts. The mechanisms for this are explained in part by human interaction with divine participation in at least one mode by the infused virtues, as an integral aspect of the individual moving towards their final end. We argue this integrated view of human action that is developed by Aquinas is precisely what Pinckaers has termed the freedom of excellence.

¹²³ Thomas Osborne, *Human Action in Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, & William of Ockham*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014); Simon Gainé, *Will there be Free Will in Heaven?: Freedom, Impeccability and Beatitude*, (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2003).

Aquinas and Appetites, Inclinations and Final Causes

The term goodness pervades Aquinas' writing on both God and man as a property of being.¹²⁴ "The goodness of a thing consists in it being desirable...desirability is consequent of perfection...and perfection depends on how far it has achieved actuality"¹²⁵ thus the act of being is the first perfection of every created being. God, being the only self-subsisting being, pure simplicity, is good: not just good but Goodness itself. For all other created beings, being and essence are the composition of substance and accidents.¹²⁶ "Since no creature is essentially its own being, no creature has by its nature all the perfection for which it is capable. For this reason, every creature is oriented toward an ultimate end distinct from itself, and so must attain that end through its actions."¹²⁷

Accordingly, since all things are destined and directed by God to good, and this is done in such a way that in each one is a principle by which it tends of itself to good as if seeking good itself, it is necessary to say that all things naturally tend to good. If all things were inclined to good without having within themselves any principle of inclination, they could be said to be led to good, but not to be tending toward it. But in virtue of an innate principle all things are said to tend to good as if reaching for it of their own accord. For this reason it is said in Wisdom (8:1) that divine wisdom "ordereth all things sweetly" because each one by its own motion tends to that for which it has been divinely destined.¹²⁸

The appetites are a crucial intermediary in the causal sequence that begins with the mind's conception of its final end. The appetites are the engine pulling us forward to the completed actions that realize that end.¹²⁹ These inclinations form a key connection in understanding how Aquinas connects particular willing acts into a coherent series ordered to a

¹²⁴ *ST*, I, q. 5, a. 1, 23-24.

¹²⁵ *ST*, I, q. 4, a. 2, 21-22.

¹²⁶ *SCG II, Summa Contra Gentiles, 2: Book Two: Creation*, trans James F. Anderson, (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), chap. 52.

¹²⁷ Agustín Echavarría, "Aquinas on Divine Impeccability, Omnipotence, and Free Will." *Religious Studies*, 2018, 3.

¹²⁸ *DQV III. q22. a,1*, in *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate The Disputed Questions on Truth Volumes 1-3*. trans Robert Mulligan,(1952, Regnery, in The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Electronic Edition), <http://www.nlx.com/collections>, 37.

¹²⁹ Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae Ia*, 75-89, (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 209.

final end. We will explore specific aspects of Aquinas' interconnection between the most important appetite, the appetite of the intellect or the will, and the intellect itself. We will demonstrate the critical role the virtues play for Aquinas in connecting human action to moral theory. By that point it will be clear that Pinckaers is thoroughly justified in claiming Thomistic roots for his formulation of freedom of excellence.

Voluntarism versus Intellectualism?

Aquinas considers the will and intellect as two powers (*potentiae*) that, although they are ordered to each other, are distinct from each other and from the soul.¹³⁰ The will chooses an object that is shown to it by the intellect, and while the intellect moves the will Aquinas considers the will the efficient cause of the subsequent act. Aquinas relates this distinctness by reference to the sense appetites which humans share with animals as distinct from the soul. He acknowledges the situation for humans is more complex as humans have an intellect, so he argues by analogy, there is an appetite for the intellect which follows on the knowledge presented by the intellect and this intellectual appetite is the will.¹³¹

Aquinas understands the human act to emerge out of the interaction between its appetites and the intellect. Every intellect, human or angelic, can grasp the good and will it. Every nature has a natural inclination, and the natural inclination is towards the good.¹³² Since the will's formal object is the good, whatever the will wills must be judged good by the intellect that presents the object to the will. Therefore, in Aquinas' view, a person cannot do evil for evil's sake; instead, each person's action is taken based on their understanding of their final end. However, there is a broad split among Thomists as to the particulars of the relationship between

¹³⁰ Pasnau, 144.

¹³¹ *ST*, I, q. 80, a. 2, 409-410.

¹³² *ST*, I, q. 60, a. 1, 297-298.

will and intellect. This division roughly corresponds to the difference between holding Aquinas was a voluntarist or whether he was an intellectualist.

Voluntarism in the context of the medieval schools asserts that at the concrete level of the act, the will has superiority over the soul's other powers, particularly the intellect.¹³³ By contrast, the intellectualist position holds that the will's activity is under the intellect's control. This section follows the analysis of Jeffrey Hause that argues Aquinas position is a synthesis of both positions.¹³⁴ Intellectualists can cite Aquinas that "Hence the whole root of freedom is located in reason"¹³⁵ and that "Only that which has an intellect is able to act by free judgment, insofar as it knows the universal nature of the good, from which it is able to judge this or that to be good."¹³⁶ These statements seem to create a strong current for voluntarists to swim against. However, Aquinas provides suggestions of voluntaristic leanings in indicating the will is free from determination, determination other than its nature to will to happiness and the good in general. He also asserts that the will has the ability to will or not will an act that the intellect presents it,¹³⁷ a key differentiator of man from animal in that animal cannot refrain from acting but man can and further that:

If the will be offered an object which is good universally and from every point of view, the will tends to it of necessity, if it wills anything at all; since it cannot will the opposite. If, on the other hand, the will is offered an object that is not good from every point of view, it will not tend to it of necessity...any other particular goods, in so far as they are lacking in some good, can be regarded as non-goods: and from this point of view, they can be set aside or approved by the will, which can tend to one and the same thing from various points of view.¹³⁸

¹³³ Jeffrey Hause, "Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists", *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 6, no. 2 (1997): 167-82.

¹³⁴ Hause, 167-82.

¹³⁵ *QDV* III. q. 24. a, 2, in *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate, The Disputed Questions on Truth*, Volumes 1-3, translated by Robert Mulligan, (1952, Regnery), in *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Electronic Edition*.

¹³⁶ *ST*, I, q. 59, a. 3, 295-296.

¹³⁷ *ST*, I-II q. 6, a. 7, ad 3, 621.

¹³⁸ *ST*, I-II q. 10, a. 3, c, 635.

This ability suggests that while the will cannot act against the final judgement of the intellect, the option of inaction remains, suggesting the will has a ‘pocket veto’ over the alternatives presented to it by the intellect.¹³⁹

The argument against this view by an intellectualist would be that nothing in the will’s ability to not will in this or similar statements suggests that this has occurred in opposition to the intellect’s judgement. Certainly, Aquinas makes clear that the will’s is guided by reason:

...but every being that possesses intellect and reason, acts by free choice, namely inasmuch as the choice, in virtue of which it acts, follows on the apprehension of the intellect or reason which extends to many things.¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, that is free which is not tied down to any one definite course. But the appetite of an intellectual substance is not under compulsion to pursue any one definite good, for it follows intellectual apprehension, which embraces good universally. Therefore the appetite of an intelligent substance is free, since it tends toward all good in general.¹⁴¹

Aquinas specifically links the ability of the will to either will or not will with reason in holding a human being responsible for their acts. “Now man is master of his acts, and especially of his willing or not willing, because of his deliberate reason, which can be bent to one side or another.”¹⁴²

The will can choose between different goods or different means to good. This includes the ability to choose apparent goods that are not good.¹⁴³ This is the path on which evil acts occur, which for Aquinas are always willed under the *ratio* of goodness even though the particular act is in fact not good.¹⁴⁴ The will is *indetermined* in regard to choices between

¹³⁹ Hause, 172.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *QDM* q. 16, a. 5 a. c, in *Quaestiones disputatae de malo, On Evil*, trans. Jean T Oesterle, (1993, University of Notre Dame Press, in *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Electronic Edition*, <http://www.nlx.com/collections>).

¹⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*. I.76, p71, trans. Cyril Vollert, (B. Herder Book, 1952, in *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Electronic Edition*, <http://www.nlx.com/collections>)

¹⁴² *ST*, I-II, q. 109, a 2, ad 1, 1125.

¹⁴³ Colleen McCluskey, “Intellective Appetite and the Freedom of Human Action”, *The Thomist* 66 (2002), 434-42.

¹⁴⁴ Osborne, 10.

different and even incompatible goods since no good in this life exhausts what it means to be good: "...just as now we desire of necessity to be happy, it is therefore clear that the will does not desire of necessity whatever it desires."¹⁴⁵

If Aquinas does not support a voluntarism of exercise, then perhaps he supports a voluntarism of specification? He makes a distinction between an act's exercise and specification:

The will is moved in two ways: first, as to the exercise of its act; secondly, as to the specification of its act, derived from the object. As to the first way, no object moves the will necessarily, for no matter what the object be, it is in man's power not to think of it, and consequently not to will it actually.¹⁴⁶

When in Aquinas the will selects from the various options presented by the intellect, the intellectualist would interpret that reason draws a further conclusion about which option is preferable and the will chooses that option. Whereas voluntarists such as Eleonore Stump and others¹⁴⁷ would argue that practical judgement does not settle the object of choice. John Finnis concedes that reason shapes the alternatives but asserts we should understand Aquinas to mean that "where practical reasoning is followed by choice, reasoning must have left something open to choice."¹⁴⁸ Finnis buttresses this point from Aquinas:

Choice includes something that consent has not, namely, a certain relation to something to which something else is preferred: and therefore after consent there still remains a choice. For it may happen that by aid of counsel several means have been found conducive to the end, and through each of these meeting with approval, consent has been given to each: but after approving of many, we have given our preference to one by choosing it.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ *ST*, I, q, 82, a. 2, c , 414.

¹⁴⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 10, a. 2, c, ,634.

¹⁴⁷ Eleonore Stump, Norman Kretzmann, and Michael L. Peterson, "Absolute Simplicity." *Faith and Philosophy* 2, no. 4 (1985): 353-82.

¹⁴⁸ John Finnis, "Object and Intention in Moral Judgments according to Aquinas," *The Thomist*, (Volume 55, Number 1), January 1991, 5.

¹⁴⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 15, a. 3, ad 3, 652.

An intellectualist response to this is that nowhere does Aquinas say that it is up to the will alone or that it is independent of the intellect to determine its own activity, but that Aquinas implies or states that human beings have control of their acts through both reason and will.¹⁵⁰

The will is said to have dominion over its own act not to the exclusion of the first cause, but inasmuch as the first cause does not act in the will so as to determine it of necessity to one thing as it determines nature; wherefore the determination of the act remains in the power of the reason and will.¹⁵¹

Even in the case where the will has a role in causing a choice between equally attractive options that the intellect presents to it, Aquinas still maintains a role for reason above simple presentation of the alternatives. In commenting on Plato's reference to two food dishes being equally desirable and equidistant he says: "If two things are proposed (to the will) which are equal in one respect, nothing prevents our considering in one of them some quality which makes it stand out, and (so nothing prevents) the will's being inclined to that one rather than to the other."¹⁵²

Will as Self-Mover and as a Mover of the Intellect

This evidence argues against Aquinas as a voluntarist of either exercise or of specification. We have already seen that Aquinas asserts the formal relationship that the will is guided by reason, but is it *determined* by reason? If it is the latter, then Aquinas could be accused of simply evaporating any fundamental role for the will and should therefore be considered a pure intellectualist. But Aquinas makes clear that while the role of choice lies with the will, will is not untethered from reason:

Choice is the final acceptance of something to be carried out. This is not the business of reason but of will; for, however much reason puts one ahead of the other, there is not yet the acceptance of one in preference to the other as something to be done until the will inclines to the one rather than to the other. The will does not of necessity follow reason. Choice is nevertheless not an act of the will taken

¹⁵⁰ Hause, 178.

¹⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *DP*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 13 p135 in *On the Power of God*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1932, in *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Electronic Edition*, <http://www.nlx.com/collections>)

¹⁵² *ST*, 1-II, q. 13, a. 6, obj 3, trans. and parenthesis content added by Hause, 180.

absolutely but in its relation to reason, because there appears in choice what is proper to reason: the comparing of one with the other or the putting of one before the other. This is, of course, found in the act of the will from the influence of reason: reason proposes something to the will, not as useful simply, but as the more useful to an end.¹⁵³

What keeps Aquinas position from collapsing to pure intellectualism? Aquinas subscribes formally to the Aristotelian concept of the will as a cause of itself, subject as we will see to certain caveats:

Free decision is the cause of its motion, because a human being through free decision moves himself to act. But it does not of necessity belong to liberty that what is free should be the first cause of itself, as neither for one thing to be cause of another need it be the first cause. God, therefore, is the first cause, Who moves causes both natural and voluntary. And just as by moving natural causes He does not prevent their acts being natural, so by moving voluntary causes He does not deprive their actions of being voluntary: but rather is He the cause of this very thing in them; for He operates in each thing according to its own nature”¹⁵⁴

The will of a being is a self-mover, but not a first cause—this capability is derived from God’s indirect causality. Aquinas ties this need for self-movement into moral theology because he requires self-movement for works that a person might do to be ascribed to merit, and as we will see later self-movement is not all that is required.

If the will were so moved by another as in no way to be moved from within itself, the act of the will would not be imputed for reward or blame...it does not thereby forfeit the motive for merit or demerit.¹⁵⁵

Crucially, Aquinas describes actions the will has in feedback to the intellect. After all, the will is the efficient cause of the action, this action moves the entire person including the intellect¹⁵⁶ and that “the will wills the intellect to understand.”¹⁵⁷ Robert Pasnau argues this explicit feedback between the will and the intellect is the equivalent for Aquinas of higher order

¹⁵³ QDV, q 22, a.15, reply c, 90.

¹⁵⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 83, a.1, ad 3 , 418.

¹⁵⁵ *ST*, I, q. 105, a.4, ad 3 , 518.

¹⁵⁶ *ST*, I, q. 82, a.4, c, 416.

¹⁵⁷ *ST*, I, q. 82, a.4, ad 1, 416.

volitions.¹⁵⁸ Humans, unlike the animals, not only are able to make judgments about our judgments but we have “volitions that direct our volitions.”¹⁵⁹ Whether the volitions that direct our volitions is simply will acting on will, which we have seen Aquinas allows for, there is also the direct influence of the will on the intellect in terms of focus: “But the will has the power to apply or not to apply its attention to something.”¹⁶⁰

Our general inclinations provide a push to our intellect to consider a range of options. If and when specific circumstances occur, options outside of that range are foreclosed and the will moves us within a narrower confine with no further cognition occurring regarding the foreclosed options. Aquinas’ theory of will and intellect therefore is not simply focused on the single act but includes the long-term dispositions that affect our day-to-day actions. Aquinas views the relationship between will and reason as a continual feedback and feedforward process where intellect guides will, will moves intellect, and in so doing *both are changed over time*.

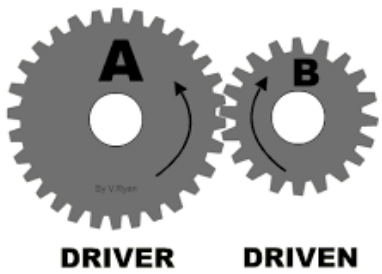
The will does not simply endorse the passing judgments of reason, in a neutral fashion, but subjects those judgments to the higher-order aims that shape who we are. The will, in other words, contains habits or dispositions that influence the course of its operations may tell us to cheat, but the will can insist on honesty; reason may counsel silence, but the will can urge us to speak. In such cases it is the will that is in control, in virtue of its fixed dispositions and desires, which hold independently of reasons dictates—considered in the short term. The will cannot entirely repudiate reason, but the will shapes reason just as much as the reason shapes the will.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Pasnau, 228.

¹⁵⁹ Pasnau, 228.

¹⁶⁰ *QDM*, q. 3, a. 10 body

¹⁶¹ Pasnau, 228.



<http://www.mrbillington.com/gears.html>

Figure 5. Will driving Intellect or Intellect driving Will?

While the will is the efficient cause of motion for the intellect, we have seen Aquinas' view includes a rich and nuanced interaction between the will and the intellect. Figure 5 reflects abstractly why classifying Aquinas as either a voluntarist or an intellectualist misses the mark. It is not possible in such a relationship to assign a driver role when both may be able to influence the other even while retaining distinct functions. However, as Pasnau asserts, it is this interaction over time with conjunction with the habits and dispositions that completes Aquinas' description of the rich relationship between will and intellect. We briefly note that this Thomistic view of will and intellect is certainly consistent with Pinckaers, but to go further in supporting a Thomistic foundation for freedom of excellence we need to connect Aquinas' theory of will with his moral theory.

Dealing with Weakness of the Will and the Passions

Aquinas makes this association with his moral theory by asserting the virtues of justice and charity as dispositions of the will.¹⁶² Aquinas's "rational appetite" should then be understood as not simply a calculus of reason but as reflecting our deepest commitments as human beings. However, we have not yet seen how to explain those actions which appear wrong, wrongheaded or just plain evil. We will first need to review how Aquinas weaves

¹⁶² *ST*, I-II, q. 56, a.6, 827.

together the will and reason with dispositions, inclinations and the virtues. It will be in dealing with temptation and failure where Aquinas explicates a primary and ongoing role for Divine action in terms of the “infusions” of the virtues of charity and justice.

Aquinas’ claim that the will is a rational appetite has been severely criticized in light of the apparently irrational actions of the will. Hobbes would complain that:

The Definition of the Will, given commonly by the Schools, that it is a Rational Appetite, is not good. For if it were, then could there be no Voluntary Act against Reason. For a Voluntary Act is that, which proceedeth from the will, and no other.¹⁶³

Hobbes wishes to have the will accounted for even when he believes it is grounded in “...Ambition, Lust...Aversion or Feare”¹⁶⁴ because for Hobbes like Aquinas the role of the will is critical in ensuring the “voluntary” nature of the act for which the person can therefore be held morally accountable.

In part, Aquinas accounts for wrong actions originating from nonrational desires such as lust by pointing to the inclinations, especially those of the body. “But only the wise resist bodily inclinations; and they are few in comparison with the foolish, because according to Ecclesiastes (1:15) ‘the number of fools is infinite.’”¹⁶⁵ Aquinas will largely hold that such nonrational acts affects the will indirectly through the intellect while the origin of the nonrational desires arise through the sensory apparatus of the body.

Aquinas describes two effects of the sensory system on the person—the whole person including the immaterial intellect. He defines the sensory appetite as having concupiscible and irascible powers—through the concupiscible “the soul is simply inclined to seek what is suitable,

¹⁶³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter VI, The Will. Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3207/3207-h/3207-h.htm>

¹⁶⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter VI, The Will.

¹⁶⁵ *The Holy Bible, The Vulgate Bible*: Douay-Rheims Translation; *QDV*, q 22, a.9, ad 2, 67.

according to the senses, and to fly from what is hurtful...whereby an animal resists these attacks that hinder what is suitable, and inflict harm is called irascible.”¹⁶⁶ While Aristotle appears to allow these bodily powers to directly move the body to action bypassing the will, Aquinas has these powers both affecting intellect and will in a way that is sometimes irresistible. Aquinas will state in one place that the irascible and the concupiscible are subject to reason,¹⁶⁷ but elsewhere the perhaps more realistic assessment that “Sensuality cannot be cured in this life except by a miracle.”¹⁶⁸

Aquinas believes this imperfect state of affairs is the consequence of original sin. Prior to the Fall Adam and Eve were in control of these appetites, but subsequent to the Fall we possess a concupiscence that can be controlled but not absolutely.

However, this corruption of the "fomes"¹⁶⁹ does not hinder man from using his rational will to check individual inordinate movements, if he be presentient to them, for instance by turning his thoughts to other things. Yet while he is turning his thoughts to something else, an inordinate movement may arise about this also: thus when a man, in order to avoid the movements of concupiscence, turns his thoughts away from carnal pleasures, to the considerations of science, sometimes an unpremeditated movement of vainglory will arise. Consequently, a man cannot avoid all such movements¹⁷⁰

Aquinas describes two kinds of actions against reason that result from this state. The first is the notion of incontinent willing. Aquinas follows Aristotle in describing such actions occurring in an individual who acts for the perceived short term (usually in the context of a

¹⁶⁶ *ST*, I, q. 81, a. 2, c, in, 411.

¹⁶⁷ *ST*, I, q. 81, a. 2, c, in, 412.

¹⁶⁸ *QDV*, q 25, a.7, ad 1, 237.

¹⁶⁹ An archaic medical term for morbid matter created by disease. In the context of Thomas and the *ST*, the online editors footnote reads ‘As used by the theologian, it denotes the quasi-material element and effect of original sin, and sometimes goes under the name of "concupiscence”.’

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.XP_Q12_A3.html

¹⁷⁰ *ST*, I-II q. 74, a. 3, ad 2, in, 921.

sensual pleasure), and therefore is ignoring the implications of the long term. “For what is here and now pleasant seems absolutely pleasant and good if it is not related to the future.”¹⁷¹

Aquinas has an active role for reason in resisting such tendencies. He allows for the case “that some sins are committed from weakness” contra Socrates who taught “that no one having knowledge sins from weakness” which Aquinas held is clearly contrary to our daily experience. He instead argues that the intellect *can* be impeded or diverted: “When concupiscence, or anger, or something of this kind, is intense, man is impeded from the consideration of knowledge.”¹⁷² But for Aquinas “the will [provides] the power to direct or not direct attention to a thing”, giving a special blame for the will in this case. But Pasnau suggests it might be more true to Aquinas to say that such an individual lacks sufficient disposition within the will to hold the person’s attention away from passion’s object.¹⁷³

A second and a far more serious action against reason, is the intemperate action. This is not a description that should be applied to a particular act but is used to describe the situation where there is malice against the good consistently. Such a person “knowingly chooses the bad”.¹⁷⁴ The incontinent individual is one, who after failing to control his passion that acted through the sensory appetite and his reason and will, fails to choose to the good, but is after the act regretful in having failed to control his passion. This is not the case with the intemperate individual, whose will is “out of order when it loves more the lesser good.”¹⁷⁵ The intemperate loves his sensory-appetite-inspired passions more than he loves God. This failure is one of not having a proper disposition:

¹⁷¹ *In DE*, III.15 § 829, in *Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima*, trans. Kenelm Foster and Silvester Humphries, (Yale University Press, 1951, in *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Electronic Edition*, <http://www.nlx.com/collections>), 474.

¹⁷² *QDM*, q. 3, a. 9, c.

¹⁷³ Pasnau, 251.

¹⁷⁴ *ST*, I-II q. 78, a. 1, 941.

¹⁷⁵ *ST*, I-II q. 78, a. 1, c, in, 941.

when someone is so disposed by habit or passion that something seems either good or bad to him under this particular aspect, the will is not moved of necessity: because it has the power to remove this disposition so that the thing does not seem so to him; for example, when a man calms his wrath so as not to judge something in anger. Passion however is more easily removed than habit.¹⁷⁶

Dispositions matter to the human act, but dispositions do not necessitate. Dispositions can be changed and even removed although not as easily as passions, and results might be slow in coming. The implication is that this type of change develops over time for those with enough intelligence and perseverance to stay on the right path. Hence, right action takes a certain measure of wisdom since “only the wise resist...[but] the number of fools is infinite.”¹⁷⁷ It is the training up of these dispositions of the will that help manage the incompletely controlled passions. For Aquinas, this is precisely the role of the virtues.

The Role of the Virtues in the Will and Reason

A virtue is a habit which “denotes a perfection of a power.”¹⁷⁸ Aquinas focused on the moral and intellectual virtues in their distinctiveness to support his analysis of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.¹⁷⁹ These virtues directly relate to establishing right dispositions of the will, although Aquinas will assert all the virtues impact the will or the reason.

Following Dreskinski,¹⁸⁰ for Aquinas the moral virtues are habits “by which we work well,”¹⁸¹ “and by which we live righteously.”¹⁸² “Virtue is numbered among the highest goods insofar as through it man is ordered to the highest good, which is God, and for this reason no one uses virtue badly.”¹⁸³ Each moral virtue is associated with an aspect of the appetitive part of the

¹⁷⁶ *QDM*, q. 6, c

¹⁷⁷ *QDV*, q. 22, a.9, ad 2, 67.

¹⁷⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 55, a. 1, 819.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph P. Wawrykow, "The Theological Virtues", in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter 23.1.

¹⁸⁰ Shane Drefcinski, “A Very Short Primer on St Thomas Aquinas’ Account of the Various Virtues” <https://people.uwplatt.edu/~drefcins/233AquinasVirtues.html>.

¹⁸¹ *ST*, I-II, q. 55, a. 4, c, 822.

¹⁸² *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 2, 855.

¹⁸³ *DQV*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 17.

soul.¹⁸⁴ The virtue of temperance perfects the concupiscible appetite;¹⁸⁵ the virtue of courage perfects the irascible appetite;¹⁸⁶ the virtue of justice perfects the will.¹⁸⁷ And closely associated with the moral virtues is the intellectual virtue of prudence, which Aquinas defined as “the right reason of things to be done,” which involves deliberation about the means to a good end, and that in turn depends on the rectitude of the appetite.¹⁸⁸

Aquinas follows Aristotle in asserting that it is by habituation and practice we acquire these virtues.¹⁸⁹ We do not start out life possessing adequate courage for every situation in which it is needed, but by taking advantage of opportunities we can grow in this virtue. Similarly, one can become temperate by the practice of regulating the appetite that promises pleasure—an appetite that could otherwise hinder the development of honesty and the full expression of our beauty.¹⁹⁰

While Aquinas suggests that humans can, in and of themselves, develop ordinary virtues, only God can transform human beings by His gift of the moral virtues.¹⁹¹ These virtues are habits “which God works in us, without us.”¹⁹² In addition to the moral virtues for which one can prepare with prior acts are the infused theological virtues of faith, hope and charity that are supernatural—that are above the natural capacities of the human. These virtues direct us “towards a happiness surpassing man’s nature...by a kind of participation in the Godhead.”¹⁹³

¹⁸⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 59, a. 4, c, 840.

¹⁸⁵ *ST*, I-II, q. 60, a. 4, 844.

¹⁸⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 60, a. 4, 844.

¹⁸⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 58, a. 1, c, 1429.

¹⁸⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 57, a. 4, c, 830.

¹⁸⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 63, a. 2, 855.

¹⁹⁰ Temperance for Aquinas covers a surprisingly broad semantic range to which he attaches the ideas of beauty, honor, and honesty. Beauty is particularly ascribed to temperance because of its aid in avoiding that which would defile and mar our intended full beauty, and to honesty because temperance withstands the vices that would bring dishonor to the honest. *ST*, I-II, q. 141, a.3, 1760.

¹⁹¹ *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 3, 856.

¹⁹² *ST*, I-II, q. 55, a. 4, 821.

¹⁹³ *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 1, 851.

The virtue of faith, perfects the intellect, as “a habit of mind, whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent.”¹⁹⁴ The virtue of hope, perfecting the will, reflects the movement of the will “towards certain spiritual union.”¹⁹⁵ And the virtue of charity, “which is the mother and root of all the virtues”¹⁹⁶ also perfects the will and is the uniting of man to God in true friendship.¹⁹⁷

But distinctive of the theological virtues, it is with charity that God additionally infuses the moral virtues.¹⁹⁸ Hobbes may scoff at the idea of a full-fledged habit being the correct metaphor for infused virtues, “the words in-poured virtue, in-blown virtue, are as absurd and insignificant as a round triangle,”¹⁹⁹ however, Aquinas’ view preserves a significant role for the person beyond being simply a passive receptacle.

Aquinas defends the notion, in the context of charity, that the infused virtues can be deepened and increased in the individual in a process analogous to the habituation of the acquired virtues.²⁰⁰ He describes charity as being in motion towards its end, thus it can be “ever more [increasing] in the subject.”²⁰¹ Its very nature is to cause the individual to act in ways that lead to a more fervent and deepened love, thus increasing our inclination to love God and our neighbor. Each act of charity disposes a person to greater charity in the future resulting a virtuous feedback process in regards to our moral growth.²⁰² Conversely, “when a man fails to make use of his virtuous habit in order to moderate his own passions or deeds...wherefore virtue

¹⁹⁴ *ST*, II-II, q. 4, a. 1, c, 1184.

¹⁹⁵ *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3, 853.

¹⁹⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 4, 853.

¹⁹⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, 1263.

¹⁹⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 65, a. 3, c, 863.

¹⁹⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Chapter 4, is objecting to the idea that a habit can be externally incorporated to the individual. Evidently, he objected even if person doing the incorporating was God.

²⁰⁰ Wawrykow, Chapter 23.2.

²⁰¹ *ST*, II-II, q. 24, a. 4, 1271.

²⁰² *ST*, II-II, q. 24, a. 6, 1273-74.

is destroyed or lessened by cessation from act.”²⁰³ Failure to exercise the infused virtues weakens their power, and in the specific case of charity, mortal sin “destroys it entirely...since when sinning mortally a man acts against charity”²⁰⁴

The Priority of Grace in Ordering the Will

We have demonstrated the prior role God has in the development of virtue, but the relationship between these virtues and will and grace is more fully developed in Aquinas’ Biblical commentaries.²⁰⁵ Aquinas is perfectly clear regarding the proper ordering of these activities *vis a vis* salvation:

To create anything is to produce it from nothing; hence, when anyone is justified without preceding merits, he can be said to have been created as though made from nothing (*quasi ex nihilo factus*). The creative action of justification occurs through the power of Christ communicating the Holy Spirit²⁰⁶

While Aquinas makes this justification a consequence of our new creation through the Holy Spirit, we are also inwardly renewed so that we can carry out these works that are prepared for us. “Let anyone imagine that good works are prepared for us by God in such a way that we do not cooperate in their realization through our free will, he [Paul] annexes ‘that we should walk in them’, as though he said: thus has he prepared them for us, that we might perform them for ourselves through our free will.”²⁰⁷ We are co-workers in carrying out these good works with God. Aquinas identifies this process with justification and justification with salvation:

There are four things which are accounted to be necessary for the justification of the ungodly, viz. the infusion of grace, the movement of the free-will towards God

²⁰³ *ST*, I-II, q. 53, a. 3, 813.

²⁰⁴ *ST*, II-II, q. 24, a. 10, 1277. But with repentance and confession of sin, the effects of this destruction can be healed.

²⁰⁵ Daniel Keating, “Justification, Sanctification and Divinization” in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, eds. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating and John Yocum, (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 139-158.

²⁰⁶ Thomas Aquinas. *In Eph, 2:10*, in *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* Translation by Matthew L. Lamb, (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1966), 95-97.

²⁰⁷ *In Eph, 2:10*, 98.

by faith, the movement of the free-will [away from]²⁰⁸ sin, and the remission of sins. The reason for this is that ...the justification of the ungodly is a movement whereby the soul is moved by God from a state of sin to a state of justice. Now in the movement whereby one thing is moved by another, three things are required: first the motion of the mover; secondly, the movement of the moved; thirdly, the consummation of the movement, or the attainment of the end. On the part of the Divine motion, there is the infusion of grace; on the part of the free-will which is moved, there are two movements—of departure from the term whence, and the approach to the term whereto; but the consummation of the movement or attainment of the end of the movement is implied in the remission of sins; for in this is the justification of the ungodly completed.²⁰⁹

It might be possible to say that Aquinas' view of justification subsumes Luther's view of justification but crucially it includes the right ordering of the one justified. As Matthew Lamb has said, "No one insists more strongly than Aquinas on the sinner's absolute dependence on God to justify him; but he equally insists that God's justifying word effects what it says."²¹⁰

Aquinas writes that a core part of this process for the human is the appropriate ordering of the will—the free will:

Christ works in two ways. In one way, he works without us, as in creating the heavens and the earth, raising the dead to life...In the other way, he works in us but not without us: the result of this is faith, by which the impious are brought to life...The reason for this is that whoever believes is producing the same result since what is produced in me by God is also produced in me by myself, that is, by my free choice (*liberum arbitrium*). Thus the Apostle says: 'It was not I', that is, I alone, 'but the grace of God which is with me'²¹¹

Aquinas provides a nuanced view of how to consider an action and outcome whose primary agent is God but still preserve a role for the secondary agent—that is us.

²⁰⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 113, a. 6, c, 1149, The Dominican translation of the word in the brackets is "towards" of the Latin *in*. But the context clearly indicates the opposite. For a different take on Thomas' Latin at this point see *New English Translation of St. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae (Summa Theologica)* by Alfred J. Freddoso, who translates this phrase "the movement of free choice with respect to God through faith, (c) the movement of free choice with respect to sin"

<https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/Part%201-2/st1-2-ques113.pdf>

²⁰⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 113, a. 6, c, 1149.

²¹⁰ Matthew Lamb quoted in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, 145.

²¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *In John*, 14:8-14, in *Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-5*, translated by Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

For always an action is attributed more to the principal agent than to a secondary agent; consider (for example) that we say that an axe does not make the chest, but the artificer through the axe. However the will of man is moved by God to the good. Whence above (8:14) it was said: 'They who are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.' And for that reason the interior or exterior operation of man is not to be attributed to man chiefly, but to God (Phil. 2:13)...And therefore it must be said that God moves all things, but by diverse modes, insofar as, namely, whatever thing is moved by God [is] according to the mode of its nature. And thus man is moved by God for willing and for running through the mode of free will. Thus, therefore, to will and to run is man's, as of one acting freely: however, it is not of a person as the one moving chiefly, but of God.²¹²

But this grace that infuses and aids in preserving and elevating our will, in what ways is this grace to be infused? For Aquinas this was *the* role of the sacraments. The sacraments of the New Law are a cause of grace, are an opportunity for the infusion of grace for building of the virtues, and the restoration of the will. And all this is made possible by the incarnation of Christ and especially Christ in his humanly body:

Nor is Christ only the pattern; He is also the efficient cause of our resurrection, for the things done by Christ's humanity were done not only by the power of His human nature, but also by virtue of His divinity united in Him. Just as His touch cured the leper as an instrument of His divinity, so also Christ's resurrection is the cause of our resurrection, not merely because it was a body that arose, but a body united to the Word of life.²¹³

The sacraments of the New Law are ordained for a twofold purpose: namely for a remedy against sins; and for the perfecting of the soul in things pertaining to the Divine worship according to the rite of the Christian life.²¹⁴

We must needs say that in some way the sacraments of the New Law cause grace. For it is evident that through the sacraments of the New Law man is incorporated with Christ.²¹⁵

And just as the soul's powers flow from its essence, so from grace there flow certain perfections into the powers of the soul, which are called virtues and gifts, whereby the powers are perfected in reference to their actions.²¹⁶

²¹² In Rom, 9:14-18, in *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Steven Boguslawski, (upcoming from Paulist Press, quoted in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*), 146.

²¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians*, translated by Michael Duffy, (O.P. Magi Books, Inc., Albany, N.Y., 1969), Chapter 4-2. <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/SS1Thes.htm#42>.

²¹⁴ *ST*, III, q. 63, a. 1, c, 2355.

²¹⁵ *ST*, III, q. 62, a. 1, c, 2349.

²¹⁶ *ST*, III, q. 62, a. 2, c, 2351.

The sacraments and the ongoing graces they infuse are the final link in the chain that Aquinas has woven regarding the virtues, the will and reason. It is in the reception of the grace flowing from Christ through the sacraments, both the non-repeated sacrament of baptism, and the continuing sacrament of the Eucharist, that there occurs the ordering of the will and the intellect that is the habituation process at the core of the human journey toward his final end. We argue this habituation process is to be identified with Pinckaers' freedom of excellence.

Freedom of Excellence is fully Thomistic

We have demonstrated Pinckaers' articulation of the freedom of excellence contra the freedom of indifference is well supported in the writings of Aquinas. We can assert that for Aquinas freedom arises not only from the isolated will in the context of a single atomic act, but from the entire process of humans developing *habitus* in the gifts of grace, charity and wisdom as we participate in the uncreated and divine life of the Trinitarian Persons. Daria Spezzano summarizes this interplay perfectly in his claim that this is what in the East is meant by deification:

These activities lie at the heart of the dynamic interface where the divine elevates human nature and activity. [In this process] Thomas' stresses both the absolute primal causal primacy of God—operatively and cooperatively working through the grace of the Holy Spirit—and the proper instrumental causality of the graced human subject, whose intellect and will [growing and] informed by the theological virtues and gifts are actively engaged in the *full freedom* of their movement towards the end of beatitude.²¹⁷

This schema of freedom is complex and considers the person's intellect, the person's will, the person's habits, each of which change with each successive act. These changes in the whole person enable further progress towards man's final end and these changes are mediated from the incarnation of Christ by the Spirit in 'diverse modes', some which explicitly include sacraments of the Church as vessels of this grace. This leads to an ever-enlarging true freedom

²¹⁷ Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace : Deification According to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2015), 4-5.

that accompanies the movement of the graced human being towards his beatitude. This is what Paul describes as “conformed to the image of God” (Rom 8:29)²¹⁸ is what the East calls deification, that is congruent to Aquinas’ “participation of the Holy Spirit.”²¹⁹ It is a consistent theme of the Fathers East and West and corresponds to the promise in Athanasius of the restoration of our *Imago Dei*. This is the core of what true freedom looks like. But before returning to the current debate there is one additional and crucial theological implication of freedom to cover.

²¹⁸ *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*, (Catholic ed. San Francisco: Oxford University Press: Ignatius Press, 2006).

²¹⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 3, ad. 3, 1265.

Chapter 5. Freedom and the Issue of Reversibility

Neither are we to suppose that because sin shall have no power to delight them, free will must be withdrawn. It will, on the contrary, be all the more truly free, because set free from delight in sinning to take unfailing delight in not sinning. For the first freedom of will which man received when he was created upright consisted in an ability not to sin, but also in an ability to sin; whereas this last freedom of will shall be superior, inasmuch as it shall not be able to sin.²²⁰

This section deals with a question of freedom that is of primary concern to those rooted in a Christian theological framework.²²¹ Is Augustine correct? Will we still have freedom in heaven and if so is that consistent with never sinning again? One way the problem is posed is:

- (1) The redeemed in heaven have free will.
- (2) The redeemed in heaven are no longer capable of sinning.

This section generally follows Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe,²²² except for the application of freedom of excellence to this question where we more closely follow the exposition of Gaine.²²³ Because of overlap, we elide Pawl and Timpe's five approaches to this question into three distinct approaches.²²⁴

²²⁰ Augustine, *The City of God*. Trans. Marcus Dods, (Christian Classics Ethereal Library), XXI.30, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.html>.

²²¹ A complementary question regarding the state of freedom in heaven is the same question regarding Adam and Eve prior to the Fall, and a similar question regarding the fallen angels. If Adam and Eve (or the fallen angels prior to their fall) were experiencing the beatific vision and sinned will this not limit what we can and will say about the beatific vision? Aquinas explores this issue in depth *ST*, Ia q94, q95, q96, that while Adam and Eve knew God with more perfect knowledge that we do now, they did not experience the beatific vision. *ST*, Ia, q94, a1, 478. And in *ST*, Ia, q62 and the subsequent answers Aquinas argues that although angels were created with a natural beatitude and in a state of sanctifying grace, they were not created in the beatific vision. However, by using this grace their first act of charity immediately merited and were granted the beatific vision. The fallen did not perform that first act of charity and thus could and did fall.

²²² Timothy Pawl, Kevin Timpe, "Incompatibilism, Sin, And Free Will in Heaven." *Faith and Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (2009): 398–419.

²²³ Gaine, especially Chapter 8

²²⁴ Beside dropping one of the two Thomistic solutions from their paper, we also declined reviewing the Molinistic solution. Molinism's arguments regarding God's "pre-volitional" and "volitional" knowledge is a complex and unnecessary enterprise, especially if one takes Boethius' view of God's

The first solution is labeled as a *concessionary* strategy in addressing the question of how both (1) and (2) can be true. This approach *concedes* their incompatibility and then works from there. This strategy can be seen among theologians holding libertarian views of freedom. G.B. Wall accepts the orthodox view that evil will not and cannot exist in heaven, but he comprehends his libertarian view of freedom as inconsistent with (2). Thus, he denies (1). J. Donnelly argues that human freedom, as a defense for the explanation of sin, is too important to be given up in heaven. He too comprehends that his libertarian concept of freedom cannot allow (1) and (2) to both be true. He adopts the opposite solution and argues it must still be possible for man to sin in heaven.²²⁵ Given that we have argued that libertarian approaches to freedom based on a freedom of indifference are unattractive in general, we will not respond directly to these two arguments except to note that rejecting (2) is clearly incompatible with long standing Church teaching on the impeccability of the saints.²²⁶

A second approach is to hold a theological compatibilist view of freedom. This view takes the position that being free is consistent with God determining the person's will to not sin. Since the person is free and will never sin, then (1) and (2) are satisfied. This is an approach endorsed by both John Calvin and Jonathon Edwards.²²⁷

relationship to space time seriously. Aquinas in his commentary on Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias* asserts "God lays down necessary causes for the effects that he wants to be necessary and he lays down causes that act contingently—that can fail of their effect—for the effects he wants to be contingent" quoted in Davies, Brian. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 176. This concise statement has not been improved upon by the mountain of ink, paper and hot air created in the wake of the *De Auxilis* controversy.

²²⁵ G.B. Wall, "Heaven and a Wholly Good God", *Personalist* 58 (1977) 352-357, and J. Donnelly, "Eschatologic Enquiry", *Sophia* 24 (1985) 16-31 cited in Gaine, 2-13. For Donnelly after a person sins in heaven they lose heaven.

²²⁶ In contrast Pawl and Timpe assert that they could not find a magisterial statement with regard to (1) so perhaps Wall could be considered still orthodox in his approach.

²²⁷ Bruce Reichenbach, "Evil and a Reformed View of God" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 24 (1988) 67-85.

While this view is thought of as a particularly Reform approach, it resonates with the solution first proposed by Ockham long preceding the Reformation.²²⁸ Ockham's freedom of indifference, holds that perpetuity is achieved by an additional act of God to constrain man's ability to sin. Ockham asserts that the will in heaven continues to be inherently capable of nilling the blessed beatitude even upon fruition of the vision of God.²²⁹ But since he is orthodox, adhering to the impeccability (and its perpetuity) of the blessed, he must resolve the tension between freedom and impeccability. Ockham accomplishes this by invoking God's total causality to formally exclude the possibility of the blessed either nilling God or nilling what He wills.²³⁰ Thus, Ockham solves the problem of a will that is still capable of nilling God by recourse to an "extrinsic" solution. Ockham will assert that the blessed are freer in heaven, like Augustine, but he will invoke God's total causality to suspend the free activity of the will in this one respect.

A third solution addressed in this section is the answer given by the Thomistic freedom of excellence. Freedom of excellence explicitly asserts that as we grow in our inclinations, habits, and the virtues, especially the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity that direct us to our final destiny, the degree of freedom we possess *increases*. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, there is an expectation for ups and downs in the acquisition of all the virtues, even those theological virtues that God actively infuses in us.

Prior to achieving heaven, we must address the reality of reverses in the progress we make towards our final end. We might take one step back after we have taken two steps forward on our journey and so on. Any path we take as a cumulative sum of our choices can be undone by a sequence of choices that unwind the progress made. While it might take time, no matter

²²⁸ Gaine, 71-83.

²²⁹ Gaine, 73.

²³⁰ Gaine, 78.

how far a moral agent may proceed on a given path towards God and away from self—freedom, particularly for the freedom of indifference or any variation of libertarian freedom, these courses could be reversed as long as the human agent still has a free will. Notwithstanding, it has been the ancient teaching of the Church that the impeccability of the saints is perpetual, which is a technical way of saying that once a person has achieved the beatific vision they will no longer sin. But are they then no longer free?

Aquinas' approach to resolving the tension between (1) and (2) is quite different than Ockham, because Aquinas holds the ability to do evil is not essential to having free will:

The second diversity to which free will can extend, is considered according to the difference of good and evil; but this diversity does not pertain to the power of free will essentially (*per se*) but is related to it incidentally (*per accidens*), inasmuch as it is found in a nature capable of defect. For since the will of itself is ordered to good as to its proper object, that it tends to evil can occur only from this that evil is apprehended under the aspect of good; which pertains to a defect of the intellect or reason, from which liberty of choice has its origin; but it does not belong to the nature of any power that it be defective in its act, for example it does not pertain to the nature of the power of sight that a person sees indistinctly; and therefore nothing prevents us from discovering the existence of a free will which so extends to good that in no way can it extend to evil, either by nature, as in God, or by reason of the perfection of grace, as in the saints and the blessed angels.²³¹

Aquinas does not require the will to be shackled by this Divine constraint. For Aquinas the beatific vision is not an object that replaces the will's self-motion, but that in the beatific vision the will is moved efficiently to its exercise by its natural inclination.

With respect to the specification of the act, the will can in a sense be determined in this one special case, because the intellect presents to it an object that is completely good in every way and is in itself the universal good.²³²

If every created good is in some way ordered to God, the logical end of this ordering is the supreme good of seeing God. In this good there can be nothing that is deficient. Aquinas has said the will is free with respect to the exercise regardless of the object and he has denied that

²³¹ *QDM* q.16, a.5.

²³² Osborne, 13.

someone with the beatific vision can turn his sight away from God: “The will of the man who sees God in His essence of necessity adheres to God, just as now we desire of necessity to be happy”²³³

Under freedom of excellence the achieving of man’s end is not accompanied by a diminishment of man’s freedom in agreement with Augustine: “Now the fact that they will not be able to take delight in sin does not entail that they have no free will.”²³⁴ The saints have been freed from the delight in sinning for a delight in not sinning—a delight in which there is no turning away—it is *indeclinabilem*. We can agree with Aquinas and Augustine that moving towards our final end increases our freedom but what is “sticky” about achieving this state such that there is no conceivable way to reverse course once we have achieved the final end? Aquinas asserts the nature of the vision itself is such a guarantee of irreversibility.

Can we find analogs in other fields to help us understand how such a thing could be? The most common examples of irreversibility that occur in the physical world happen in the domain of statistical thermodynamics. Take the example of a gas escaping from a pressurized container. Never does an open container become pressurized again because of gas molecules spontaneously moving from the room back into and repressurizing the container. While this behavior is never observed in fact, the equations of statistical mechanics that govern such gas movements do have a small (extremely small) probability associated with just that occurrence. But arguing irreversibility while acknowledging even microscopically small probabilities is qualitatively not in line with the absolute confidence in perpetuity projected by Aquinas’ writings so we must look to better parallels.

²³³ *ST*, I, q. 82, a.2, , 371.

²³⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, XXI.30.

We can draw analogically from the world of modern astrophysics as in the case of black holes. As seen in Figure 6, the black hole represents a singularity in the space-time continuum where intense gravitational forces are so severe that there exists a defined region around the entity where even light itself cannot escape its massive gravitational fields. This area is called the event horizon and according to

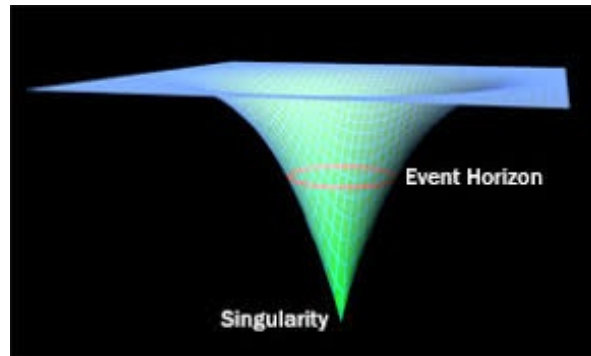


Figure 6.

equations of general relativity once anything—particles, light or information itself—passes the boundary of the event horizon it becomes impossible to return. Up until that cusp point, with sufficient forces, it would be possible to envision return from nearly the edge of the event horizon. But once at and past that point objects *irreversibly* pass from view.

We might then describe analogically the growth of freedom of excellence for human beings along their journey to final ends as seen in Figure 7. The inverted black hole at the right side represents our final end, and the everted black hole at that left our final destination if we continue to move away from God.

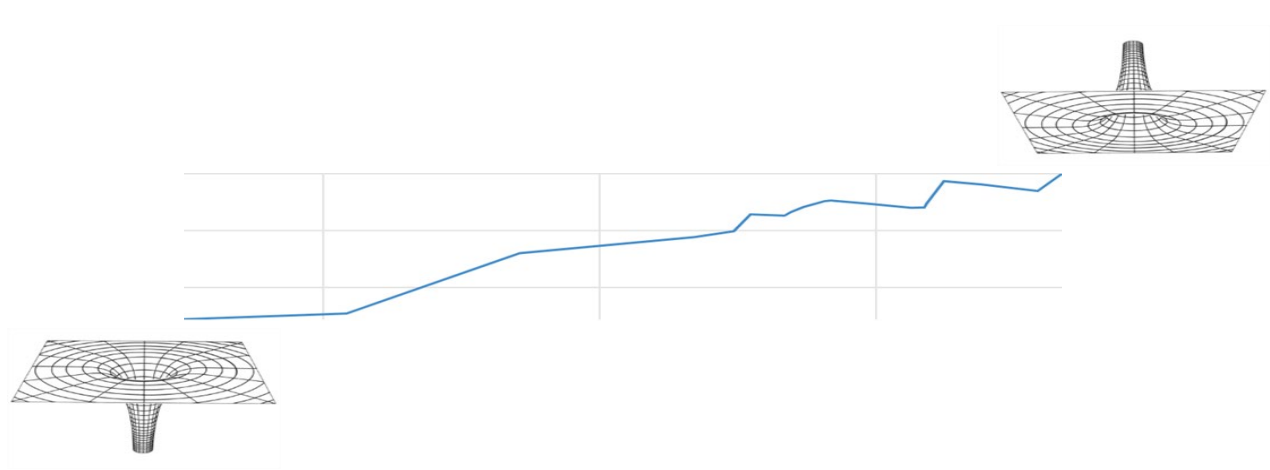


Figure 7. ²³⁵

There is for most of us a slow uneven path that describes our development in the virtues, whose full expression will be our heritage in the beatific vision. The possibility of reversal towards that goal exists here in the present world. Yet for many of us, there comes a time when aided by God’s actions, our disordered passions are ordered, our disordered bodies are recreated to their intended state, and we achieve our final end.

This transformation could include several distinct and explicit operations of God, such as a special rare gift of grace here on earth to enable us to live sinlessly, the gift of the purgation by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and the reunion of our transformed souls with our recreated bodies in the Resurrection. The summation of these processes can be described analogically by the fall up into and through a final event horizon at the right end of Figure 7. Such a process would possess irreversibility as naturally as the irreversibility of light falling past the event horizon of a black hole with regard to return to normal space time.

²³⁵ This is a graph of my table tennis USATT rating over the last five years—a result of persistent effort, paid coaching and hours of practice. Scale in real life goes from 0 to about 2800. Currently stands at 1500.

The left side of Figure 7 describes the horrible counterpart of that irreversible change for the individual that chooses again and again the path leading away from their true destiny. Aquinas describes this as the consequence of sin caused by the will as it withdraws from God,²³⁶ or Augustine's description of this path as the move towards pride. Christ promises forgiveness seventy time seven, but Scripture also describes a God that cries, "Ephraim is joined to idols—Let him alone!" (Hosea 4:17). This is perhaps the sin against the Holy Spirit described by Matthew 12:32. C.S. Lewis describes this sin in literary terms as a trip where people voluntarily keep traveling farther and farther away from Heaven until only nothingness is left. All because these people would prefer their imitation selves to the true reality of who they are to become in Heaven.²³⁷ The left path describes this final falling as an irreversible spiral into the depths of Hell itself.

This short chapter has demonstrated that there is a consistent view of freedom that continues to exist--not just exist but exuberantly exist--in the beatific vision. We have established that the Thomistic view does not suffer from the cramped difficulties of the libertarian position but provides an understanding for how freedom can exist in its fullness. To understand how this state could stay perpetually impeccable we appealed analogically to the example of the black hole in understanding this state as intrinsically not extrinsically irreversible.

²³⁶ *QDM*, q. 3, a. 1.

²³⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1946).

Chapter 6. Freedom of Excellence as a Response to Contemporary Debate

Now that we have a fully developed Thomistic view of freedom of excellence we are prepared to respond to the contemporary views of human freedom. Table 2 represents the crucial differences that are useful as a context for the choice of arguments this chapter will tackle and will be revisited by the chapter's end.

Table 2.

	Libertarian asserts constitutive	Compatibilist asserts	Freedom of Excellence asserts
<i>If same past, different outcome must be possible for freedom to exist</i>	Yes—key	No	No
<i>If a decision can be explained in terms of an antecedent causal chain it cannot be free</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>Requires external indeterminant element</i>	Yes	No	No ²³⁸
<i>An act requires self reflection to be free</i>	Yes	No	Yes-key
<i>Free acts occur posterior to a nonconscious act</i>	No	Yes	Can accommodate but doesn't concede its relevance
<i>Free act is a consequence of self moving will</i>	No for majority view, yes for agent-causality	No	Yes-key
<i>Freedom is compatible with a monistic materialistic universe</i>	Yes—but requires indeterminant element	Yes—key	No—key, hylomorphic dualism
<i>Freedom constituent of individual's final end</i>	No for secularists	No for secularists	Yes—key
<i>Freedom consistent with impeccability</i>	No—always possibility of reversion to even in beatific vision	Yes — only because of continuing extrinsic divine cause	Yes—key. intrinsic characteristic of the beatific vision

We note the crucial Thomistic presumption missing from both contemporary libertarian and compatibilist views that human beings, like every created entity, have final ends. This key metaphysical assumption provides a natural context for discussions of man's moral agency that struggle to find purchase in contemporary thinking about man's freedom. A central implication that the notion of a final end has for any theory of freedom is its restoration of "directionality" to decision making. Final ends provide a perspective that looks past the immediate antecedents and consequences arising from an individual act and on to its ordering to the final goal. In contrast,

²³⁸ Libertarians require some indeterminant element "external" to the will for freedom to exist. This requirement is not required for Freedom of Excellence which guards its freedom with a self-moved will.

the classic libertarian principle that man is only free that when presented with the same choices, he could choose some other course, creates an inherent instability in attempting to cohere a series of free actions towards any consistent goal much less a final end.

This instability can be demonstrated in a revisit to Kane's "Garden of Forking Paths." From the perspective of freedom of excellence, the freest choice is one that takes into account the ultimate goal of the person's final end. However, if this decision leads to there being fewer choices of paths to take as the person journeys through the garden, the libertarian would assert that the individual's freedom is decreasing. While the libertarian would seek for some indeterminacy as part of decision-making given their *same past different outcome* principle, the compatibilist would suggest what we mean by freedom is only coherent if it makes sense to the person making the choice. Does it make sense for our decisions to reflect our inclinations, our values? Does it make sense for our decisions to be considered sensible to ourselves as we reflect on the decision? The answer the compatibilist would make is yes, yes, and most definitely yes. The strongest arguments the compatibilists bring is their understanding that all the faculties of the man's body and brain including dispositions, genetic variability, and reasoning ability should and can be considered as contributing to a particular decision without removing human freedom.

On this point freedom of excellence can agree with the compatibilist and judge the libertarian argument at its core to be incoherent. However, while those holding to a freedom of excellence and those holding the compatibilist view of freedom may share certain assertions, we cannot share the compatibilists presumption of an exclusively deterministic solely material universe. We will demonstrate that this view leads to a minimization of the individual experience of our mental qualia, leads to an incoherent theory of personal identity, and ultimately calls into question even the reality of personal consciousness.

This chapter will review work done in empirical decision making from psychology and neurobiology that has been used to claim support for a compatibilist view of freedom. We will explore the current fashion among some neurobiologists to find freedom in the behavior of our neural circuits *after* an event in the brain they consider nonconscious and therefore not free. We will show how their results can be interpreted as consistent with freedom of excellence while not conceding the necessity of adopting *a posteriori* views of decision making. We will also consider certain remarkable developments in mathematics and science that put sharp constraints on the underlying metaphysical presumptions of materialism in eroding the underpinnings of standard notions of determinism.

Merely demonstrating that freedom of excellence is consistent with external evidence is insufficient. We will show that notions of individual identity cannot be reconciled with a materialistic universe and that explanations for individual consciousness flounder unless based on a richer metaphysical framework than what is condoned by many contemporary philosophers. We will demonstrate that with a shift to Thomistic metaphysics, freedom of excellence provides a theory of freedom that is coherent, consistent with the current empirical evidence, and is a freedom worth having.

Accommodating Empirical Studies on Decision Making—the challenge of James and Libet.

Since the late 19th century, a variety of writers have challenged the view that human decision making is under conscious control. If these challenges are true, it would render any theory of human freedom very odd indeed. William James meditated on what we mean by will by reflecting on what is usually the first decision of the day—how do we get out of bed?

We know what it is to get out of bed on a freezing morning in a room without a fire, and how the very vital principle within us protests against the ordeal. Probably most persons have lain on certain mornings for an hour at a time unable to brace themselves to the resolve. We think how late we shall be, how the duties of the day will suffer; we say, ‘I must get up, this is ignominious,’ etc.; but still the warm couch feels too delicious, the

cold outside too cruel, and resolution faints away and postpones itself again and again just as it seemed on the verge of bursting the resistance and passing over into the decisive act. Now how do we ever get up under such circumstances? If I may generalize from my own experience, we more often than not get up without any struggle or decision at all. We suddenly find that we have got up. A fortunate lapse of consciousness occurs; we forget both the warmth and the cold; we fall into some reverie connected with the day's life, in the course of which the idea flashes across us, 'Hollo! I must lie here no longer'—an idea which at that lucky instant awakens no contradictory or paralyzing suggestions, and consequently produces immediately its appropriate motor effects. It was our acute consciousness of both the warmth and the cold during the period of struggle, which paralyzed our activity then and kept our idea of rising in the condition of wish and not of will. The moment these inhibitory ideas ceased; the original idea exerted its effects.²³⁹

According to James, first our thoughts arise, there is then a link from thoughts to the impulsive power to our motor operations, and finally the feeling of will and effort is derived from the interplay between opposing thoughts. But most crucially he observes that there did in fact not appear to be a conscious step of a specific decision that occurred—at least not of one that he was consciously aware.

These ruminations of James were followed up a generation later by Gilbert Ryle²⁴⁰ whose attempts at introspection end with him doubting that there is a “there” there. Ryle denies the reality of most subjective conscious experiences and instead explains them as non-conscious dispositions to behave in particular ways that are associated with an epiphenomenon of a sensory state that projects the illusion of that reality in our minds.²⁴¹ This view became influential among later 20th century philosophers who credit Ryle as ending the traditional concept of the mind.

²³⁹ William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, (2nd ed. Great Books of the Western World Vol I-II. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1990), 524-5.

²⁴⁰ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949), Chapter VI. Ryle inaugurates the philosophical deconstruction of the mind as well as ridicule of all things dualistic.

²⁴¹ Ryle is thus suggesting many of our conscious “thoughts” are equivalent in some sense to the key mistake referenced in Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*. (New York: Summit Books, 1985).

James' view that there is a discontinuity between the reflective thought and act appears to receive reinforcement from the 1983 classic neurobiology experiment of Benjamin Libet.²⁴² The critical experimental measurements from this experiment is displayed in Figure 8. The key experiment has subsequently been repeated and confirmed by other laboratories.²⁴³ The conventional interpretation of this experiment is that not only is the act and thought disconnected in some sense but that they are apparently temporally reversed! Whether that claim is upheld the experiment *is* taken as evidence for prior nonconscious activity preceding the first conscious intent of a human act, thus presumed by compatibilists to vitiate a prospective meaningful role for the intellect.

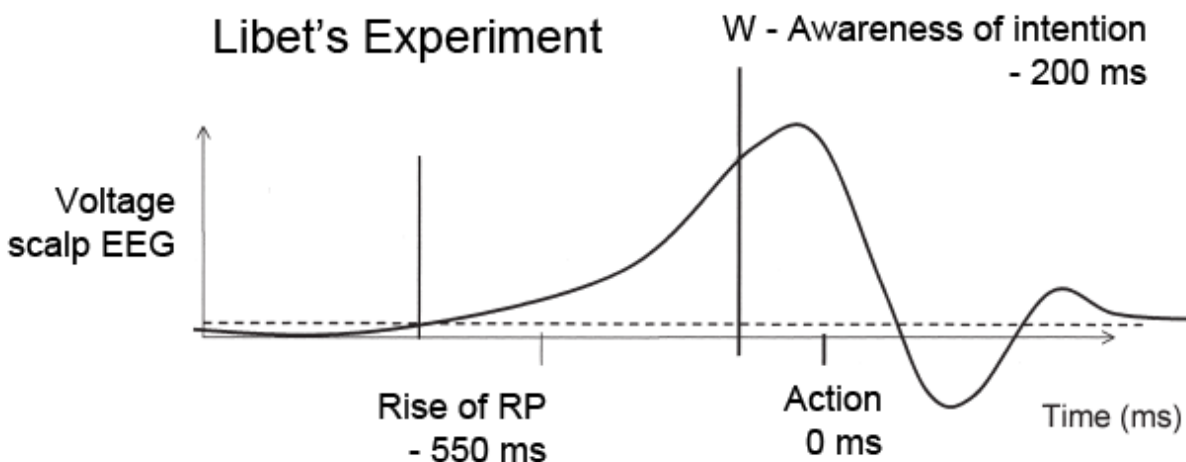


Figure 8.

In the experiment, subjects watch a clock hand and at a time of their choosing depress a switch and are asked to note when they were aware of their desire to depress the switch. Consistently for group after group, $\frac{1}{2}$ second prior to the subjects denoting the time of their

²⁴² Benjamin Libet, Anthony Freeman, Keith W. Sutherland. *The Volitional Brain: Towards A Neuroscience Of Free Will* (Imprint Academic, Exeter UK, 1999), 49.

²⁴³ Libet, 49-50.

awareness of their intention to act, there was an increase in voltage indicating something was happening in the brain preceding first conscious awareness of the intent to act. At least this appears to be the case in terms of the recorded responses of the individuals.

Compatibilists have used this evidence to argue for a deterministic prior to the human's decision making. They argue that if there is evidence for activity in the brain prior to conscious awareness, there had to be factors that drove the decision to act other than a deliberation of the individual's conscious reasoning capacity. The compatibilist argues that this is what is behind the curtain of all supposedly "free" decisions. There is a web of possibly unknown causes that follow deterministic laws and which ultimately lead to an act. The individual then concludes that this decision was the result of their own doing, even though they may be unaware the decision to act occurred prior to the "thought" where they thought they had made the decision.

There are several responses available in defense against this attack on the role of conscious deliberation. First, in response to James and Ryle, Karl Popper points out that others that have taken a much more systematic approach to introspection do not take James' or Ryle's naïve observations as worthy of serious consideration. Popper cites work from the contemporaneous Wurzburg School which had already established a significant body of reproducible work regarding systematic studies into introspection.²⁴⁴ But Popper could have also pointed to centuries of experience with spiritual disciplines systematized by the Desert Fathers such as Evagrius²⁴⁵ where many can attest to the reproducible changes in life practices resulting from serious and disciplined introspection.

²⁴⁴ Karl Popper, and John C. Eccles, 106-107.

²⁴⁵ Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus the Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), specifically his *Praktikos* sections on the "Eight Thoughts" 66, and "On Thoughts" 214, which demonstrate an amazingly modern insight in developing practical introspective disciplines in furthering and deepening a person's spiritual prayer life. These disciplines should be partitioned from some of his theological views.

And finally, we do not have to accept the conventional interpretation that has been drawn from the experimental evidence of Libet. The key interpretive claim is that the awareness of the intent was preceded by the rise in the electrical potential. But while the established time the test subject depressed the switch was an *external* measurement, and the established time the electrical potentials began to rise was an *external* measurement, the estimate of when their intent was formed was based on the individual's *internal* sense of time. There is simply no way to get around this methodological issue at the very basis of the experiment that depended on mixing external with subjective estimates of the occurrence in time of an event.

But the conventional interpretation of this experiment, however unsupported from the actual data, does raise an interesting question. Is it possible to defend a role for freedom, particularly freedom of excellence, even if we concede the existence of a category of acts that arise disconnected from prior conscious deliberation? Libet himself argues that while the initiation of voluntary action is not free, because it is not under the control of the conscious mind, the control of the intentions to act *after* they have arisen, *may* be free. We are not conceding these acts occur except under fairly unusual circumstances,²⁴⁶ but there has been intense interest in this kind of postulated mental/brain activity in relation to proposals such as “criterial causation” that focus on making room for freedom in the behavior of neural networks *after* a given event occurs. We will demonstrate that freedom of excellence's ability to connect actions towards a final end can accommodate even these *posteriori* views of human acts. We will start by showing through a mathematical analogy how freedom of excellence can integrate even a “random” act and order it to the individual's final end.

²⁴⁶ Acts that occur while sleep walking, or other drug or disease induced abnormal states belong in this category. The field of obsessive-compulsive disorders are the standard exemplars of this class.

Final ends can guide even random acts.

We will demonstrate the power of final ends from an example drawn from the field of mathematics known as optimization theory and illustrated by the challenge of designing a passenger jet for successful manufacturing. There are many ways to consider how best to go about balancing all the various parameters we have control over in deciding how to manufacture the jet. But a common consideration would be to determine what combination of decisions (or parameter values) that will minimize the overall cost of construction for a jet of a given carrying capacity and speed.²⁴⁷

Mathematically this problem can be described as a multidimensional surface that represents all combinations of possible values in our various individual decisions, with the “height” of the surface being the cost of manufacture for each combination of decisions. The combination of variables at the “lowest” point on the surface tells which combination of decisions will result in the lowest cost to manufacture. The problem is finding that point.

We can simplify this problem if we can imagine there are only two variables we need to control. In this case you can imagine their combination to be like the coordinates on a normal two-dimensional map. Then let the height of the ground at any given map coordinates represent the cost of the jet construction. Imagine a topographic map with contour lines that in a normal map represent the same altitude of the ground, but in the case of our jet manufacturing process are contours of constant manufacturing cost. If you had such a map you could inspect it directly to find the lowest point. That point will identify the combination of parameters where your manufacturing costs will be lowest—what the mathematicians call the minima of the surface.

²⁴⁷ If you own and operate the jet after its manufacture you might be interested in different cost measure—what design would give us the least expensive cost (usually from fuel) in transporting that capacity between two points?

Figure 9 is such a topographical map where you want to end up down at the bottom of dip (marked by the +) in the ground that represents your lowest cost. You start your journey high up on the lip of this dip; high meaning it is more expensive. If you had this map in hand you could simply go straight downhill to your destination like the path seen on the right labeled “Gradient Descent”. The fastest way to get to the desired bottom is to go straight down the steepest grade to the bottom of the dip.

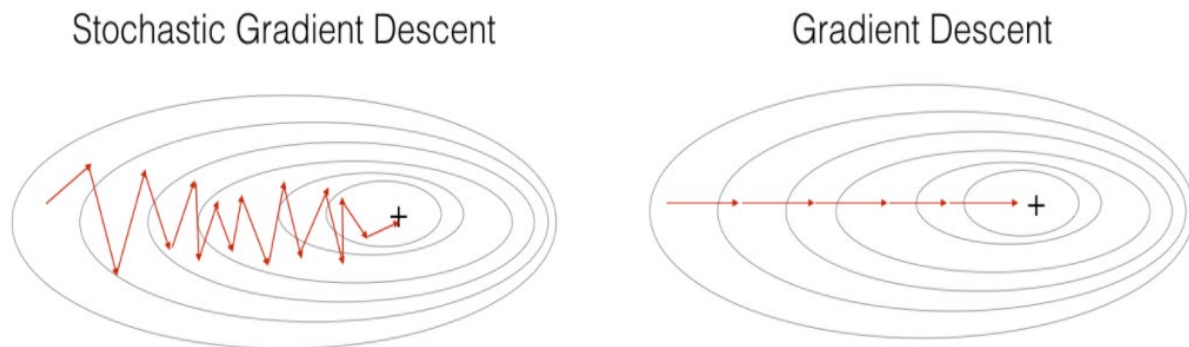


Figure 9.

But what if you do not have such a map *and* you don't have much in the way of the ability to use your vision to see even one step towards your goal? But you do know the dip is your goal and we allow that you can determine *after a step is taken* whether it is a step uphill or a step downhill (or that you stepped and didn't go up or down). And we will allow you to also have rough idea of how steep the step was. Assume you are blind but that you still have your body's proprioceptors working properly. You could employ the following effective strategy:

- 1) flip a coin²⁴⁸ to decide which cardinal direction to take one step either north, south, east or west at random.

²⁴⁸ Since there are four cardinal directions on this two-dimensional map we need the equivalent of a four headed rather two headed coin to flip. The key idea is to use randomness to guide a decision initially.

- 2) *After* the act of taking a step, assess whether you went somewhat uphill or somewhat downhill or stayed the same.
- 3) If you went uphill change direction exactly opposite and take two steps.
- 4) If you went downhill, continue to go downhill one more step.
- 5) If you did not change direction flip a coin (this time a normal two headed coin) and pick a cardinal direction perpendicular to your previous step and then again to take one step.
- 6) After each of the outcomes of each step note whether you are going uphill, downhill or staying level and re-apply rules 2-5 *until no matter what direction you step you find you are going up hill.*

The left side of Figure 9 demonstrates a use of this strategy. Optimization theory guarantees this algorithm will get you to your dip under a broad range of mathematical assumptions about the elements going into your cost calculations, in other words, it is guaranteed to work effectively under a broad variety of lumpy bumpy hills and valleys²⁴⁹ such as the more complex terrain seen in Figure 10²⁵⁰ to find its final goal. This algorithm works by applying practical reasoning to the *consequences* of a random act with a clear goal in view, and by having a clear criterion of whether the act was “good” or “bad” according to its outcome.

²⁴⁹ Bernard Widrow and Eugene Walach, “On the Statistical Efficiency of the LMS Algorithm with Nonstationary Inputs,” *IEEE Transactions on Information Theory*, Vol. IT-30, No2. March 1984.

²⁵⁰ Capri Granville, <https://www.datasciencecentral.com/profiles/blogs/alternatives-to-the-gradient-descent-algorithm>.

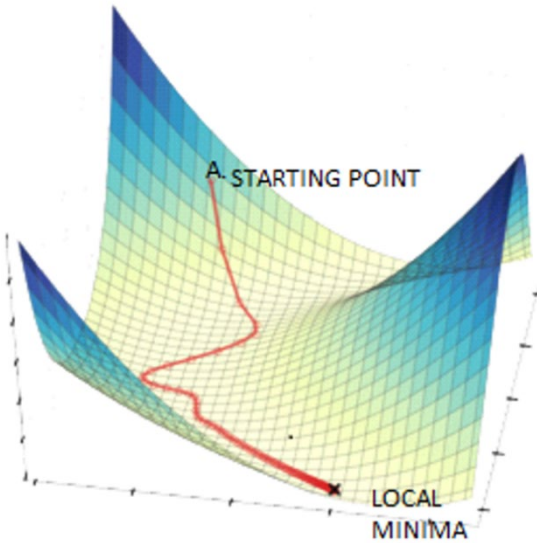


Figure 10.

We are not claiming in this example that introducing random events is the most desirable approach to decision making—it is not even the best choice in our mathematical analogy. As seen in Figure 9 on the right side, if you can see your way *straight* down to the cost minimum you get there faster and with less effort than using our 4 and 2 headed coin flipping algorithm. However, we *have* demonstrated that a theory of human action that incorporates explicitly the notion of a final end, *and* takes seriously the idea that humans will attempt to steer towards that final end, can accommodate even blindly random events, regardless of whether internal or external in origin.

This emphasis on connecting an act to a subsequent act where the conscious intellect and will are engaged is a crucial feature of freedom of excellence in responding to claims compatibilists have made regarding the strong evidence in the neurosciences that any kind of directed sequence of decisions has ability to result in changes in our neural substrates. These changes in turn can affect the outcome of subsequent neural behaviors. Compatibilists use this evidence for a deterministic basis for freedom. We will argue instead that it points to one of the

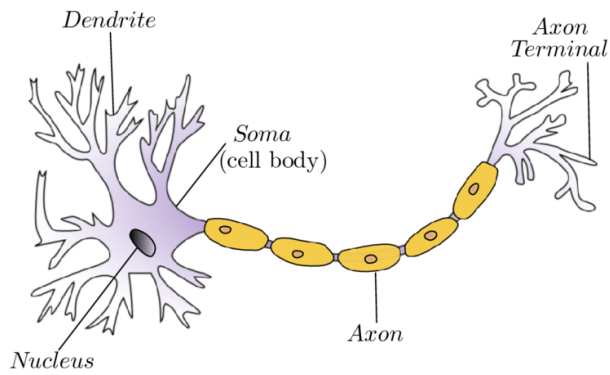
ways our intellect and its comprehension of our final ends can effect changes in our total being in terms of future decision making.

Criterial Causation as a physicalist model for a compatibilist view of human freedom.

The neuroscientist Peter Tse has demonstrated that specific patterns of information inputs can result in self-modification of neural circuits.²⁵¹ The changes induced then result in modifications such that if the same inputs are presented to the neural circuits their future behavior is changed. This occurs not in a random fashion but in a focused fashion that can incrementally allow given subsets of complex neural networks to achieve “better performance” in measurable ways. A classic example of this behavior is the visual sub systems that are responsible for turning the complex mass of neurological signals coming from our retinas into geometric interpretations such as edge detection in the images we visualize. These sub systems can get better and better at “seeing” lines in our visual fields by giving those neural networks images that contain “edges” in the visual field over months and years. Tse describes this process as “criterial causation,” because it is caused just by a pattern of information being processed by a given neural network. The key is that the processing of the pattern of information feeds back into that network and effects changes that take effect for a future input to the network. Tse asserts this behavior is a physical basis for understanding the existence of human freedom, but a human freedom that is rooted in a physicalist and compatibilist model.

Let us take a deeper look at the material evidence he takes for supporting his claim. Later we will address the coherence of his interpretation. The basic schematization of the neuron in Figure 11. supports signaling from the dendritic end through the axon to the axon terminal where the signal is turned into neurochemicals that bridge the gap to the dendrites of the next neuron.

²⁵¹ Tse, 133



<https://biologydictionary.net/nervous-system/>

Figure 11.

This simple neuron supports a “feed-forward” pattern of signaling. Feed-forward means the flow of electrical or neurochemical signaling moves in one direction only, starting from dendritic end and flowing to the ends of axons, where they would normally interdigitate with the next set of dendrites and send the signal merrily along to the next neuron. The term “feed-back” pattern of signaling is used if there exist any connections where, either immediately or eventually through other intermediary neurons, a signal that originally started at the dendridrtic end of the neuron in Figure 11 finds its way back to that same dendritic end.

Consider large scale networks of hundreds of these neurons cooperating in a feed-forward network to turn an upstream event (i.e., to the left of Figure 11) into an action, by progressive processing through layers of neurons. This type neural network, described in Figure 12, is extremely important in the visual cortex of our brain where they are hierarchically organized and perform feature extraction for various aspects of the image as it is interpreted in the brain.²⁵²

²⁵² The term “feature extraction” is a common term in neurobiology borrowed from the signal processing community. It refers to the overall process of taking the raw retinal neuronal discharge signals and the turning them into the concept such as the letter “a” as understood by our minds—at least for those of us who believe we have minds.

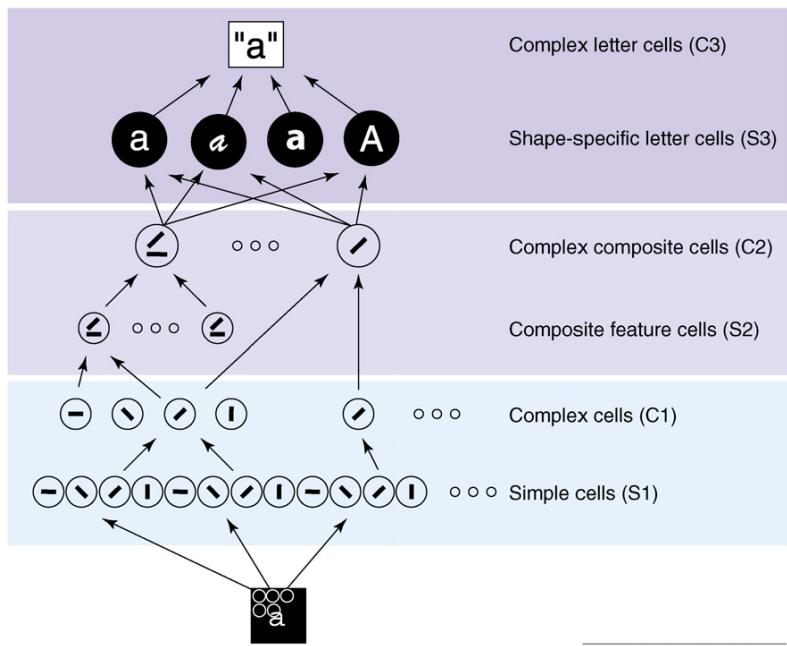


Figure 12.

But critical for Tse, and those like him seeking a physical model for human freedom rooted completely in the neural circuits of the brain, is the existence of feed-back neural circuits. We have an example of how the brain can organize such circuits schematically in Figure 13.

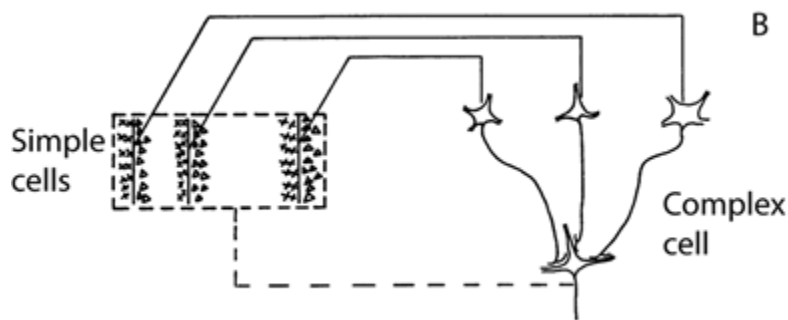
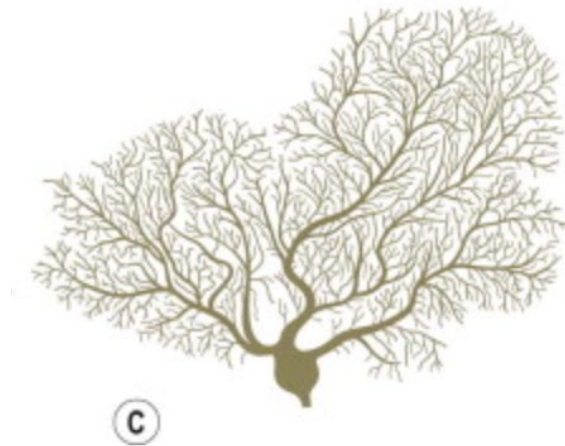


Figure 13.

Here we have a group of ordinary neurons on the left organized in some kind of feed-forward network. But we see an interesting group of neurons that intercalate between the output of the

feed-forward neurons on the left and feed at least part of their output signal back to the input of those same arrays.²⁵³

Figure 13. demonstrates the behavior that most interests Tse. Feedback that sends signals back into the upstream network has been demonstrated experimentally to create persistent long-lasting effects. While Figure 13. looks relatively simple, keep in mind that the physical complexity of a single feedback cell can look like in reality is more like Figure 14.



{<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/pyramidal-cell>}

Figure 14.

Tse makes the case that these networks respond to patterns in the input, patterns which are effectively information flows, and then *after* the input pattern hits these neurons, if the criteria for the pattern is met, then a real physical and persistent change occurs in that very neural network. For example, in the case of the visual cortex where the network gets better at detecting edges by being given edge patterns from the retina, this effect is not proportional to the amount of energy that is being input to the neuronal circuit but is based on the pattern coming into the

²⁵³The arrays of feed-forward cells on the left of Figure 13 are receiving their primary input from other cells (not shown). The “feedback” signal that is shown is an added signal to the normal flow.

neural network. Tse calls this behavior “critical causation” and claims it can be used as a way to explain how both the flow of external sensory information or internal perceived states of sensory experience, can actualize real physical and persistent changes on the biology of the brain and thus persistently affect future reception of related patterns of information.²⁵⁴ This type of feedback causing persistent neural network changes has been observed by multiple researchers.²⁵⁵

Tse would be unimpressed with the concerns of either James or Ryle regarding their claims of the absence of self-aware thoughts prior to taking an action. For Tse, the key to freedom is found in the changes in the neural processing that occurs *after* some neural subsystem fires off. Tse uses the idea that the “criteria” that affects the neural circuit is really an information pattern and therefore is not *a priori* hard wired into our being and therefore not subject completely to the deterministic behavior of the neurons themselves. He argues this notion provides the necessary wiggle room for allowing the individual to steer his own ship.²⁵⁶ It is Tse’s version of attempting to describe how then the brain can act as a self-moved mover but not violate any materialistic presumptions.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Tse, 31-78

²⁵⁵ L.F. Abbot, and W.G. Regehr, “Synaptic Computation” *Nature*, 431(2004), 796-803; C. Chavkin, “Dynorphins are endogenous opioid peptides released from granule cells to act neurohormorally and inhibit excitatory neurotransmission in the hippocampus” *Progress in Brain Research*, 125(2000), 363-367; R.M. Fitzsimonds, and M.M. Poo, “Retrograde signaling in the development and modification of synapses,” *Physiological Reviews*, 78(1998), 143-170; T.F. Freund, I. Katona, and D. Piomelli, “Role of endogenous cannabinoids in synaptic signaling.” *Physiological Reviews*, 83(2003), 1017-1066.

²⁵⁶ Tse, 156-168.

²⁵⁷ Critical causation could be viewed as an attempt to create, within the constraints of materialism, a system with equivalencies to Aristotelean matter and form where information patterns act in lieu of form.

Freedom of Excellence and neurobiological findings

This empirical evidence from the neurosciences can be readily assimilated to the framework of freedom of excellence. When we talk of habits, inclinations, and dispositions from a Thomistic perspective, we expect persistent changes accrue to aspects of our bodies, our sensory apparatus, in addition to the immaterial aspects of our being as well, as a consequence of our decisions and associated acts. The evidence that Tse and others have accrued demonstrating how changes can persistently accumulate in our neural pathways subsequent to our actions does not challenge the relevance or importance of the role of conscious reflection, systematic deliberation *prior* to a given neural event, but provides increased clarity around how the consequences of our decisions and thus our actions affect the physical components that will contribute to future decisions.

We have demonstrated that freedom of excellence can allow progress towards a final end even when incorporating random acts. In the case of the evidence referenced by Tse, we can see the material incarnation of the way decisions can become incorporated in our material being. This ability can be interpreted as evidence of how our very bodies are designed to enable growth along specific paths—secular evidence to be sure—but consistent with the fundamental Thomistic view that we have built into our neural pathways the capability of pursuing final ends.

We claim that these empirical studies are completely consistent with the qualitative process Pinckaers describes regarding freedom of excellence and the virtues. Our acts, whether they arise in a fashion fully visible to our intellect through careful deliberation over alternatives, or arising randomly, or even “unconsciously” from the subsystem of our brains neural circuits, are all able to be reflected on by our self-awareness. A self-consciousness that is able, in the light of the person’s final ends, to create another act, and then another. These studies suggest that a sequence of actions modifies our very neural networks and is consistent with a view that

they modify our inclinations and habits. In any case, they have the potential to propel the individual forward towards his final end.

The consequences to the neural circuitry of these events do not have to be limited to external sensory flows as suggested by Tse and others. It can be the consequence of thinking itself. We therefore maintain the distinction Tse and other physicalists make of *posterior* versus *prior* activation of a neural network is arbitrary. Any serious deliberation that could involve neural processing could result in the same physical effects. There is simply no need to foreclose the role of prior or concurrent intellection with regard to this kind of evidence. On the other hand, these experiments confirm intuitions about how we work as human beings that extend at least as far back as Aristotle who recognized the role of practice is pursuing the virtuous life. How we think, what we think, how we decide, what we decide, how we act, what we do has the potential for making persistent changes to our being including our physical bodies.

Contra Compatibilist Determinism

We look next at the impact of developments in 20th century mathematics that erode one of the pillars of all materialistic theories of freedom, namely, the notion of a universe governed by deterministic laws. Secular compatibilists argue free decisions are completely determined by the laws governing the material substrate, mainly our central nervous system, that is solely responsible for making those decisions. For theological compatibilists, human decisions are determined directly by God.²⁵⁸ While these positions are unacceptable *a priori* for a Catholic, there are arguments that undermine compatibilism other than theological unacceptability. This section argues that the concept of a deterministic causality is a relic of the early phase of the Enlightenment, and its meaning has been eroded by developments in our understanding of the physical world primarily in the 20th century.

²⁵⁸ Antony Flew, "Compatibilism, Free Will and God." *Philosophy* 48, no. 185 (1973): 231-44.

What does determinism in this context actually mean? Most discussions still live in the semantic shadow of Laplacian determinism.

We may regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its past and the cause of its future. An intellect which at any given moment knew all of the forces that animate nature and the mutual positions of the beings that compose it, if this intellect were vast enough to submit the data to analysis, could condense into a single formula the movement of the greatest bodies of the universe and that of the lightest atom; for such an intellect nothing could be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes.²⁵⁹

The threat of this view to free will seems clear: all doctrines of determinism, whether theological or physicalist imply that given the past and certain deterministic laws (or actions of an omnipotent God) there is only one possible future. Whatever happens is therefore necessary and cannot but occur.

The first hint that Laplace's 'billiard ball deterministic collision chain' view of causality would need revision was when it was recognized that there were other species of physical actions relevant to physical change such as chemical or energy transformations. Even in the 19th century the developing understanding of thermodynamics meant dealing with enormous numbers of entities in a physical system that required statistical descriptions that no longer supported the notion of meaningful determinism at the level of individual gas molecules.²⁶⁰ But it was the arrival of the revolution in quantum physics that allowed serious doubts regarding the Laplacian view of determinism to arise.

Some would argue developments in quantum mechanics only challenged an epistemological view of determinism. That is, in the context of physics, those issues which we can establish by measurements, i.e., by experimentation, still allow for the more important ontological view of determinism of the underlying physics to be maintained. While Einstein

²⁵⁹ Marquis Pierre Laplace, *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, translated into English from the original French 6th ed. by Truscott, F.W. and Emory, F.L. (Dover Publications, New York, 1951), 4.

²⁶⁰ Oliver Penrose, *Foundations of Statistical Mechanics*, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1970).

conceded the practical consequences of the formulas of quantum mechanics that were able to time and again be verified by experimental apparatus, he sought to include “hidden variable” theories to explain the seemingly bizarre implications of non-locality demonstrated in quantum systems.²⁶¹ In other words he refused to accept the idea that quantum mechanics threatened the deterministic foundations of “what was really happening” in these experiments. But with the publication of the Bell’s inequality theorem that no physicalist theory based on hidden variables could provide such explanations,²⁶² and the subsequent experiments that have confirmed Bell’s theories, the physical determinists have been thoroughly routed, at least for domains for which quantum behaviors are relevant.

For the current generation of physicists there is no disagreement that the physical states of the fundamental particles of the universe, such as location or momentum, are fundamentally incapable of complete joint specification.²⁶³ What this means from an experimental perspective, is that there is a level in physics in which we cannot specify in detail what is occurring to the entities that are residing at that level except probabilistically. This characteristic is not due to a lack of high-quality recording equipment, not due to a lack of creative imagination on the part of the physicist in constructing their experiments, but is baked into the fundamental behavior of the universe at that level of granularity. That is what the theories directly suggest and all we can say about whether it is truly true or not, in the ontological sense is that every experiment that has been created here to date agrees with the theory.²⁶⁴ Since at present it seems unlikely that

²⁶¹ Albert Einstein, B. Podolsky, and N. Rosen, “Can quantum-mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete?” *Physical Review* 47(1935), 777-780.

²⁶² John Bell, "On the Einstein Podolsky Rosen Paradox" *Physics*, **1** (1964) (3): 195–200.

²⁶³ For more mind-bending behaviors of quantum mechanics including the ability of vacuum to spontaneously birth paired particles or quantum entanglements that span galaxies see John Gribbin, *Schrodinger's Kittens and the Search for Reality: Solving the Quantum Mysteries* (1st American ed. Boston: Little, Brown &, 1995).

²⁶⁴ In anticipation of the section on chaos, it might be surprising that the best agreement that has ever been achieved in physics in agreeing between theory and experiment are those regarding QED—quantum electrodynamics. According to my professor of quantum mechanics Dr. Claude Barnett, this best proven

quantum mechanics is relevant at the level of the biological substrate of the brain, the challenge it presents regarding causality could be sidestepped for events relating to human freedom. But as we shall demonstrate in the next section, developments in non-linear mathematics put the causal determinists much deeper into the epistemological hole.

Chaos

For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the message was lost.
For want of a message the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.²⁶⁵

Until the rise of computation devices, the modern development of mathematics mostly focused on the subset of mathematics called linear that dealt with functions²⁶⁶ that behaved in the following way. If you supplied these functions (or in general weighted combinations of these functions) with small inputs you got small outputs, if you supplied them with somewhat larger inputs you got somewhat larger outputs and so on. In a fashion that can be precisely defined linear mathematical relationships are well behaved and allowed mathematicians, physicists and engineers to frequently obtain so-called closed form solutions. These characteristics were critical in the days of pen and paper tooling.

theory is only to 6 decimal places of precision, suggesting there is significant room for discrepancies between theories and experimental measurements in future experiments.

²⁶⁵ This “standard” version can be found in *Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, ed. Iona and Peter Opie, (Oxford, 1951), 324, and Benjamin Franklin is credited with very similar version. One of the earliest versions in English is “The losse of a nayle, the losse of an army'. The want of a nayle looseth the shooe, the losse of shooe troubles the horse, the horse indangereth the rider, the rider breaking his ranke molests the company, so farre as to hazard the whole Army” is from 1629 in *The Works of Thomas Adams: The Sum Of His Sermons, Meditations, And Other Divine And Moral Discourses*, 714

²⁶⁶The equation $y = f(x)$ is recognizable as a common way to referencing functions. For mathematicians it is actually a mapping from one domain to another and has many interesting abstract attributes even without saying much about the actual details of what $f(x)$ is. Examples would include behaviors such as whether it possesses a derivative, whether it can be integrated between $x=-\infty$ and $+\infty$, and whether it is *linear*.

Such equations include some of the most incredibly important equations in the history of mankind such as James C. Maxwell's equations²⁶⁷ that in their compact and expressive form, along with the equations of special relativity wholly describe the behavior of the macroscopic electromagnetic universe. While generally ignored even nowadays by non-specialists, non-linear equations crop up everywhere in terms of our attempts to systematically describe and predict the material universe. Understanding for this class of mathematics is best done visually, *i.e.*, graphing their behavior, but their key characteristic where they differ from linear mathematics is that small changes in the inputs lead to unpredictable changes (which can be very large) in the equation's output.

Manipulating these equations with only pencil and paper is challenging since there are not formulas that describe their behaviors—*i.e.*, what a mathematician would call a closed form solution. Instead, they need to be evaluated numerically for many different values, use the non-linear equation to compute the outcome, and then plot the result in some kind of graph in order to obtain the equivalent insights that mathematicians could obtain from their beloved linear mathematics. All these tasks were quite tedious until the rise of computing machines.

However, once mathematicians equipped with computing resources began to systematically explore non-linear equations, unexpected behaviors were observed. And these behaviors send an additional and final shock to the system of those wedded emotionally to the Laplacian deterministic view of the material universe. The key behavior of many of these equations (and the systems they describe) is so-called chaotic behavior—or simply termed chaos.

$$\begin{aligned} \left(v_{ph}^2 \nabla^2 - \frac{\partial^2}{\partial t^2} \right) \mathbf{E} &= \mathbf{0} \\ \left(v_{ph}^2 \nabla^2 - \frac{\partial^2}{\partial t^2} \right) \mathbf{B} &= \mathbf{0} \end{aligned}$$

²⁶⁷ Maxwell's equations for free space in so-called point form.

The first equation tells you everything you need or can know about electric field, the second about the magnetic field, in spacetime. Aren't they beautiful?

As is demonstrated in the introduction to chaos in Appendix B, the crucial issue is that there is no way predict the behavior of a system that is best described with such a non-linear relationship. Extremely small differences in starting measurements, differences much smaller than our ability in many cases to control, yield wildly differing predictions. A crucial aspect of chaos theory and where it differs from quantum mechanics is that its behavior infects the macroscopic scale, the scale of the world we live in, and not just the microscopic world of quantum mechanics.

Limits to notions of Deterministic Causality

"Prediction is difficult, especially the future." — Niels Bohr

"I do not think that word means what you think it means" —Inigo Montoya

Let us emphasize that the limits to determinacy demonstrated in Appendix B are not due to quantum mechanical indeterminacy. It is not due to some external source of random chance such as either a personal or impersonal force pushing or causing atoms to “swerve”. It arises from the behavior of equations when we try to use them to evaluate their future state. Chaotic equations cannot, *not shall not* but *cannot*, be predicted into the future in any meaningful sense of that word. No matter how big our computers are or how much knowledge we assemble, our ability to predict is doomed. This is all due to the sensitivity of arbitrarily small differences in either starting conditions or in the descriptions of current state, which are amplified into future uncertainty. This is a crucial dilemma for those who believe that the mathematical representations of reality are connected to the underlying reality of the universe, a claim compatibilists implicitly accept but do not attempt to justify.

The limits of determinism become more challenging as one moves to the domain of the human brain. Virtually any realistically complex biological system has non-linear equations lurking that have the potential for expressing chaotic behavior. In particular the human brain, the most complex entity in the known universe, has multiple systems that demonstrate non-linear

behavior, ranging from “winner take all”²⁶⁸ neuronal networks or nonlinear “attractor”²⁶⁹ mechanisms that can amplify small differences into radically different outcomes.²⁷⁰ When one adds to that intrinsic chaotic nonlinearity and take into account the incredible complexity that is known about just the topology of the brain circuits, ~100 billion neurons, with each neuron possessing between 1000 to 10,000 or more connections to other neurons,²⁷¹ you have system where the notion of any finite entity in the entire universe being able to predict state evolution is not just unlikely, it is absurd. The concept of determinism with even a completely materialistically based mind is simply incommensurable with empirical reality. I want to keep emphasizing here that for materialists their physical representations act like ontological truths for the rest of us. It is neither accurate nor necessary for the metaphysics of the freedom of excellence to be eroded by this practical lack of predictive capability. But then Thomists live in a world that is materialist plus an immaterial reality.

What this means is the central bone of contention in the libertarian vs compatibilist debate, as to whether freedom either requires or doesn't require *same past, same future*, has no meaning in terms of ever being able to make coherent sense of that statement in any fashion that involves actual observations and measurements, at least when the human brain is in view. It is postulating a scenario where one could never, even in a simulation exercise, ever reproduce that same past. It remains an unrealizable thought experiment.

²⁶⁸ I am not able to concisely explain what a “winner take all” neural circuit is but its behavior has been recognized as nonlinear since its inception in electrical engineering circuit theory—see the Wikipedia page for a basic orientation if you are interested. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winner-take-all_\(computing\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winner-take-all_(computing)).

²⁶⁹ Attractors are a set of numerical values which some chaotic equations tend to evolve towards. They can be commonly seen in economic equations representing inflation rates or unemployment rates and are best understood by seeing visual representations. See <http://www.chaoscope.org/gallery.html>.

²⁷⁰ S.L. Bressler, and J.A. Kelson, “Cortical coordination and dynamics and cognition,” *Trends in Cognitive Neuroscience* 5, 2001, 26-36; H. Haken, *The Science of Structure: Synergetics*, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold. 1984).

²⁷¹ Thomas M. Bartol Jr, Cailey Bromer, Justin Kinney, Michael A. Chirillo, Jennifer N. Bourne, Kristen M. Harris, and Terrence J. Sejnowski, “Nanoconnectomic upper bound on the variability of synaptic plasticity” *eLife* 2015;4:e10778. eLife Sciences Publications, Ltd. (online citation).

What is reasonable to say or not to say about these kinds of behaviors? For the materialist it is a given that there is a congruence between our mathematical representations and the true claims they are willing to make about the universe. But chaos theory has forced such individuals into a corner. Materialists, including compatibilists, have no way, even in principle, to utilize (i.e., compute) their presumed deterministic rules to accomplish prediction when faced with a chaotic system. These empties of any meaning for them the word *deterministic* when their tools, the descriptions of their causal chains, have the capability for chaotic behavior. In contrast, there is nothing in the field of chaos theory that represents an impediment to a Thomistic view of freedom. It is possible to concede these limitations to the fabric of mathematical representations, but these representations need not be confused with the real world. This issue is entirely a problem for the materialist.

Internal Coherency Not Determinism

We would like to point out that while these developments erode the implications of what determinism can mean to a materialist, it particularly weakens what it means when applied from the third person perspective. Specifically, we will argue that the issues of determinism so important to the compatibilist are less relevant in the internal world of the “I”.²⁷² The self-aware intellect’s ability to reflect upon forces/events that are external to it, events that may very well be deterministically caused, creates secondary reflections that reminds one of Aquinas’ assertion of self-moving (a secondary mover downstream of the Divine first mover). This approach is similar to but based on a more expansive metaphysics than that presumed by the previously discussed Chisholmian agent. We agree with Chisholm that the ability of the “I” to reflect upon

²⁷² The “I” is shorthand for our self-aware sense of our self. This perspective cannot be described in third person and is therefore incompatible with scientific framing which is universally third person.

these external events renders the external chain of events potentially neutral in terms of their necessitation.

The importance of the “I” self-reflection to order events extends to those that may be internally generated as well. The literature of self-reports on the state of the human mind²⁷³ generally agree that what comes into our thoughts is a mixture of order and chaos.²⁷⁴ The reaction to this mixture as it occurs in our “I” is more analogous to a surf boarder riding a rapidly evolving wave rather than an orderly calm reflective picture. But as we can attest from our personal experience, our intellect, our self-awareness allows us to ride the wave of the disorder and create order and meaning out of it.

The skeptics of the reality of the mind like Ryle first assert our internal inability to identify a transparent trail of explicit reasoning in our acts, and then use this assertion as evidence for of the unreality of our mental constructs.²⁷⁵ But even if his assertion is true, at least in some cases, the conclusion should have led him in precisely the opposite direction. The human minds ability, *a posteriori*, to deal with spontaneous events within its world of cognition, whether due to some externally indeterminate circumstance, or the unobserved product of a lower level brain-based subsystem, is what leads to our sense of internal coherency. Humans can make sense of things that are happening to them regardless of whether it is arising from a source that is apparently from within or from a source that is apparently from without. The explanation is not to be found encoded in some complex rule of the universe but is based on the mystery of

²⁷³ Can there be any other kind of reports on the human mind? The obvious answer to those not well schooled in current philosophy is that our “I” is a necessary precondition for any possible starting point in this discussion.

²⁷⁴ By this is meant chaos in the general sense, not the mathematical sense of the word.

²⁷⁵ Entities he dismisses include not just our internal experience of sensory excitation (i.e., to include the idea of phantom pain and not just “real” pain), but entities such as the experience of thinking of something, the experience of suddenly remembering. In Ryle’s case, practically any internal mental state that we might associate characteristically with the sense of “I” appears to be on the chopping block. Instead, he would consider these subjectively experienced qualities to be merely an epiphenomenon of a sensory state and has no “I” significance.

our self-awareness. It is precisely our intellect's awareness of our internal cognitive and volitional movements that we have a place to stand to understand *any* aspect of what a free act is. Disqualifying these experiences because they are only available to us internally is simply to eliminate the possibility for philosophers to come to a coherent understanding of freedom. They have excluded the very "senses" needed to determine coherency!

The role of the internal world versus the external world is strongly contrasted between the compatibilist and freedom of excellence. Compatibilists would insist on applying determinism to both, by which they mean that all outcomes of the individual decision process follow these necessitated deterministic outcomes. They diminish the internal world, evicting almost everything related specifically to experiences of the "I". Whereas freedom of excellence with its rich internal world can assimilate an external world that is an apparent mixture of deterministic and indeterministic events because of the ability of the intellect to reflect on both the events and the impact those events have on the person, at least in part. This enables the *imposition* of coherency, not as an illusion as Ryle would suggest, but as one of the fundamental characteristics actualizing the atomic act. Thus, for the freedom of excellence the internal world where ultimately the self-reflective judgements of the human being reside is one in which coherency but not determinism reigns.

Freedom of Excellence cannot be strictly materialistic

As we have stated earlier, a key difference between freedom of excellence and contemporary theories of human freedom is their comprehension of man's final end. While the Enlightenment has abandoned Aristotelean causation that formally defines the notion of final causes, there remains an interest in whether there can be hope for a continuity of our personal identity. Therefore, the notion of a future self that is not the same "self" as our present self would be troubling. On the question of what makes us *us*, the weight of Enlightenment, as well

as modern and post-modern, philosophical thought has decisively moved towards the view of the individual as being only the sum of their material constituents of their functioning body, especially their brain. Certainly, multifarious medical evidence has accumulated pointing to a decisive role for the healthy functioning of our neural anatomy and physiology in terms of our sense of self. But on this core question of what makes us *us*, we can demonstrate that a strictly materialistic view of the human mind is inadequate and cannot support a notion of continuity of personal identity, a continuity that is necessary for any theory that is concerned with final ends.

The Case of the Schrödinger Twin and Personal Identity

There are several variations of a classic thought experiment that challenge the idea of continuity of personal identity in a solely physical substrate. For *Star Trek* era philosophers, the most well-known is that of Parfit's transporter traveler but I will offer a slightly different version.²⁷⁶

The scene is that there are two free standing closets (an A closet and a B closet) standing side by side in a large hall that have doors you enter in, and once inside a door you can exit from on the other side. *You*²⁷⁷ enter the A closet and wait for a few seconds. During this time an absolutely perfect recreation copy of your material body appears inside the B closet, but *You* in closet A are otherwise unaffected. This copy is as exact as it is possible to be in terms of modern physics. In quantum mechanical terms there is a very complex Schrödinger wave

²⁷⁶ Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, (Oxford [Oxfordshire]: Clarendon Press, 1984), Chapter 10, 200-217; But Parfit's *Star Trek* inspired transporter examples minimize the issue of the person/body left behind which allows readers too much latitude in their response. My scenario is intentionally drawn with a fatal denouement to provide maximum incentive to the reader to consider very carefully the metaphysics of the situation—after all I am arguing metaphysics are a matter of life and death. As to the source of my scenario, I cannot recall reading it or being told about it, so it is possible I originated it. In any case I have been using this Schrödinger Twin scenario dating back to college dorm arguments in the 70s and so it is possible its original inspiration is drawn from the same source as Parfit's, *Star Trek*.

²⁷⁷ *You* in italics is the label for the you that transits closet A in this story.

function²⁷⁸ that encapsulates the exact state of every aspect of your material body down to the spin of every electron, down to the same color of every quark that has been copied and reproduced in closet B.²⁷⁹

At this point there are two entities that are exact materialistic duplicates except for being a few feet apart in space. If materialism is true, no one in the rest of the world, including *Your*²⁸⁰ loving spouse (if you have one) should be able to determine any difference. A key question that remains for the materialist is what does this mean for *Your* sense of continuity of personal identity? Certainly, the being in closet B would meet John Locke's criterion for someone satisfying the necessary requirements for preservation of his notion of personal identity.

This also shows wherein the identity of the same man consists: viz. in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body.²⁸¹

This scenario also arguably meets the requirement for continuity of the body demanded by some theologians for persistence of identity in the Resurrection.²⁸²

But now there is slightly twisted denouement to this scenario in order to put a very sharp edge on the question of continuity of personal identity. Both *You* and the closet-B-you exit your respective closets into the hall. There is a person facing both of you armed with a gun in his hand, a single round in the chamber, and a desire to shoot one of you in the head. One of you

²⁷⁸ Schrödinger wave functions are for the physicist a theory of everything for matter. Every possible experiment a physicist could perform involves a resolution of this function. But that does not mean manipulating it for complex entities is practical.

²⁷⁹ The only exception to exact identity is that the closet B wave function will have coordinates in three spatial location terms of x,y,z, spatially shifted (x-x₀, y-y₀, z) to account for the difference in location. Coordinate z is unshifted since both You and closet-B-you are standing on level ground.

²⁸⁰ This capitalization is intended to make clear that the question is addressed to the You we have previously defined that is transiting closet A.

²⁸¹ John Locke, XXVII "Identity and Diversity" in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (Hackett Classics. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996) § 6.

²⁸² David J. Bleich, "Resurrection and Personal Identity." *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 45, no. 3 2012: 73-88; Robert P. George, Patrick Lee, "Material Continuity in the Resurrection" *First Things*, August 18, 2006.

will die. Since *You* or closet-B-you would, under the presumptions of materialism, have precisely the same memories, same neuronal paths, same everything physical at the moment of this re-creation—presumably even the exact “thoughts” *You* were thinking as you went into closet A. Therefore, under these suppositions, there should be literally *no* difference to the rest of the world as to whether the man with the gun shoots *You* or closet-B-you.

So, the question to *You* is—do you care whether *You* get the bullet in your head or whether it is closet-B-you that gets the bullet in the noggin? If *You* do care, what is it that you object to?²⁸³ Effective material continuity appears to be satisfied with closet-B-you. If materialism is true, then even your loved ones would be happy with closet-B-you. But if *You do care* there is something else missing in a purely materialistic theory. What *is* very clearly in your mind is that sense that only you have, your “I”. A critical aspect of this argument is that if indeed *You* prefer the closet-B-you take the bullet this is conceding that, under the best-case scenario that materialism has to offer in replication, there is something missing that makes the *You* distinctly and uniquely *You*.

As Libet notes there is an unexplained gap between the categories of physical phenomena and the categories of subjective phenomena. As Leibniz averred, if we investigate the brain with full knowledge of its physical makeup and nerve cell activities, we will see nothing that describes our “I” experience. Yet this “I” is at the core of what we are and discussions that do not anchor their theories in its characteristic—that pretend this gap is not there or ignore its supreme importance—are hard or perhaps impossible to take seriously. A statement that cannot be repeated too often in this context, is the assumption that the physically observable world can account for the experiences and functions of the “I” remains a speculative belief—*not a scientific*

²⁸³ There is of course the trauma from seeing someone that looks just like you killed just a few feet away from you.

*proposition.*²⁸⁴ The Schrodinger Twin scenario illustrates the proper response to this challenge is to expand your metaphysics.

Freedom of excellence adopts Aquinas' metaphysical supposition that the rational intellect is immaterial and persists beyond the body yet "the intellective in principle is united to the body as its form."²⁸⁵ Contrary to the Cartesian dualism discussed in Chapter 2, wherein the body was one substance and the mind was another, creating the problem interactionism, the dualism of Aquinas integrates the concept of material and the immaterial via a form of Aristotelean hylomorphism.²⁸⁶ With hylomorphic dualism, man's soul is the form of his body. There is no meaning to the question of how mind and body interact because soul and body are not distinct substances, they are complementary principles of one complete substance that is the whole being.²⁸⁷ The soul is not the ghost in the machine, it takes both body and soul to describe what man *is*. Man's form, his soul, persists through sleep, through replacement of the atoms of the body as it occurs normally in this life, and in the end persists through to the Resurrection.²⁸⁸

The challenge of self-awareness/self-consciousness for the materialist

One way to minimize the problem that modern philosophy and science has in dealing "scientifically" with first person experiences is to minimize or deconstruct their significance. Ryle's work in diminishing what we have meant by the concept of the mind has led to a

²⁸⁴ Materialists struggle to explain continuity of identity in scenarios less sharp than this one. How to explain continuity through sleep or how to explain continuity of identity in the face of the constant material replacement of the atoms/molecules in our body? How fast or how much can be replaced before I am not me? Some philosophers, after reflecting on their equivalent of the Twin Paradox, not only give up on the possibility of continuity of identity, give up on the idea of personal identity entirely. Parfit, Chapter 16.

²⁸⁵ *ST*, I, q. 76, a.1, c., , 371.

²⁸⁶ Pasnau, 73.

²⁸⁷ Benignus, 175.

²⁸⁸ It is a mistake to think that Thomas separated all "thinking" for the immaterial intellect with a separate non-thinking body. He asserted a sophisticated separation of concerns where the sensory apparatus of the body possessed a *cogitative* capability that dealt with the instances of a thing while the intellect dealt with the universals, the former bodily and latter immaterially.

generation of philosophers not only denying free will but asserting that all those qualities of mental activity that most of us take as foundational for human experience are epiphenomena at best or illusions at worst. Galen Strawson, disgusted with this approach that he considers the height of intellectual laziness, has publicly called out an entire generation of philosophers for this nihilistic conclusion such as Brian Farrell, Paul Feyerabend, Richard Rorty, and Daniel Dennett among others.²⁸⁹

This attitude is typified by insisting that the whole idea of conscious thought is “an error,” evidently based on the idea that since most of the “states” associated with our brain are not actually visible to our “working memory”, and while conceding that it *seems* that there is a conscious experience, there isn’t *really* any conscious experience: the seeming is, in fact, an illusion.²⁹⁰ Strawson retorts that the trouble with this view is that any such illusion is already and necessarily an actual instance of the thing said to be an illusion.

Suppose you’re hypnotized to feel intense pain. Someone may say that you’re not really in pain, that the pain is illusory, because you haven’t really suffered any bodily damage. But to seem to feel pain *is* to be in pain. It’s not possible here to open a gap between appearance and reality, between what *is* and what *seems*.²⁹¹

We *seem* to be conscious, we *seem* to be self-aware, we *seem* to be able to reflect on our cogitations. While appearance and reality are not the same, to attempt to open a chasm between *this* appearance and reality is simply incoherent.

²⁸⁹ Galen Strawson, “The Consciousness Deniers” *New York Review of Books*, March 13, 2018. <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/03/13/the-consciousness-deniers/>.

²⁹⁰ Peter Carruthers, “The Illusion of Conscious Thought” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 24, No. 9–10, 2017, 228–52; Steve Ayan, “There is No Such Thing as Conscious Thought” December 20, 2018. *Scientific American* online, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/there-is-no-such-thing-as-conscious-thought/#>.

²⁹¹ Strawson, 4.

Perhaps the most creative attempt²⁹² to consider how a purely materialistic physical substrate could give rise to self-awareness is Douglas Hofstadter.²⁹³ Hofstadter concedes the difficulties of explaining self-awareness when rooted only in the biology and physics of the human brain. He attempts to erect on this materialistic foundation a kind of nonmaterial castle to support the creation of the characteristics of self that he appears to value in terms of his own internal subjective experiences. His approach is not so much constructive as analogical and finds its inception with the most momentous event in 20th century mathematics and arguably the single most important development in the history of mathematics, as he takes the reader through the implications of the Gödel's incompleteness theorem.²⁹⁴ The implication of this work is usually communicated to the non-mathematician as the (startling) result that every formal mathematical system only slightly more complicated than arithmetic will contain assertions that cannot be evaluated as either true or false within the confines of that system.²⁹⁵ But Hofstadter points out that the real stunning characteristic of the work is the ability of such systems to essentially “simulate” themselves or other formal systems.²⁹⁶ This ability formed the foundation of how Gödel, in his theorem, destroyed the attempts of Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead in their *Principia Mathematica* to found all of mathematics on an impervious logical foundation.

Hofstadter tells a tale of how this cardinal characteristic of formal systems to “simulate” themselves could give rise to an ability of our material brain to create a simulation (and a simulation of a simulation in continuing regress) of “self.” Through this approach he attempts to

²⁹² From the field of computer science.

²⁹³ Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach : An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Douglas R. Hofstadter, *I Am a Strange Loop* (New York: Basic Books, 2007)

²⁹⁴ Kurt Gödel, 1931, “Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme I,” *Monatshefte für Mathematik Physik*, 38: 173–198. English translation in van Heijenoort 1967, 596–616.

²⁹⁵ Gödel's work is also referred to as the undecidability theorem

²⁹⁶ Hofstadter, *I Am a Strange Loop*, 125-161.

explain the intuitive characteristics of the mind we each individually experience with these simulations, by rooting these characteristics directly within the material brain.²⁹⁷ The ability of a formal mathematical system to simulate itself (and by extension simulate much broader classes of other formal mathematical systems) begins with the concept of self-reference. Until Gödel, self-referentiality was best known for its ability known to create classic logic problems such as the liar's paradox. Here is a sentence representing the simplest version:

(1) This sentence is false.

If (1) is true, then sentence is false. Equivalently if (1) is false then the sentence is true.²⁹⁸ The conundrum this sentence presents is not due to anything slippery in the laws of logic, it is due to the sentence making itself the target of the logical assertion. When we think about consciousness it must include this notion of awareness being able to be aware of itself being aware of itself (and so on ad infinitum). A physical analog of this concept is crudely captured in **Figure 15** as the apparently infinitely receding image in the mirror of the image in the mirror and so on:

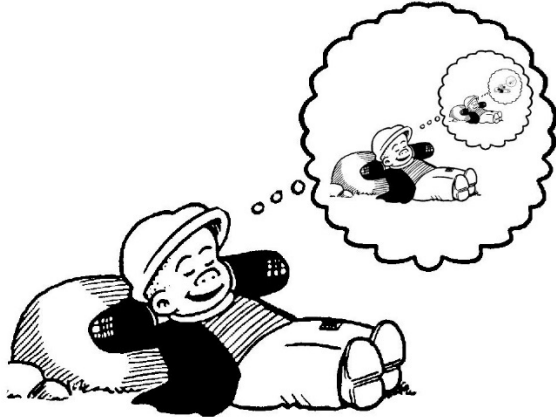


<http://noahpinionblog.blogspot.com/2015/01/priors-and-posteriors.html>

²⁹⁷ We can consider this kind of effort further evidence of the need for matter/form metaphysics. When you do not have an adequate metaphysical framework, you attempt to extend it within the limitations what you are willing to accept. We can see this in Tse and now in Hofstadter.

²⁹⁸ There is a difference between the “label” (1) that refers to sentence being true or false, and the truth false value as expressed “evaluating” the sentence.

Hofstadter extracts from Gödel's work a notion that goes beyond basic recursing relationships. He postulates that a key ability of the materialistic brain is to be able to “simulate” an individual. He considers this capability crucial for successful human interactions with others, particularly with individuals close to us such as spouses.²⁹⁹ But he considers the most central application of this capability is to create a simulation of the individual themselves.³⁰⁰



<http://pifflesnoot.com/2017/11/29/thank-infinity-cream-wheat-box/>

Figure 16.

Figure 16 is an attempt to capture non-mathematically this idea. Ernie Bushmiller’s character Sluggo is not just dreaming that he is dreaming; he is dreaming of a self that is in turn dreaming of a self and so on *ad infinitum*. Each layer of “selfness” in the dream is a simulation of using their self as a substrate to simulate the next layer of “self”. Sluggo (as are we) is aware in the dream that the self he is dreaming up isn’t “himself” but is a self, one layer removed.

²⁹⁹ A sad biographical context of this work is the very premature loss of his beloved wife, an experience that may have served as the incipit for his deep interest in this topic.

³⁰⁰ Hofstadter, *I Am a Strange Loop*, Chapters 13 and 15

Hofstadter tags the ability of a formal mathematical system to simulate itself as “strange loop behavior,”³⁰¹ and asserts that our brains have more than enough sufficient structural complexity to support this kind of “strange loop” behavior. He ties this ability to simulate our selfness as the crucial capability allowing for the emergence of self-awareness. He argues the brain acts as the ultimate universal representational machines capable of importing not just sense-events but symbols, and symbols representing symbols ad infinitum.³⁰² Unlike the Sluggo cartoon, he does not believe there is a primary Sluggo who is the first level dreamer. His view

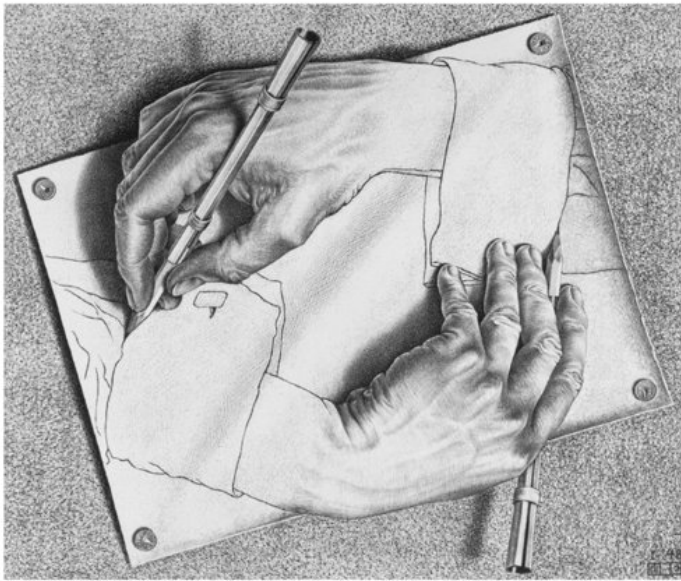


Figure 17.

is closer to the well-known Escher “Drawing Hands”³⁰³ in Figure 17 where his idea of the non-reality of the primary self is captured by the idea that neither hand exists except as the other hand brings it into existence. Only through simulation of self does true selfness come into existence.

Hofstadter’s exposition of Gödel is a fascinating and mostly clear explanation of one of the densest papers in mathematics. Discussions of self-referentiality are mind twistingly

³⁰¹ Hofstadter, *Strange Loop*, chapter 10, but the Sluggo cartoon is a more compact explanation.

³⁰² Hofstadter, *Strange Loop*, 245.

³⁰³ <https://moa.byu.edu/m-c-eschers-drawing-hands/>

entertaining and he writes with a beautiful style. But what exactly has he accomplished in his analogical argument? His arguments admit the reality of self-awareness that we all experience, but founders on establishing how it actually comes into existence from a purely material base. Yes, if the brain could simulate self it could account for self. This line of reasoning is much like the recipe for how to make a million dollars in which the first step is to start with a million dollars. At best he has argued the brain might very well have the ability in some sense to simulate itself. This is a substrate Hofstadter has already conceded needs additional abstractions constructed above it to achieve true self-awareness.

Hofstadter walks through Parfit's teleportation scenario which is less crisp with regard to the choices facing an individual when "perfectly duplicated" in a material sense than the closet/gun scenario I presented in this chapter, and like Parfit, Hofstadter comes away convinced that not only does continuity of personal identity make no sense but that ultimately there must be no "I".

My claim is that an "I" is a hallucination perceived by a hallucination...[but] ceasing to believe altogether in the "I" is in fact impossible, because it is indispensable for survival. Like it or not, we humans are stuck for good with this myth.³⁰⁴

Hofstadter, like Parfit, and Dennett when faced with the ultimate choice between belief in a materialistic only universe and belief in their own personal identity makes what can only be described as an ideological, arguably even a *theological* choice between competing theories regarding what is at the very core of what makes us human.

Revisiting the issue of predictability—Fidelity

We have argued that determinism in the natural world does not mean, at least epistemologically, what the materialists think it means. But there is a crucial sense in which

³⁰⁴ Hofstadter, *Strange Loop*, 292-93.

actions of our fellow human beings can not only be relied upon but that such reliability increases as individuals progress towards their final end. We describe this characteristic as fidelity.

The best of human relationships are permeated by this quality. Married partners can have a confidence born of the bonds of mutual love, the experience of a shared journey, reinforced by the evidence of repeated reciprocal *trust* that their partners will do right by their relationship although placed in potentially compromising circumstances. Even young but fast friends can have the experience of *counting on* their true friends to defend them from the barbs of their immature peers. Soldiers carry out their duties are willing to put their life in the hands of their comrades, *knowing* they can rely them, *knowing* they will cover their back and never let them down to the limit of their ability, even if that sometimes means giving up their lives for one another.

What accounts for our *trust*, our ability to *count on*, our ability to *know* what these individuals will attempt or accomplish regarding our need and our expectations? The idea we could ‘compute’ this kind of behavior given a deep understanding of the laws of the universe is as we have seen absurd. Even more absurd is the notion of applying libertarian or freedom of indifference to the choices relevant to this fidelity. If such individuals were given an opportunity to make their decision over again given the identical circumstances, would we want them to choose other than to be a trustworthy loving spouse, or a true friend, or a loyal and courageous fellow soldier? When they did make that same decision again and again we dispute with the libertarian classifying such actions as unfree since these actions violate the *same past different outcome* principle. We would also dispute with the compatibilist that this fidelity was due to necessitated conformance to deterministic physical laws. Instead, from the perspective of freedom of excellence, we would consider these individuals fidelity to be the highest expression of human freedom in pursuit of their final ends. *We* would wish to *be* that worthy spouse, that

loyal friend, and that soldier willing to give their life for another. This kind of predictability is not the yielding up to a deterministic constraint or taking subterfuge in some type of random event—it is the fulfillment of becoming the kind of people we are supposed be, and that we ought to be in the process of becoming. It is the consequence of fidelity to those virtues which are our lodestones in that becoming.

Chapter 7. Final End

In chapter 2 we reviewed the contemporary debate concerning man's free will. While finding aspects of that debate worthy of being assimilated into the fuller freedom of excellence, we ultimately agree with those who assert the contemporary debate is unlikely to be resolved given its present framing and current presumptions. We presented an alternative to this depressing view of freedom in returning to a Thomistic foundation. Freedom of excellence moves the focus beyond the isolated atomic act, and places it firmly in the development of the habits and virtues that constitute the process of becoming a fully realized human being growing towards their final end. This view of freedom recognizes that each act results in modifications that fold back into the very character of the person's will and intellect that in turn influence subsequent choices. That discussion captured one of the key differences between a freedom of indifference or of choice between contraries by the analogy of learning. When there is a focus on the accumulation of something, whether it be a skill, an accumulation of knowledge, or as Pinckaers describes as most central for a freedom of excellence, the acquiring of virtue, the locus for true freedom moves beyond an autonomous, untethered will and instead considers freedom a property of the whole person and *all* their acts.

It was demonstrated that Pinckaers' assertion of a Thomistic base for his freedom of excellence was well supported in Aquinas. Thomas provides a rich and nuanced view of the relationship between intellect and will, and the feedback between the will, the intellect and the virtues. This view includes the primary role of Divine grace in the gift of the virtues, and their role in the proper ordering of the will and intellect. This process of the development of freedom of excellence corresponds to the individual participation in the divine, the restoration of the image of God in the person, and that individual's movement towards their final end in the beatific vision.

The notion of man's final end is in fact necessary to bring directionality to the issue of what freedom means. If we apply the idea of final ends to the famous Garden of forking paths, it ensures that the garden is more than simply a mass of branching forks—it *goes somewhere* and that somewhere is of cosmic significance. This presumption is missing from the contemporary debate, lost to the Enlightenment as Baruch Spinoza ridiculed the final cause as “[turning] Nature completely upside down. For what is really a cause, it considers an effect, and conversely. What is by nature prior it makes posterior.”³⁰⁵ This is an ignorant criticism in the most fundamental sense, blind to the role of self-aware beings who *can* apprehend their final cause, a cause that draws the person like a lodestone attracts the needle of the compass. The loss of the final cause leaves the libertarian view of freedom incoherent in its efforts, reduced to avoiding non-existent deterministic fate, aimlessly wandering their forking paths.

If it were simply a binary choice between libertarian and compatibilist views of human freedom, we would argue compatibilism has the stronger case. Its arguments against the incoherency of the libertarian fear of comprehensible causal chains, and its recognition that our decision-making process is affected by our inclinations and our dispositions are to be assimilated. Compatibilism's confidence in predictability anchored on its notion of determination falters on the shoals of chaos, but its fatal flaw is its metaphysical amputation of all things non-material. We demonstrated that persistence of personal identity is impossible for the materialist, a conclusion shared by many current philosophers and leading those holding to this truncated metaphysics to disbelieve in consciousness itself.

In contrast freedom of excellence is consistent with current knowledge of both science and mathematics. It is robust to theories of quantum mechanics and chaos theory. It can encompass views of human decision making that occur in the classic fashion of reflective

³⁰⁵ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics I*, cited in Pasnau, 207.

deliberation and conscious choice—freedom of excellence is not nullified nor necessitated by a completely comprehensible causal chain leading up to a given decision—precisely because of the role of the self-reflective (and immaterial) intellect. Freedom of excellence delights in the comprehensibility of its self-modifying feedback system where the consequences of one act affects those characteristics of inclination, habit, and openness to the graces of the Spirit that will then in turn reinforce or mitigate future decisions. We demonstrated the ability of freedom of excellence to accommodate even Jamesian (or random) acts because the connection between act and subsequent self-reflection provides the individual with a rear-view mirror while still steering forward toward a final end. We demonstrated that continuity of personal identity is inconsistent with a purely materialistic view of being. Therefore, one of the desiderata of a theory of freedom needs to include is a non-materialistic component, a presumption built into the hylomorphic metaphysics undergirding freedom of excellence.

Freedom of excellence is not simply a philosophical view of freedom, it is a theological assertion about what man is intended to be, and it is a theological description about how God interacts with us, now and in the final vision. It is a theory that gives Divine priority to both our initial enablement as self-moved movers, and as an ongoing supplier of supernatural gifts that make possible our participation in the Divine. The consequence is not an arbitrary constraint on our intrinsic characteristics but is the restoration of what should have been and what some day will be. Freedom of excellences places the meaning of freedom in its proper mooring, namely, in the end God has intended for us. Its locus is in man becoming more not less, more real in contrast with less real, more free rather than less free, becoming something rather than becoming nothing. We argued by analogy how it can be reasonable to understand this as an intrinsic change and one that is ontologically irreversible.

C.S. Lewis captures this sense of the overflowing fullness of our final end that possesses all of what God ever intended for us in a passage from the final Narnia book *The Last Battle*. Narnia has been utterly destroyed, Peter, Eustace and the rest of the characters are on their final journey:

"The Eagle is right," said the Lord Digory. "Listen, Peter. When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream." His voice stirred everyone like a trumpet as he spoke these words: but when he added under his breath "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what do they teach them at these schools!" the older ones laughed...

It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among mountains. And in the wall of that room opposite to the window there may have been a looking glass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley, all over again, in the looking glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real ones: yet at the same time they were somehow different - deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if ever you get there you will know what I mean. It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried: "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. Bree-hee-hee! Come further up, come further in!"³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), Chapter 15

Freedom of excellence is becoming what we have been looking for all our life, it is what is meant to put on our full humanness by becoming what God always intended us to be. The fullest possible expression of mankind is our participation in the divine. More choices, not fewer, more opportunity for human expression, not less opportunity for such expression. Is such a person predictable in their trustworthiness? Is such a person reliable in their sharing of charity? Is such a person overflowing in their freedom? Is this what we want from the gift of freedom?

Yes.

Appendix A. A Brief Development of the Concept of the Will from Socrates to Maximus

Volition, 'tis plain, is an act of the mind knowingly exerting that dominion it takes itself to have over any part of the man, by employing it in, or withholding it from any particular action. And what is the will but the faculty to do this?³⁰⁷

The question of what exactly we mean by the term will is an entangled one when asked regarding its historical development, but it can minimally be viewed as a conceptual part of a theory of human action that is richer than a focus on mere bodily movement.³⁰⁸ Key associations with the concept of will as Locke has it includes the notion of intentionality and of its quantitation as a volitional property of the person i.e. a strength of will or weakness of will as part of its explanatory properties. This appendix briefly traces its semantic development through the historical arc from Socrates to Maximus the Confessor.

The standard view until the last few decades was that the will as a volitional concept was lacking in Greek philosophy, only first realized with Augustine and his *On Free Choice of the Will* AD 388-95.³⁰⁹ This view has been challenged with some scholars finding volitional conceptions of the will much earlier in the Stoics³¹⁰ or much later in Maximus the Confessor.³¹¹ There has also been increasing appreciation that the early Greek philosophers possessed will-like concepts even if they were not unified into the single concept of the will that became more ubiquitous in late antiquity into the scholastic period.

³⁰⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett Classics. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), Chapter 21.

³⁰⁸ A.W. Price, "Aristotle, the Stoics and the Will" in *The Will and Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, eds Thomas Pink, and M.W.F. Stone (Routledge, London and New York, 2004), 30.

³⁰⁹ Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity, Sather Classical Lectures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), Chapter VI.

³¹⁰ Neal Ward Gilbert, "The Concept of Will in Early Latin Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1963): 22.

³¹¹ R.A. Gauthier, *Aristote. L'Ethique à Nicomaque*, Tome I, Première Partie: Introduction, Deuxième édition (Louvain, Publications Universitaires - Paris, Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1970), VI, 360.

Socrates and Homer

The hallmark of early Greek philosophy was its focus on the order and beauty that are established and maintained by the deities. It looked to the external world of the universe instead of starting with the study of human nature.³¹² Its framework rested on the key role of human reason—the human mind must be capable of perceiving and appreciating the rational order of the universe.³¹³ It is therefore unsurprising that Socrates lays out the central role that knowledge plays in the virtues—in fact that all virtues are simply knowledge.³¹⁴ For Socrates no one ever errs knowingly or willingly: when a person does wrong their action is an intellectual failure, specifically ignorance about what is right.³¹⁵

While Socrates is unwavering in his focus on the role of reason (*logos*) and possession of right knowledge, others admit the role for other forces to explain human action, particularly for failures of the intellect. In Homeric anthropology, man's behavior emerges from the dualism of rational and irrational forces such as when Achilles, in being manipulated by Agamemnon, resolves to draw his sword after weighing it in his heart and mind.³¹⁶ The rational derived from the application of man's reasoning powers, the irrational from emotions such as anger, fear or hatred.³¹⁷

³¹² Dihle, 36.

³¹³ Dihle, 2.

³¹⁴ Plato, *Protagoras*, 329b-333b, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 3 translated by W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1967).

³¹⁵ *Protagoras*, 352c, 358b.

³¹⁶ Homer, *Illiad*, translated by William Cower, 1791, Online Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16452/16452-h/16452-h.htm>.

³¹⁷ Dihle, 26.

Plato

Plato believed the reconciliation of the rational intent of a man with the order of reality only occurs in human consciousness: “Only the human mind participates in the intelligible and only the intelligible is entirely real.”³¹⁸ In the *Timaeus*, following a deterministic concept of nature, failures in human life are explained by deficiencies of man’s material body and his attached soul that is a consequence of inadequate training.³¹⁹ In *The Republic*, Plato asserts matter interferes with the noetic order; the world we experience is perishable, disorderly, irrational and unpredictable. Knowledge which the intellect can acquire refers to the real, is lasting and unchanging and structured by reason.³²⁰

In Plato’s explanation of the human act, he describes the souls *thumos* (high spirited sometimes anger) as allied with reason in the struggle with *epithumiai* (the sensual appetites), which is sometimes on its own opposed to reason.³²¹ Plato in discussing souls’ ‘choosing’ their next lives for reincarnation, uses the term *haireisthai* for this choosing, and makes clear this choice is the soul’s *aitia* (responsibility). If the soul chooses virtuously, this virtue is *free* and has no *adespoton* (master). Richard Sorabji asserts this is the earliest explicit reference to a metaphor for freedom in the context of human choosing.³²²

Aristotle

Aristotle distributed ideas that are grouped under the modern idea of will among several different concepts, but all of them are usually thought to lack the modern notion of intention that

³¹⁸ Dihle, 40.

³¹⁹ Plato, *Timaeus*, 81E-87A, trans. B. Jowett, Project Gutenberg
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1572/1572-h/1572-h.htm#link2H_4_0010

³²⁰ Dihle, 41.

³²¹ Plato, *The Republic*, 9, C7-D2, trans. Benjamin Jowett.

³²² Richard Sorabji, “The Concept of the Will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor” in *The Will and Human Action : From Antiquity to the Present Day*. Eds. Thomas Pink, and M.W.F. Stone (London Studies in the History of Philosophy: New York, 2003), 9.

we associate with will.³²³ First is a general concept of acts that are ‘voluntary’ *hekousios* (ἑκούσιος), these are actions Aristotle allows both beasts and children to have and are the broadest categories of acts. This concept includes acts that we would deny acting from reason but that Aristotle would still attribute as “up to us.” For example, *hekousios* would include the act of a dog biting someone, and that dog would be held responsible for the action even though this is not an act deriving from reason.³²⁴ Aristotle follows Socrates and Plato in understanding the role of *logos* and the knowledge it has in right action but he also has a concept, distinct from but associated with reason, *boulēsis*, which he categorizes as part of the rational soul and distinct from reason itself.³²⁵ In commenting on Plato’s use of this term Aristotle uses *boulēsis*, as appetite or desire for that what we really want that is good, or at least *appears* good.³²⁶

Besides acts arising from reason, and acts arising resulting from the appetitive but still rational appetites, there is an additional concept that overlaps with the modern view of will which Aristotle termed *prohairesis* (προαίρεσις). This is that which arises from the desire for the good ends of *boulēsis* and is the desire for the means that will lead towards those ends. This term is sometimes translated “choice” but it is important to consider that Aristotle did not differentiate between degrees of *prohairesis* in an equivalent fashion to the idea of weak-willed or strong-willed. In Aristotle’s account of where individuals fail to act according to their *prohairesis* which he termed *akrasia*, he explains that it is the appetites that cause us to overlook the knowledge of the good choice and that it is reason, not *prohairesis*, that fights the appetites.³²⁷

³²³ A.W. Price, “Aristotle, the Stoics and the Will” *The Will and Human Action : From Antiquity to the Present Day*. Eds. Thomas Pink, and M.W.F. Stone (London Studies in the History of Philosophy: New York, 2003), 30.

³²⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.2 in Books II-IV. trans. C.C.W. Taylor, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2006).

³²⁵ Sorabji, 8.

³²⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.4.

³²⁷ Sorabji, 11.

Shifting away from Plato's *Protagoras* where sensuality and irrational impulses duel with moral knowledge, Aristotle's theory of human action introduces a key concept that will survive to the medieval schools—the notion that the habitual inclination toward virtuous actions results from a process of practice, a process firmly under the control of the intellect.³²⁸ Moral progress for Aristotle is not simply knowledge in the abstract universal sense. For Aristotle nature and its order are the kinds of knowledge that is possible to be known objectively. But in the moral life the role of this kind of objective knowledge is rarely applicable.

It is up to “practical” intelligence to come to the decisions in ordinary life as illustrated by the story of Alexander of Arodisias.³²⁹ A ship's crew finds itself amid a tempest and throws their cargo overseas to keep their ship from foundering and themselves from drowning. The presence of the tempest overwhelms their prior intent to carry the cargo to its destination. The sailors made their decision purposefully based on what they deemed best at the moment, it is an action tightly linked to the intellect and to cognition. For Aristotle, it is practical intellect that deals with the messy empirical realities of man's ordinary world rather than the unchanging universal truths of the cosmos. Dihle argues this approach weakened the tight Socratic and Platonic linkage between virtue and knowledge,³³⁰ but for Aristotle this kind of practical knowledge *is* linked with the notion of a virtue emerging from a practiced sequence of actions under the regulation of the intellect.

Epicureans and the Stoics

Epicurus and his followers were interested in the notion of freedom but not will, depending instead on their concept of freedom arising from a “swerving” atomic cosmology. However, in later Latin arguments about the lack of freedom in Stoicism, first in Lucretius and

³²⁸ Dihle, 56.

³²⁹ Dihle, 59.

³³⁰ Dihle, 58.

later with Cicero we first see the term *libera voluntas*—free will appear.³³¹ Happiness (read moral perfection) depends on man’s ability to insulate himself from anything that disturbs his emotional or moral equilibrium. While man cannot escape being affected by the unpredictable movements of the universal atomic processes, he can detach himself and attain the goal of happiness (again read moral perfection).³³²

For the Stoics every motion, every event, every deed was predetermined by fate (*heimarene*) which was a continuous string of causes.³³³ Freedom, responsibility and morality occur only in reference to human consciousness. Man can comprehend this strict determinism as rational and providential. This knowledge enables him to adapt his intention freely to what fate has ordained for him. The perfect agreement between his consciousness and nature leads to his moral perfection and his human happiness.³³⁴

An early Stoic, Chrysippus in the third century BC, contributed the notion of intellectual assent to a human act or *sunkatathesis*.³³⁵ While Stoics were materialists and saw assent as a change in the tension of the soul-pneuma of the heart, this concept became readily assimilated into Neoplatonic and Christian formulations of the immaterial soul and is viewed as a predecessor to the role that consensus and the command of the will plays with Aquinas.³³⁶

The later Stoic Epictetus, building on this concept of *sunkatathesis*, expands the semantics of *prohairesis* to include a broader notion of moral character that is formed by our day-to-day decisions. Charles Kahn argues that Epictetus represents this as the true self, the “I”

³³¹ Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, 2.251-93, translated Ronald Latham, (Penguin Classics. Baltimore, 1952).

³³² Dihle, 41.

³³³ John Sellars, *Stoicism*, (Durham [England]: Acumen, 2006), 100.

³³⁴ If this sounds much like a contemporary compatibilist framing of the free will debate—it should.

³³⁵ Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, (Oxford, 1985), Chapter 3.

³³⁶ Charles Kahn, “Discovering the Will From Aristotle to Aquinas” in *The Question of "Eclecticism" : Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, Edited by John M. Dillon and A.A. Long. (Hellenistic Culture and Society; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 41.

of personal identity and character which stands in contrast with Plato's principle of reason that offers no real basis for the kind of individuation required by a developed metaphysics of personal selfhood.³³⁷

In every case, I want and prefer [*mallon thelō*] what God wants. For I think what God wants is better than what I want. I attach myself to him as servant and follower, I share his impulse, his desire [*sunoregomai, sunhormō*]; I simply share his will [*haplos sunthelō*].³³⁸

This view of will presents an interesting resonance with what we will see in the Hebrew development of the will.

Hebrew View of God's Will³³⁹

In Greek cosmology, understanding the plans of the gods and the order of the universe placed man's reason at the center of decision making including those of the moral life. But across the Mediterranean arose a view of God that shifted the center of this focus away from reason and to what will become known as the will. Dihle argues that Hebrew and thus the early Christian view is of a God not bound by the order of His Universe. Instead, He is the creator *ex nihilo*. He orders the chaotic, animates the lifeless, and sets into motion what was merely potential. Contra the Greeks He transcends the order that constrains all others.³⁴⁰ God can create, change and destroy as He pleases, but this transcendence does not imply actions that are arbitrary towards his creatures "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my

³³⁷ Kahn, 254

³³⁸ Epictetus, *Discourses*, 4.7.2, quoted and translated Charles Kahn, "Discovering the Will From Aristotle to Aquinas", 254

³³⁹ This section follows Dihle in finding deep differences between Greek and Hebrew views of the will, which would imply contrasts in their respective views of human freedom. However, freedom of excellence broadens the view of freedom beyond atomic volitional activity and creates an opportunity to argue Greek and Hebrew views of freedom are closer than Dihle and this section would suggest—but developing that argument is another thesis:-)

³⁴⁰ Dihle, 4.

steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you” (Isaiah 54:10).³⁴¹

In the view of Aristotle, Plato and the Stoics, freedom is brought about when the intellect has chosen the action in alignment with the true order of being, “not hindered by error, emotion or compulsion.”³⁴² But Dihle argues the anthropology of the Hebrews is grounded in man’s ability to decide and act either for good or ill regardless of his intellectual assessment of the outcome of the act. A fundamental difference in Greek and Hebrew cosmologies is illustrated by Seneca’s assertion “I do not obey God, I agree with Him.”³⁴³ For the Greek, Dihle argues that *proheretic* choice accompanies an image of reality where everything exists according to unchanging rules. Man is able understand these rules and act on them. In contrast Dihle argues for the Hebrew there is a Creator free to intervene with his creation at any time according to His absolute will. The commandment of God could be obeyed or disobeyed but not proved or disproved, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). This leads to the crucial difference in Hebrew thought: “He [the Hebrew] becomes conscious of his own intention through continued acts of obedience or disobedience—acts of the will—by which he freely reacts to utterance of the divine will.”³⁴⁴

But the Hebrew’s scripture makes clear that man can refuse to accept and obey, and this ability to accept or refuse is thus the basis of his moral responsibility. “It was he who created humankind in the beginning, and he left them in the power of their own free choice.” (Sirach 15:14). The righteous man can become unrighteous and the unrighteous man can become

³⁴¹ *The Holy Bible : Revised Standard Version*

³⁴² Dihle, 71.

³⁴³ Seneca, *The Epistles of Seneca*, 96.2, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca_younger-epistles/1917/pb_LCL077.105.xml.

³⁴⁴ Dihle, 72. I think Dihle’s argument here is a bit overstated, but to be fair his magisterial work on the will was completed prior to the significant paradigm shift regarding Second Temple Jewish understandings of the Law, particularly in the person of Paul, inaugurated by E.P. Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977.

righteous in either the acceptance or the refusal of the call to obedience. The Hebrew scripture does not provide systematic technical terminology to denote the idea of will, or obedience and disobedience attributed to some specific component of the human being such as their intellect or their emotion or their sensory apparatus. Instead in Hebrew thought specific characteristics such as these voluntarist concepts are assimilated to the whole person.

It is through divine *torah* that man can react responsibly to the will of God. This is not done by a purely intellectual effort, but a man must consider the ends of his action in their relation to the commandment of God, suggesting crucial role for the intellect accomplishing this obedience. That is why the just man “on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalms 1:2). The view that obedience to the commandment of God, both results from and leads to such meditation and forms the foundation for moral progress, is apparent across the breadth of scripture.³⁴⁵ It emerges in its fullness in Second Temple Judaism exemplified by Gamaliel’s “Render your will His will so that He can render His will your will,”³⁴⁶ and Christ’s prayer in the garden “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will (θέλω), but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39)

What then accounts in the Hebrew view to explain bad or evil decisions? Whereas the Greeks may blame ignorance or the passions interfering, the Hebrews would refer to man’s ‘stiffheartedness’ (Ezra 2:4). Man has been given clear commandments but also the ability to ignore or even to reject these commands. The Manual of Discipline,³⁴⁷ found at Qumran and designated 1QS, and more commonly known as the Rule of the Community, defines stiff

³⁴⁵ The wisdom literature of Scripture would be a primary area for support for this claim such Wisdom, Proverbs, Job, and the Psalms but I would claim it is implicit in many of the narrative passages of the Law and the Prophets as well. But to substantiate this claim would be part of another thesis.

³⁴⁶ Dihle, 78.

³⁴⁷ The Rule scroll is considered a defining document of the Essenes, providing insight to their motivations, and detailed descriptions of their daily ritual life. An online transcription is available <http://www.nyx.net/~dwashbur/1qsintro.htm>.

heartedness as a rejection of salutary knowledge which could cause people to go on the right path.³⁴⁸ This ability is put in tension with the Hebraic views of divine predestination expressed in the story of Pharaoh whose actions were not affected by Moses revelations to him, but by God ‘hardening his heart’ (Exodus 9:12). This belief in both human responsibility as a result of human act as well as predestination in association with divine omniscience recurs in the Hebrew scripture. It is a tension that continues in the debate between Catholic and Calvinist theology and within Catholic theology in the *de Auxiliis* controversy.³⁴⁹

The Hebrew theme of human responsibility takes on additional texture with the writings of Paul especially with his concept of conscience. For Paul, conscience is distinct from the intellect, it indicates to its person whether an action has been or will be in accordance with the will of God in Rom 2:14-18. To interfere with the conscience of someone else interferes with their relationship with God, as in 1 Cor 10:29, and is therefore an attack on his freedom (*eleutheria*).³⁵⁰ For Paul, conscience by testifying to the will of God, provides a motivation for action in the individual, regardless of the intellectual standing of that person.

In contradistinction to the Greeks, Paul’s explanation for why man is able to do wrong is explained by leading life “according to the flesh.” This concept is not to be entangled with a dualistic hatred of matter but is a reference to the state of man in which all his activity, including his religious, intellectual and moral endeavor, finds its final end in himself. This is reflected by

³⁴⁸ Dihle, 76.

³⁴⁹ Named for the *Congregation de Auxilis* established by Pope Clement VIII to settle the theological controversy between Dominicans and Jesuits in the 16th century regarding the implications of efficacious grace for man’s freedom. Pope Paul V, who had to endure 20 additional years of arguments and some 85 additional conferences after the original Congregation completed its work, finally told the disputants to shut up and stop calling each other heretics, had it right. Aquinas’ position on this issue has not been improved upon—see a prior footnote referencing this issue.

³⁵⁰ Dihle, 81.

references to concepts like pride—not the human body—that are in Paul’s mind. For Paul, this train of self-oriented action can only be stopped by divine grace.

Unification of Greek Will-like semantics in the Latin

The interaction between these Greek and Hebrew approaches to the driving forces of the human act, between a not-yet-fully-characterized-notion-of-will and the intellect, sets the stage for the next milestone. There is scholarly consensus that a key step in the formation of the Augustinian view of will occurs with the translation of Greek philosophical material to Latin by Cicero. *Voluntas*, the standard Latin rendering since the time of Cicero for the Greek *boulēsis*, is the verbal noun derived from the verb *volo* “I want” as *boulēsis* is the nominalization for the Greek verb *boulamai*.³⁵¹ But the secondary connections of the Latin noun have a semantic reach beyond the equivalency to the Greek. *Voluntate sua* is to do something spontaneously of one’s own accord; the adjective *voluntarii* is the term for volunteers in the Roman legion.³⁵² Cicero also translated *hekousios* as *voluntarius*, resulting in a linguistic connection in Latin between two unconnected Greek concepts, *hekousion* and *boulēsis*. Kahn and Dihle both argue that this linguistic foundation aided in the emergence of Augustine’s and thus Aquinas’ view of will. Kahn observes that when Aquinas asserts something is called *voluntarium* because it is according to the inclination of the will *voluntas*³⁵³ he is simply thinking in Latin.³⁵⁴ A final linguistic connection in the Latin of yet another distinct will-like Aristotelian Greek term occurs when Seneca translates Epictetus’ *prohairesis* (προαίρεσις) to *voluntas*: “The body requires many things for health, the soul nourishes itself... Whatever can make you good is in your power. That do you need in order to be good? To will it [*velle*].³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Kahn, 248; Dihle, 133.

³⁵² Kahn, 248.

³⁵³ *ST*, I-II, q. 6, a. 5, c, 619-620.

³⁵⁴ Kahn, 241.

³⁵⁵ *Ep.* 80.3-4 as cited in Kahn, 254.

Neoplatonics on Pride and the Will

One other key precursor of Augustine's formulation of the will comes from the influence of Neoplatonic school who connect the notion of pride with idea of a willing gone bad. Plotinus in considering the question what is the cause of evil in Plato's cosmology, concludes that souls turn away and break loose from the Father and become ignorant of the Father because of pride (*tolma*) and the willing (*boulethenai*) (βουλεθεναι) to belong to themselves alone. This association of pride as a cosmologic explanation also occurs with the neo-Pythagorean Dyad³⁵⁶ where *tolma* is the term used to explain the creation of the lower levels of the cosmos. This association of will and pride will appear with Augustine.

Augustine

Augustine inherits the rich will-like semantic associations in the Latin *voluntas* that tied together earlier but scattered Greek and Stoic conceptions, but he turns these linguistic connections into substantial connections that form the shape, meaning and implications of word "will" such that his use of the term is now entirely recognizable from our post Enlightenment perspective. Augustine's views on the will need to be placed in the context of his anthropology. *De trinitate* develops an anthropology strongly influenced by the idea of man in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), leading Augustine to describe the mind analogically from the three divine persons. Augustine is keenly aware of the central role the mind's awareness of itself plays in its functioning. "The mind of man knows itself. For the mind knows nothing so much as that which is close to itself; and nothing is more close to the mind than itself."³⁵⁷ Augustine asserts that this capability derives from the mind having been created in the image of God,

³⁵⁶ Plotinus 5.11.1 quoted in Sorabji, 17-18.

³⁵⁷ Augustine, *On the Trinity*. 14.7-14, translated Gareth B. Matthews, Books 8-15. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

and therefore has the potential to become wise, *i.e.*, to remember, know and love God its creator.³⁵⁸

Augustine's understanding of the will plays a central role in his vivid description of the contrary forces he experienced during his own conversion experience:

I myself was longing for this very thing, yet I was bound: not by someone else's iron chains but by my own iron will [*voluntas*]. The enemy still held sway over the exercise of my will, and from that had fashioned a chain for me and bound me in fetters. In fact, my feelings of sexual desire were formed out of the perversion of my will [*velle meum*]. While my will was in thrall to sexual desire, it grew into a habitual behavior: while I was capitulating to that habitual behavior, it grew into something I could not live without.... Yet I had begun to own a new will [*voluntas nova*], a wish to worship you voluntarily [*vellem*] and to enjoy you, O God, the only sure pleasure; but it was not yet ready to overcome my former will, strengthened as it was by its long duration. And so my two wills, one old, the other new, one physical, the other spiritual, were in conflict with one another and by their strife were shattering my soul.³⁵⁹

These contrary forces described by Plato as reason vs *thumos* vs appetite, are ascribed by Augustine to the fragmentation of the will leading to a divided self. For Plato, it is reason (*logos to logistikon*) which should issue commands, but for Augustine it is *voluntas* that gives the orders.³⁶⁰ Augustine anchors this now unified concept of the will completely in the rational soul: "To the rational soul also He gave memory, sense, appetite, to the rational he gave in addition intellect, intelligence and will."³⁶¹

Augustine makes the will a central player in terms of all human action and as the explanation for why he does not always do as he thinks he should have done:

I did so many things, then, where being willing was not the same as being able; but I was not doing what I was infinitely more eagerly resolved on, which as soon as I willed it I could attain, because as soon as I willed it I would be willing! For in that circumstance, the ability was identical with the will, and to be willing was the same as already doing. But still it was not coming to pass; instead my body was all too

³⁵⁸ Augustine, *On the Trinity*. 14.21-22.

³⁵⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* VIII.5.10, Edited and Translated by Carolyn J.-B. Hammond. (Loeb Classical Library; 26-27, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

³⁶⁰ Kahn, 257.

³⁶¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, 5.11.

easily controlling the feeble will of my soul to move its limbs on demand, instead of the soul obeying itself to accomplish, in its will alone, its own robust will.

Where does this perversion come from? And what is its purpose, I say, that it should will something, and it would not so command unless it willed it, and still does not do what it tells itself to? In fact it does not exercise its will completely. For this reason it does not have complete command. Insofar as it commands, to that extent does it exercise its will; and insofar as it does not accomplish what it commands, to that extent it does really will it: for the will commands into being that will, which is none other than itself. So it does not have complete command, and therefore it cannot be identical with the things which it commands. ... It is not, therefore, a perversion to be partly willing, and partly unwilling; but it is a sickness of the mind. This is because the mind cannot rise up completely by means of the truth, for it is already weighed down with habit. So there are two wills, because each of them is incomplete, and each has what the other lacks.³⁶²

Augustine connects this will with moral responsibility:

It makes a difference what a person's will [*voluntas* is like. If it is perverted, these movements will be perverted in him. If it is upright, they will be not just blameless, but praiseworthy. Indeed, the will is present in all these movements. Rather, they are all nothing other than acts of the will [*voluntates*]³⁶³

“And I attended in order to understand what I heard, that free choice of the will is the cause of our doing wrong”³⁶⁴ a connection he makes repeatedly in *De Libero arbitrio voluntatis*.

Augustine attaches to *voluntas* the notion of its strength or weakness in clear distinction from the Stoic notions of intellectual assent (or not). Augustine sees his will struggling against his sexual appetites and is willing to speak in terms of the will's command. And as we have seen he concedes that a will can be perverted. For Augustine, whatever we do we do by will, whether it is partly, completely or in tension with competing “wills”. He attributes this to a mind that is weighed down under the burdens of twisted habits. But with regard to the ultimate source of evil in the case of the fallen angels he concludes that while the evil will is an efficient cause of the bad action, there is no efficient cause of an evil will.³⁶⁵

³⁶² Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.8.20-21.

³⁶³ Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.6.

³⁶⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, translated by Richard Sorabji, 18.

³⁶⁵ Augustine, *The City of God*, 12.6.

While Augustine denies an efficient cause for an evil will, he does point to an explanation in quoting Ecclesiasticus: “What could the origin of evil will (*mala voluntas*) [be] except pride?”³⁶⁶ Furthermore, Augustine follows Evagrius in applying this explanation for the fallen angels as well.³⁶⁷ But pride’s mechanism is an evil will, a will that unlike man’s will prior to the Fall now has no choice.³⁶⁸ Only through God’s grace, is the original image of God restored.³⁶⁹ Augustine insists that peace of mind comes only from reliance upon the Creator: *inquietum est cor nostrum donec in te requiescat*,³⁷⁰ in continuity with the doctrine of the divine will worked out by Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Marius Victorinus.³⁷¹

Kahn argues that Augustine’s doctrine of human will plays two crucial theological roles.³⁷² First, the will and its freedom of choice are an explanation, at least in part, for evil and sin as seen in *De Libero arbitrio voluntatis*. But second, the will of man is where God’s grace is realized: “All you asked of me was to deny my own will and accept yours.”³⁷³ Much of Augustine’s writings on grace and will occur in the context of his strenuous fight against the offspring of the teachings of Pelagius. This context might explain the change from a voluntarist tone in *De Libero arbitrio voluntatis* to his later *Answer To Simplicianus* that provides the foundation for Calvin’s deterministic theory of predestination by grace. We will sidestep going into those arguments by agreeing with Lössl that Augustine’s views in *Answer* should be

³⁶⁶ Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.13.

³⁶⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, 7.3.5.

³⁶⁸ Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, 3.10.29, Translated by Anna S. Benjamin and L.H. Hackstaff (Library of Liberal Arts; 150. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).

³⁶⁹ Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, 3.9.28.

³⁷⁰ “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” *Confessions*, I.1

³⁷¹ Kahn, 257.

³⁷² Kahn, 258.

³⁷³ Augustine, *Confessions*, IX.1.

contextualized by the contemporaneously written *Confessions*, where Augustine clearly views God's grace as liberating and enabling the will to be able to do good.³⁷⁴

We began this appendix by noting recent scholarship has moved away from giving Augustine primary credit for formulating the modern view of the will. But as Richard Sorabji has argued, this tendency to minimize the role of Augustine in the development of theory of the will understates the way Augustine enormously expanded the functions of the will over prior Greek and Latin writers.³⁷⁵ Sorabji points out that Augustine lays at the will's feet the directing of attention,³⁷⁶ uniting perception with the perceptible,³⁷⁷ and associating memory with internal vision.³⁷⁸ And it is Augustine who asserts faith is due to will, and having belief depend on the assent of the will.³⁷⁹

Maximus the Confessor

The journey from Aristotle through Augustine requires no justification for a Thomistic thesis since the scholarship into the roots of Aquinas writings on the will have always understood the substantial influence of Augustine, but why include Maximus? Scholars of Aquinas consider Nemesius, whom Aquinas cites from *On Human Nature* as Gregory of Nyssa, John Damascene, and Augustine to be three of the most important and direct influences on Aquinas from the Fathers,³⁸⁰ with all three possessing demonstrable familiarity with the Aristotelian commentators and Stoic sources. Although it is debated whether Aquinas had access to Maximus directly, it is clear John Damascene was strongly influenced by Maximus' writings.³⁸¹ Also Aquinas comments

³⁷⁴ Josef Lössl, "Intellect with a divine purpose: Augustine on the Will" in *The Will and Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, Editors Thomas Pink, and M.W.F. Stone, (London Studies in the History of Philosophy, Routledge, London and New York, 2004), 66.

³⁷⁵ Sorabji, 19-20.

³⁷⁶ Augustine, *On the Trinity*. 11.2.2.

³⁷⁷ Augustine, *On the Trinity*. 11.3.6.

³⁷⁸ Augustine, *On the Trinity*. 14.10.

³⁷⁹ Augustine, *Expositions of 84 Propositions in the Epistle to the Romans* 60-1 as cited in Sorabji, 20.

³⁸⁰ Osborne, *Human action*, 115.

³⁸¹ Osborne, *Human action*, 115.

on what he believed was Maximus' scholia³⁸² on Dionysius in regard to Maximus' views on the habits of angels,³⁸³ and there is recent scholarship that this scholia may be authentic Maximus.³⁸⁴

Maximus' early writings on the will derives from the view of human nature he received from the Fathers—expressed pithily by Gregory of Nazianzus that “the unassumed is the unhealed, only that which is united to God is saved.”³⁸⁵ Maximus adds to this notion of personhood his ‘Chalcedonian logic’—person is contrasted to nature—person regards the *way we are (tropos)*, not with *what we are (logos)*.³⁸⁶ But our inclination (*gnome*) must be persuaded “to follow nature and not in any way be at variance with the logos of nature” so that “we are able to have one inclination (*gnome*) and one will (*thelema*) with God and with one another, not having any discord with God or one another.”³⁸⁷ Ian McFarland points out that for Maximus, renewal of human intention is required because through the Fall the devil has “separated us, with respect to our inclination, from God and one another...and divided nature at the level of mode of existence” leading us to “turn from the natural movement we once had...to what is forbidding.”³⁸⁸ In contrast Maximus describes redemption as a process by which “through love for humankind *gnome* embraces

³⁸² Polycarp Sherwood did not include this in his list of Maximus' works and it is not included in modern critical editions of his work see Ezra Sullivan “Habituation in Virtue according to Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas”, 11.

³⁸³ *ST*, I-II q. 50. a.6, 802.

³⁸⁴ Marek Jankowiak, and Phil Booth. “A New Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor”, in *Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* eds. Pauline Allend and Bronwel Neil Vol. 1, (Oxford University Press, 2015), 31.

³⁸⁵ Gregory Nazianzus, *To Cleodnius the Priest Against Apollinarius*, Ep CI (101), <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3103a.htm>.

³⁸⁶ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (Early Church Fathers. London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 59.

³⁸⁷ Maximus, PG 91:396C, Letter 2 *On Love from Ambigua ad Iohannem*, translated by Andrew Louth in *Maximus the Confessor*, 86-87.

³⁸⁸ Ian McFarland, “‘Naturally and by Grace’: Maximus the Confessor on the Operation of the Will” *Scottish journal of Theology* 58, no. 4 (November 2005), 412; Maximus, PG91:396D-397A, Letter 2 *On Love from Ambigua ad Iohannem*, 87.

nature”, the final state in which this division is eliminated “is clearly not a matter of gnome, about which there is contention and division...but of nature itself.”³⁸⁹

Just as Augustine’s later views on free will take place in the context of his battle with the Pelagianism, so Maximus’ mature concerns for the will occur in his mortal battle with Monothelitism, the view that the two divine natures result in a single will in the Incarnate One. Maximus argued instead for a single person, a single hypostasis, with two wills, human and divine. Christ’s human will is in submission to, but not eclipsed by, his divine will.³⁹⁰

In *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, Maximus argues that the notion of a single will in Christ threatens basic Christian doctrine with the dual problem of divine passibility and Christological Docetism.³⁹¹ Since there is no dispute regarding the divine will, Maximus’ arguments focus on the issue of the human will after affirming the central orthodox view not in dispute that Christ is indeed a single person whose unity remains undivided. In this dispute Maximus distinguishes between the Christ’s human will as a natural will (*thelema phusikon*) from that of the gnostic will.

One can find a variety of shadings within Maximus’ writings with regard to meanings of *gnome*: Gnome itself is not the choice of the human act, it is a habit from which the operation that is choice comes.³⁹² But in *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, when Pyrrhus responds to Maximus, who asks what he calls Christ’s single will, Pyrrhus responds ‘gnomic’³⁹³ While Maximus

³⁸⁹ McFarland, 413; Maximus, PG91:401A, 400C, Letter 2 *On Love from Ambigua ad Iohannem*, 89.

³⁹⁰ Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 56; The nature of the human will in Maximus writings has and continues to be a point of scholarly contention in part due to textual issues regarding the work considered to be his mature position, *Disputation with Pyrrhus*. See Christopher Beeley, “Natural and Gnostic Willing in Maximus Confessor’s Disputation with Pyrrhus” (Studio Patristica 000, 1-00. Peters Publishing, 2016), 3-4.

³⁹¹ Maximus the Confessor, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of Our Father among the Saints*, 5,7, trans Joseph P. Farrell. (South Canaan, Pa.: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1990), 3-4.

³⁹² Maximus, *Opusculum I*, PG 91:17, PG 91:16D, cited in introduction *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of Our Father among the Saints*, 5,7, Translated from the Greek by Joseph P. Farrell, xx.

³⁹³ *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, 87.

acknowledges fluidity with regard to the meaning of this word, he replies in no uncertain terms that at this point it cannot be applied to Christ's human will:

Thus, those who say that there is a gnomie in Christ, as this inquiry is demonstrating, are maintaining that He is a mere man, deliberating in a manner unto us, having ignorance, doubt and opposition, since one only deliberates about something which is doubtful, not concerning what is free of doubt. By nature we have an appetite simply for what by nature is good, but we gain experience of the goal in a particular way, through inquiry and counsel. Because of this, the, the gnomie will is fitly ascribed to us, being a mode of the employment [of the will], and not a principle of nature, otherwise nature would change innumerable times. But the humanity of Christ doth not simply subsist [in a manner] similar to us, but divinely, for He Who appeared in the flesh for our sakes was God. It is thus no possible to say that Christ had a gnomie will.³⁹⁴

For Maximus the meaning of gnomie will for fallen human beings is a picture of those under the influence of sin that are 'tossed about the choices that present themselves' and are thus unable to choose freely, contrasted with the deliberative willing that Christ does possess:

And neither the freedom is the choosing. The choosing, as I have said many times is a wishful aspiration of what is ours to perform, whereas the freedom is [1] the innate authority to perform what is ours or [2] the unobstructed authority of using what is ours or [3] the non-slavish aspiration of what is ours. Therefore, the freedom and the choosing is not the same: if we, indeed, we aspire according to the freedom, we do not acquire the freedom according to what we aspire, and the aspiration is only choosing, whereas the freedom makes use of what is ours and what is [depending] on what is ours, that is, the aspiration, the decision, and the wish. Because it is according to the freedom that we are wishing, deciding, choosing, aspiring and using what is ours.³⁹⁵

In contrast, the human will of Christ has been liberated, free of the oppressive distortion of the 'gnomie will' and makes the right choices with perfect freedom³⁹⁶ because he 'possessed the good from his [human] nature'³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, 87.

³⁹⁵ Maximus, *Opuscula I*, quoted and translated in Basil Lourié, "A Freedom beyond Conflict: The Logic of Internal Conflict and the Free Will in Maximus the Confessor" *Scrinium*, Vol 14. Issue 1. (Brill 20 Sep 2018), 70.

³⁹⁶ *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, 35.

³⁹⁷ *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, 32.

Maximus on the Habits

There is a final relationship between Maximus' and Aquinas relevant for our understanding of freedom of excellence that emerges from Maximus' views on virtue and habit following the analysis of Ezra Sullivan³⁹⁸ and Andrew Louth.³⁹⁹ For both Maximus and Aquinas, the act of living the moral life and progressing in it is rooted in understanding of the role of virtue and the habits— which Maximus terms *hexis* (ἕξις) and Aquinas *habitus*. Both terms are derived from Aristotle's view of *hexis* as an arrangement of parts and capacities such that the one possessing the "habit" has a certain excellence if the parts are well-arranged or a deficiency if they are poorly arranged.⁴⁰⁰

In Maximus, "the *essence* of man is his rational nature, with his mind having *potency* for wisdom, when a man knows something his mind is at work in *act*, and when his mind is exercised by repeated acts of knowing with love, man develops the *hexis* of contemplation."⁴⁰¹ Maximus ties virtue and habit together, where habit is the result when virtue is so settled that it provides the stability to our being. "Nature is changeable; but in the saints it remains unchanging through the unchangeable habit of virtue"⁴⁰² Choice exists for accomplishing the divine purpose in us such "that when the soul is moved to make progress it becomes united to the God of all by imitating what is immutable and beneficent in His essence and activity by means of its steadfastness in the good and its unalterable habit of choice."⁴⁰³ We accomplish this by imitating "the simple and

³⁹⁸ Ezra Sullivan, "Habituation in Virtue according to Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas" https://www.academia.edu/37955370/Habituation_in_Virtue_according_to_Maximus_the_Confessor_and_Thomas_Aquinas.

³⁹⁹ Andrew Louth, "Virtue Ethics: St Maximos the Confessor and Aquinas Compared." *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26, no. 3 (August 2013): 351–363.

⁴⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans W.D. Ross, V.19, 1022b1-3. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.html>.

⁴⁰¹ Sullivan, 6.

⁴⁰² Maximus, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans George C. Berthold, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 155.

⁴⁰³ *Selected Writings*, Scholium, 9.

indivisible Goodness through habitual exercise of virtues.”⁴⁰⁴ For Maximus this process, *askesis*, of man becoming divine by grace and *hexis*, is a struggle that results in a restoration of the virtue of our original created state.⁴⁰⁵

Disciplined training (*askesis*) and the toils that go with it were devised simply for the purpose of separating from the soul in those who love virtue the deceit that infects it through the senses. It is not as if the virtues have been lately introduced from the outside. For they were inserted in us from creation, as has been already said. Once therefor deceit has been completely expelled from us, at that moment, too, the soul manifests the radiance of its natural virtue. He therefore who is not foolish is sensible; and he who is not cowardly or foolhardy is courageous; and he who is not undisciplined is chaste; and he who is not unjust is just. By nature reason is wisdom, discernment is justice, the incentive faculty is courage, and the desiring faculty chastity. Therefore, with the removal of what is contrary to nature only what is natural is accustomed to be manifest. Just as if rust is removed, there is manifest the natural gleam and lustre of iron.⁴⁰⁶

The goal of *askesis* is to be “crucified with Christ”⁴⁰⁷ as to re-order a person’s love to God. Louth analyzes this process as moving from love, to self-mastery, through fear of God, to faith in the Lord, mastery of the passions, through endurance, to hope and the separation from earthly inclinations, and finally back to love of God.⁴⁰⁸ Spiritual love is the core passion that we must cultivate, thus charity frames and undergirds all of Maximus’ teachings on *hexis*, *askesis* and *gnome*.⁴⁰⁹

While there are terminological differences, and differences in emphasis, Sullivan and Louth both argue there are few substantive differences between the core of Maximus’ teachings and Aquinas’ on the will and habit.⁴¹⁰ For both Maximus and Aquinas, charity—

⁴⁰⁴ Maximus, *Ambiguum* 7, 1097.

⁴⁰⁵ *Selected Writings*, II.72.

⁴⁰⁶ *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, 174-176.

⁴⁰⁷ Maximus, *Ambiguum* 47, 1360.

⁴⁰⁸ Louth, “Virtue Ethics”, 356.

⁴⁰⁹ Sullivan, 9.

⁴¹⁰ In *ST*, I-II q. 50. a.6, Aquinas corrects Maximus’ denial that angels have habits by asserting a proper role for “deiform habits”. Aquinas would prefer not to use Maximus’ word “natural virtues” but clarifies that moral virtues are habits that result from conscious effort and exercise. *ST* I-II. Q. 63, a.2.

love, is at the core of the perfection of the will.⁴¹¹ The role of the will is to lead the individual into full participation with Holy Spirit in Aquinas' vocabulary, or to their full deification, the full restoration of God's image in man in the words of Maximus. We can see in Maximus the outline of the more fully developed Thomistic based freedom of excellence, thus the roots for this view of freedom extends deeply in both East and West.

⁴¹¹ *ST I-II*, q. 28, a. 6.

Appendix B. An Introduction to Chaos Theory

The simplest example of a non-linear equation demonstrating chaos is Thomas Robert Malthus' equation in which he predicted the doom of the Irish to starvation—his equation for population growth⁴¹² in discrete form is:

$$(1) \quad x_{n+1} = r x_n$$

where the prediction for the number of people at generation $n+1$, let's call that number x_{n+1} ,

can be predicted by the number of people in the n th generation, let's call that number x_n ,

multiplied by whatever the basic growth rate r is (r). This is the equation Malthus used to

predict the pessimistic view that the human race (or at least the Irish) were doomed to famine

since for any $r > 1$ you will have exponential growth that will eventually outrun all resources—most especially food.⁴¹³

The dire implications of this equation do not in fact occur—doesn't occur with human populations and it doesn't occur with any animal population because reproductive rates change as the population increases (or decreases). We can alter Malthus's basic growth equation to better conform to reality with a simple adjustment in the presumptions around the growth multiplier.

⁴¹² Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population As It Affects the Future Improvement of Society, with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Goodwin, M. Condorcet and Other Writers*, (1 ed.). (London: J. Johnson in St Paul's Churchyard. 1798), <https://archive.org/details/essayonprincipl00malt/page/n8/mode/2up>.

⁴¹³ Any similarity the reader may see between the alarm raised by Jonathan Swift regarding Malthus' equations and current alarm raised regarding the computer models of global warming much be resisted lest your social media accounts get flagged as a person who does not believe in science. While it may not be apparent, this equation when turned into a plot of population versus time is in fact exponential growth. Since it is formulated as a difference equation, it is equivalent to a differential equation in calculus. The solution in time will be an integral form and most assuredly it will demonstrate exponential growth in the population.

In this case let $r(x) = r(1-x)$ where the basic growth rate changes as the population increase—changes in the direction of slowing the rate of growth—which is a much more realistic presumption. If we apply the equation to a rabbit population model this modification can be thought of as adding a predator like wolves into the equation. Combining these two equations yields

$$(2) \quad x_{n+1} = r x_n(1-x_n)$$

which is the classic predator prey equation and is of the form of the discrete logistic equation. The algebraists among the readers will recognize (2) as a non-linear equation. At every iteration there is a completely “determined” number that will emerge as the population prediction for the next generation of the population. It appears to be much like any other simple algebraic equation. But in fact, this equation hides behaviors that we can only really demonstrate by investigating its behavior numerically and then plotting its behavior graphically.

The following two graphs demonstrate that behavior of the population systems that are being described by this equation.⁴¹⁴ In Figure B1. where the growth rate r is set to 3.0, we now see the much more realistic population growth curve we desired to avoid the unrealistic runaway exponential growth predicted with equation (1). If we interpret this curve as a predator-prey model the ongoing oscillation reflects the natural season to season effect of the predators reducing the population down, followed by a reduction in their population, followed by a rise in the prey population and so on as predators (or other factors like disease) affect the net population growth. Critical to understanding the implications of Figure B2 is that it actually shows two predictions (a solid blue line, a dashed red line) corresponding to two slightly different initial populations with only a very small difference (<.1%) in their starting conditions. The resulting

⁴¹⁴ These two graphs were created by the author using a python/jupyter notebook implementation of equation (2) with plotting via the matplotlib library. Code available on demand.

prediction curves demonstrate that this small difference continues through the generations such that the human eye cannot see the difference between their superimposed lines over the entire time of the prediction.

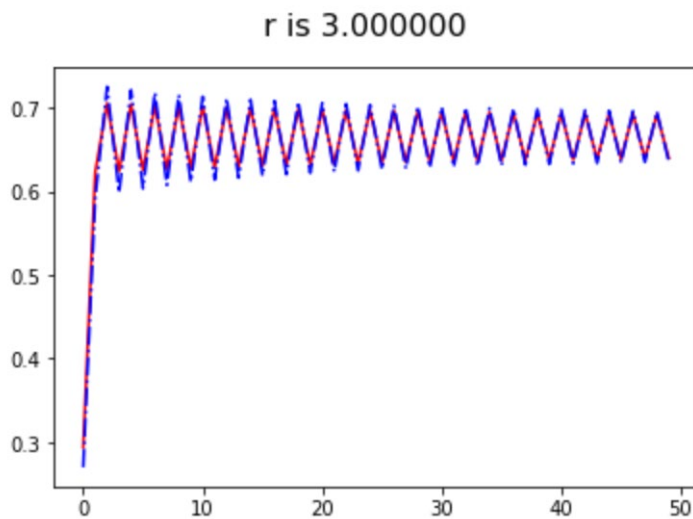


Figure B1.

A startling behavior arises as we increase the growth rate to near 4.0 in Figure B2. This extremely “noisy” plot indicates extreme fluctuations in population from one generation to the next. But the most important item to note is that the solid red and the dashed blue, which started from almost exactly the same value (less than .1% different) and following the same equation end up very quickly wildly divergent from each other less than halfway through the generations.

This is a crucial point with regard to the implications of chaos theory. It is not simply that Figure B2 is noisy and difficult to see a pattern in its movement (it is). It is that even slight differences in starting conditions, differences we cannot in general prevent from occurring in any real world scenario, lead to complete different outcomes, thus the futility in “predicting” anything once we have trespassed into the domain of chaotic equations.

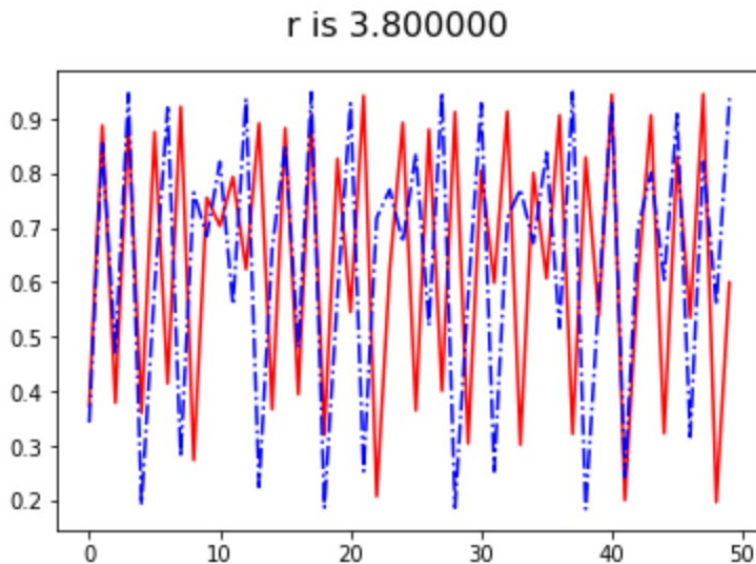


Figure B2.

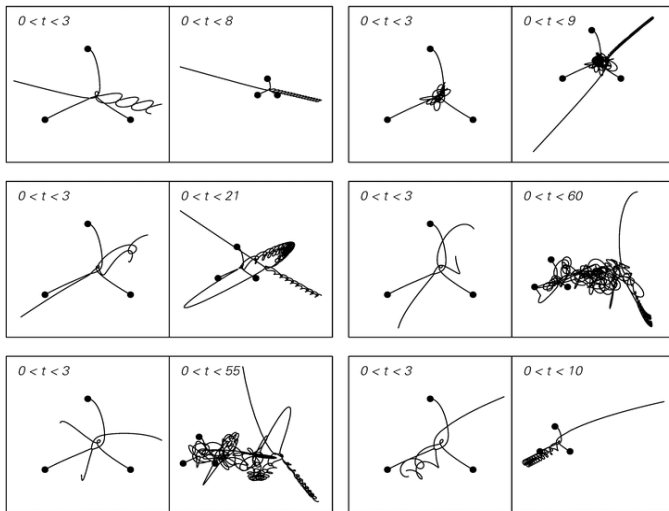
This is the fundamental characteristic of chaotic equations—their extreme sensitivity to changes in initial conditions. Small changes, like the loss of a nail from a horseshoe, has consequences that cannot be predicted, but while subject to energy constraints, can be arbitrarily extreme. Hence the alternative labeling of these chaotic systems with the term “butterfly” effect.

Lest one think that this badly behaving equation is uncommon and only limited to relatively uninteresting problems like rabbit populations, consider the classic three planetary body problem that has been recognized since the days of Newton. Hopefully, school children learn the basic and very non-chaotic equations governing the relationship of two planetary bodies, where m_1 and m_2 are the respective masses of each planetary body, r is the distance between them that with a constant G determines the force F of attraction between them that will ultimately determine their orbital mechanics.

$$F = G \frac{m_1 m_2}{r^2}$$

This is the equation governing Isaac Newton’s story of the falling apple from the apple tree.⁴¹⁵

But by adding just one more planetary body to the mix yields no analytically solvable equation and even this conceptually simple problem is in fact a chaos generator as seen in Figure B3.⁴¹⁶



<https://www.wolframscience.com/nks/notes-7-4---three-body-problem>

Figure B3.

Thus, the very equations describing our solar system, can with mild alterations in initial starting conditions yield startling and absolutely unpredictable outcomes as seen in Figure B3. This behavior derives from the fact that only finitely expressed numbers can be used—in other words numerical representations and their calculations must use finite arithmetic, and the non-linear behavior means that no matter how many digits of precision you use the characteristics of these nonlinear relationships amplify the “noise” that exists at the limits of whatever precision

⁴¹⁵ Newton’s apple falling from a tree is a simple case of two bodies in orbit around each other. In this case the apple and the earth. It is just that the earth’s outer diameter interferes with the apple completing its orbit around the earth.

⁴¹⁶ Noson S. Yanofsky, *The Outer Limits of Reason : What Science, Mathematics, and Logic Cannot Tell Us* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), 161-174.

you are using. You will *always* get wild results like Figure B2 and B3, only the scale or the number of iterations will be affected.⁴¹⁷

It is not that such systems, such as our solar system will fail to arrive at some specific state in the future. It is that there is no conceivable (finite) observer that can, even in principle regardless of their intellect or the availability of an entire universe of computational equipment, determine what that state will be beyond some number of iterations into the future. The solar system can clearly *find* its way into the future, but it is simply impossible for us to predict what the future will be except by going along for the ride and observing what it will do.

⁴¹⁷ Real attempts at prediction require a real computation machine to compute and such machines can only use some finite number of digits. Such numbers are called rational and were considered by the Pythagoreans as the only “real” numbers in existence. So +1 for Pythagoras.

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