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Control, Counter-Examples, and Reasons-Resultance

by

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Control, Counter-Examples, and Moral Responsibility

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Abstract

This work considers the soundness of Henry Frankfurt's argument that the principle of alternative possibilities is false and the implications of his argument for holding agents responsible in a causally determined universe. Frankfurt does seem to be pointing clearly to the fact that many of us do continue to hold agents responsible despite a lack of alternative possibilities. What Frankfurt may be lacking is an adequate account of control which is taken up by John Martin Fischer. What Fischer presents us with is the possibility that the reason why we continue to hold Jones responsible is because of the kind of control that agents maintain. He contends that because Jones has guidance control of his actions, Jones is morally responsible. My contention has been that Jones does not have sufficient control to be held responsible because, despite Fischer's claim to the contrary, Jones does not actually have a reasons-responsive mechanism and, so, Jones also does not have guidance control. Instead, it seems that Jones' actions are only reasons-resultant as he cannot actually respond to reasons—even in relevantly similar possible worlds.

Introduction

A few years ago, when I presented my first paper on Harry Frankfurt, I was surprised that so few people in the audience knew anything about Dr. Frankfurt's work. What was especially amazing to me was the first question I was asked about my presentation. It was something akin to, "Why does all this stuff about responsibility matter?" This question may also occur to you while reading this work, so I will address it now.

In order to convince the reader that it is important, consider the general problem around which this paper revolves: how do we rationally decide if an agent is morally responsible? Looking at this question, we notice a couple of things: 1) There is a kind of responsibility which may be distinct from other kinds of responsibility—namely, moral responsibility, and 2) This assumes that moral responsibility is something which we should cognate upon in order to understand better. In other words we have to figure out what it is and how it works. This paper will deal with whether agents can be held responsible for their actions in a universe in which all events are the direct result of the summation of the events preceding them—one which is causally determined. A causally determined universe is essentially one such that, in theory, we can predict what will happen next. In other words, there is only one way things can go—the way that is dictated by summation of all information in the universe.

Can agents be held responsible in a causally determined universe—a universe in which all of their actions are the direct result of the facts preceding them? By "responsible," I will largely mean "morally responsible." If an agent is the cause of an event, he or she is responsible, but he or she may only be "causally" responsible. Agents are often causally responsible and, yet, we do not praise or blame them for the event. For example, if an agent

has a disorder which causes the agent to shoplift against his or her will, we may not blame the agent for the shoplifting, yet we also recognize that the agent is physically responsible for the event. We do tend to absolve agents when they commit acts over which they have no control, so one wonders if the world is such that all of our actions are causally determined, can we rationally be held morally responsible? To be morally responsible, then, is to be more than just responsible; it is to be such that an agent should be praised or blamed for an event.

So why is this question important? Practically, it is important because we may not be surprised to find out that the world is causally determined—or close to it. It is likely very useful for us, as a species, to know how, when, and how much we should praise and blame others. So it seems that, at least on a practical level, knowing if we can, and how we can most reasonably hold agents morally responsible in a causally determined universe may affect greatly how we deal with assign praise and blame. At the very least, this will likely deeply affect our punitive and judicial methodologies. More deeply, it matters philosophically, because ethics loses a great deal of traction if no one can rationally be held morally responsible.

In this work, I will be dealing with some specific problems raised in the debate over moral responsibility in a causally determined universe. I will be focusing on two primary figures in the discourse: Harry G. Frankfurt and John Martin Fischer, both of whom have greatly affected the literature. Frankfurt's work has radically challenged some of our seemingly fundamental intuitions about moral responsibility through the presentation of some particularly forceful counter-examples. He challenges the notion that agents should be absolved for actions just because the agent had no choice but to commit the act. His counter-examples demonstrate with considerable success that an agent may not need choices (the

ability to do otherwise) in order to be held morally responsible for his actions. This idea, that the agent must have the ability to do other than he does in order to be held morally responsible is called the “principle of alternative possibilities” or PAP. Fischer also focuses on this result of the Frankfurtian counter-examples, but he concludes that there is a very specific reason why an agent need not be able to do otherwise in order to be morally responsible—namely, control. Fischer argues that what Frankfurt really shows us is that what matters in regards to an agent’s moral responsibility is whether or not the agent has a particular kind of control which he terms “guidance control.”

This work will proceed as follows. In the first part, I will present Frankfurt’s case and explain how it is that he comes to the conclusion that PAP is false. I will then consider whether his argument provides a sufficient counter-example to PAP. In order to defend Frankfurt’s case, some argue that his argument works even when the intentional states of the agent are restricted by deterministic causes. I will consider the ramifications of that claim—namely, that it may result in Frankfurt’s argument begging the question. In the end, though, this criticism may simply miss the thrust of Frankfurt’s argument and, so, I will consider what it is that Frankfurt’s argument tells us about intentional states.

In the second part I will consider John Martin Fischer’s account of moral responsibility as it was motivated by shortcomings in Frankfurt’s position. I will present the account of moral responsibility as espoused by Fischer and his collaborator Mark Ravizza, a position that also denies the truth of PAP. I will briefly consider two concerns then I will move on to what I term to be “the problem of Mr. Black.” The problem, as I will argue, is that their position generates the counter-intuitive conclusion that two agent’s may be held morally responsible for one agent’s action as well as intentional states. This problem will motivate a

significant addendum to Fischer's and Ravizza's account. This addendum, which is the recognition that there can be a distinction made between mechanisms which are responsive to reasons and mechanisms which are not responsive to reasons, will result in some changes in regards to ascriptions of moral responsibility in Frankfurtian counter-examples. Finally, I will consider my account as challenged by the one of the strongest arguments against compatibilism.

Part I: Frankfurt and His Alleged Counter-Examples.

Ch.1 The Initial Landscape

With the introduction of his "revised principle of alternative possibilities" Henry Frankfurt changed the landscape of the debate over determinism and moral responsibility. Frankfurt, in one groundbreaking paper, brought into serious question the assumption that, "An agent can only be held morally responsible if he or she could have done otherwise."¹ Although this statement seems quite intuitive, Frankfurt presents counter-examples to PAP. These counter examples, now known as "Frankfurtian counter-examples" have become quite famous in the field and although they have subsequently undergone substantial revision, they remain a mainstay of the argument against PAP.

The essence of a Frankfurtian counter-example is this: an agent, let us call him "Jones," believes that he has the choice between two options. In fact, he does not because of certain contravening factors (we might say that there is an agent "Black" who can interfere with Jones' action without Jones' knowledge). Jones is unable to take anything other than one predetermined action. So, although he believes he has the choice between options A and B, in reality, he will take option A. Frankfurt's point revolves around the following event: Jones

¹ Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): p. 838.

takes the action A, and no intervention was required by Black—he willingly chose to do A and acted in such a way as to bring A about. The intuition though seems to be that, despite Jones' lack of an alternative possibility, he is responsible because he does A, and no intervention on the part of Black was required to make Jones do A. It seems that Frankfurt has provided a counter-example to PAP. An agent may have only one metaphysically possible option (epistemologically, Jones may believe he has the ability to do A or not do A) and still be held morally responsible.

Those who accept Frankfurt's account, or variations of it, are now named "neo-compatibilists." Perhaps the foremost of these neo-compatibilists is John Martin Fischer. Fischer does not agree with the entirety of Frankfurt's initial account, but he has teased out some of the significant reasons why Frankfurtian counter-examples intuitively appeal to us. Fischer has argued that it is not an alternative possibility that moral responsibility requires (as demonstrated by Frankfurtian counter-examples) but, instead, control. Fischer rejects the generally accepted dogma that moral responsibility requires freedom. Whereas classical compatibilists accept this picture—they try to prove that we can be free in a causally determined world—Fischer concedes to the incompatibilist that freedom does require alternative possibilities. Instead, he attacks the idea that moral responsibility requires freedom by using Frankfurt's counter-examples to demonstrate that responsibility only requires a particular kind of control.²

There are at least two challenges to both Frankfurt and Fischer. First, I will argue that Frankfurt's examples are not true counter-examples. I will conclude, simply, that Frankfurt, in his examples, does not provide us with situations in which the agent in question does not have

² Robert Kane. *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will. Fundamentals of Philosophy Series*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

alternate possibilities. It may seem *prima-facie* that Frankfurt provides the reader with cases in which the agent does not actually have alternative possibilities, but once one looks deeper, one can see that Frankfurt's examples only provide us with examples of an agent who cannot do other *than bring about a specific event* but not examples of an agent *who cannot intend otherwise*. There are, of course, numerous responses to this claim, and I will attempt to address the most pressing of them.

Fischer argues that what Frankfurtian counter-examples actually demonstrate is close to my preceding point, that the agent in the examples is still held responsible, despite a lack of alternative possibilities, because the agent still has a kind of control—what Fischer terms “guidance control.” According to Fischer, “An agent exercises guidance control of his behavior insofar as it issues from his own, appropriately reasons-responsive mechanism.”³ It is only this kind of control that is necessary for an agent to be held morally accountable. I will consider some of what it means to have control and how legitimate Fischer's claim that an agent is still responsible if he or she has only what he terms “guidance control” despite a lack of what he terms “regulative control,” “which is the freedom to choose and do otherwise.”⁴ In Fischer's examples, one agent has regulative control (Mr. Black) and the other agent only has guidance control (Mr. Jones). Moreover, Mr. Black, unlike Mr. Jones, has the ability to prevent the event from coming about and the ability to ensure that it does come about. I will focus on what I consider to be a rather odd result of accepting Fischer's analysis of Frankfurtian counter-examples: namely, that there are two agents who can be held responsible

³ John Martin Fischer. “Compatibilism.” *Four Views on Free Will*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007. p. 78.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 57.

for bringing about an event at the same time, despite the fact that one of those agents has the ability to prevent or ensure that the event comes about, and the other does not.

This work will proceed as follows. In the first part, I will present Frankfurt's case and explain how it is that he comes to the conclusion that PAP is false. I will then consider whether his argument truly does act as a counter-example to PAP. In order to salvage Frankfurt's case, some argue that his argument works even when the intentional states of the agent are restricted. I will consider the ramifications of that claim—namely, that it may result in Frankfurt's argument begging the question. In the end, though, this criticism may simply miss the thrust of Frankfurt's argument and, so, I will consider what it is that Frankfurt's argument tells us about intentional states.

In the second part I will consider Fischer's account of moral responsibility as motivated by flaws in Frankfurt's work. I will present the account of moral responsibility as generated by Fischer and Mark Ravizza, which also denies the truth of PAP. I will briefly consider two concerns, which their account brings to my mind and then move on to what I term to be "the problem of Mr. Black." This problem, that two agent's may both be held morally responsible for one agent's action and intentional states will motivate what I believe to be is a significant addendum to Fischer's and Ravizza's account. This addendum, which is the recognition there can be a distinction made between mechanisms which are responsive to reasons and mechanism which are not responsive to reasons, will result in some changes in regards to ascriptions of moral responsibility in Frankfurtian counter-examples. Finally, I will consider my account as challenged by the argument against compatibilism.

Until Frankfurt published his paper "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" in 1969, the belief that alternative possibilities were necessary for moral

responsibility was considered by many to be largely unchallengeable. Ever since Immanuel Kant argued that “ought implies can,” very few could argue reasonably that agents can be held responsible for their actions in a determined universe. This apparent truth seems to entail also the principle of alternative possibilities and so PAP appeals to our intuitions so significantly that we base much of our moral judgment upon it. Just as an agent can only be required to do things that he actually can do, it was considered true that an agent cannot be blamed for doing what he did if he could not do otherwise because that means that the agent is essentially being blamed for not doing things he could not do or blamed for things he has done but could not avoid. The idea that “ought implies can” was so intuitively appealing that we invoke it not only philosophically, but practically, as in cases of determining whether or not someone should be punished for a crime.

The intuition behind PAP remained effectively unchallenged for many years. To quote Frankfurt:

Practically no one... seems inclined to deny or even to question that the principle of alternate possibilities (construed in some way or other) is true. It has generally seemed so overwhelmingly plausible that some philosophers have even characterized it as an *a priori* truth. People whose accounts of free will or of moral responsibility are radically at odds evidently find in it a firm and convenient common ground upon which they can profitably take their opposing stands.⁵

In his paper, Frankfurt attempts to brush away hundreds of years of near-dogma regarding PAP. In order to determine whether or not he is successful one must first gain a deeper understanding of PAP and Frankfurt’s attack on it.

Ch. 2 Frankfurt’s Contribution

⁵ Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): p. 838.

There seems to be something fundamentally true about the “ought implies can” principle. Agents are regularly absolved for events over which they are causally responsible, and, yet, they could not have avoided. If for example, a cute little squirrel scampers underneath the wheel of my car and I am grief-stricken, my friends are likely to console me and tell me that “there is nothing you could have done, Nick.” Why does this absolve me, though? I am unquestionably responsible for the death of our poor little furry friend. So, why, then, do my friends console me so quickly when I berate myself for his untimely demise? Our initial inclination seems to be to answer that I am absolved because there is little that I could have done to prevent the death.

Frankfurt tells us that this initial explanation for our act of absolution is incorrect. He argues that it is not because I could not have done otherwise that I am absolved, but because I acted *only because I could not have done otherwise*. If I ask for absolution and provide my excuse, Frankfurt tells us that “we understand the person who offers the excuse to mean that he did what he did *only because* he was unable to do otherwise, or *only because* he had to do it.”⁶ When the agent’s intentions play an essential role in the bringing about of the event, he may not necessarily be absolved. For the sake of expediency I will refer to the summation of the agent’s motivations, desires, and willings as his “intentions” for the duration of this paper. To illustrate Frankfurt’s point: imagine that I am the kind of person who actually aims for squirrels while driving; if I see a squirrel on the road, I violently swerve in order to try to kill it. But, let us say in one particular case, my wheel locks without my knowing it. Moreover, I see a squirrel directly in front of my tire. Now, it is impossible, because of the locked steering wheel, for me to avoid hitting the squirrel. Nevertheless, in this case, I do not even try to turn

⁶ Harry G. Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): p. 838.

the wheel, because I want to hit the squirrel. After my most recent kill, I notice that my steering is locked, and return home (with some difficulty). So, then, let us imagine that my friends and family hold an intervention in order to help me with my squirrel killing problem. When my friends confront me about killing my most recent squirrel (let's call him "Fluffy"), I defend myself by stating, "No, I am not at fault because my steering wheel locked. I hit the squirrel because I could not do otherwise." Even so, in this case, we may not so hastily absolve me of Fluffy's death, even though it seems that I could not do otherwise.

In this case, I did not kill the squirrel only because I could not do otherwise (the actual event "Nick killed 'Fluffy' comes about in part because I really wanted to kill Fluffy).

To quote Frankfurt,

The following may all be true: there were circumstances that made it impossible for a person to avoid doing something; these circumstances actually played a role in bringing about that he did it, so that it is correct to say that he did it because he could not have done otherwise; the person really wanted to do what he did; he did it because it was what he really wanted to do, so that it is not correct to say that he did what he did only because he could not have done otherwise. Under these conditions, the person may well be morally responsible for what he has done.⁷

This quote motivates an even more interesting claim. Notice that he states that it may be true that "these circumstances actually played a role in bringing about that he did it." Frankfurt thinks that the an agent can be held responsible, *even if the circumstances which make it impossible for him to do otherwise also play a role in bringing about that he commits the act.* He makes this argument in order to account for the fact that causal determinism does play a role in our action, stating, "For if it was causally determined that a person perform a certain action, then it will be true that the person performed it because of those causal determinants."⁸

⁷ Frankfurt, Harry G. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 839.

⁸ Frankfurt 838.

But this is not sufficient for Frankfurt to account for why we act as we do, because when we accept the excuse “I did it because I could not do otherwise...”

It is because we assume that we are being told more than the statement strictly and literally conveys. We understand the person who offers the excuse to mean that he did what he did *only because* he was unable to do otherwise, or *only because* he had to do it. And we understand him to mean, more particularly, *that when he did what he did it was not because that was what he really wanted to do.*⁹

The last series of italics are my own and placed there to emphasize the point that even if Frankfurt is not concerned with our intentions, it definitely seems that he cares a great deal about 1) whether we wanted to commit the act, and 2) whether that want is a reason for the act.¹⁰

It may well be that, while on my squirrel hunting trip, I see Fluffy and I am about to turn the wheel to kill him, when the wheel locks and changes the car’s direction to point toward the squirrel just as I turn the steering wheel towards the squirrel; I may be held morally responsible because I did not hit it only because I could not do otherwise. The fact that the steering problem changes the car’s direction is not the only reason why I hit the squirrel, due to the fact that I was also on a squirrel hunting trip. The fact that the steering malfunction does the work for me may be irrelevant: “When a fact is in this way irrelevant to the problem of accounting for a person’s action, it seems quite gratuitous to assign it any weight in the assessment of his moral responsibility.”¹¹ This, however, is likely too strong a reading of Frankfurt; it does seem rather important to him that the possible intervening factors do not actually intervene, as in the first case where the steering wheel locks but does not turn. Nevertheless, Frankfurt seems to care a great deal about why we commit our acts: “Why should the fact [that the action was unavoidable] be considered in reaching a moral judgment

⁹ Frankfurt 838.

¹⁰ Frankfurt 838.

¹¹ Frankfurt 837.

concerning the person when it does not help in any way to understand either what made him act as he did or what, in other circumstances, he might have done?”¹² Frankfurt may not be appealing to intention, but it is difficult to see what else it is that he could be blaming the agent other than some kind of intentional state. It seems that that he is at least appealing to motivation when he considers “what made him act” as important in making moral judgments and that it “was what he really wanted to do.”

One might argue that there are many flaws in my example, but there need not be those same flaws in the example which Frankfurt provides us. To summarize: imagine that an agent “Black” has the ability to control agent “Jones” (by what means let’s not concern ourselves). Let us also imagine that Mr. Jones is about to vote in a presidential election. As it so happens, Mr. Black wants Mr. Jones to vote for candidate A and not to vote for candidate B. It also happens that Black would rather not use his powers of control. So he will refrain from using it unless Mr. Jones shows the inclination to vote for candidate B. If, on the other hand, Jones seems inclined to vote for A, as Black wishes, then Mr. Black will do nothing. In this situation Jones will vote for A; he cannot do otherwise. The only question is, “will he do it with or without Mr. Black’s intervention?” It seems that we would absolve Mr. Jones for voting for candidate A if he does it because Mr. Black uses his mysterious power to force Jones to do it. But, on the other hand, Frankfurt points out, if Mr. Jones voting for candidate A is not the result of Black forcing him to do so, we do not absolve him even though *he could not do otherwise*.

If Mr. Black never has to intervene in order to accomplish the event “Mr. Jones votes for candidate A”, why would we absolve Jones? It seems that he intends the act. In other words, it is not the case that he did only because he could not do otherwise; he did it for some

¹² Frankfurt 837.

other reason. If we imagine ourselves in any number of situations in which we view an agent who chooses to commit an act and willfully commits it, we seem disinclined to absolve the agent even if the world was such that it would have prevented him or her from doing anything else.

Someone opposing Frankfurt may argue that this cannot be correct; to hold an agent responsible for an event that he or she cannot avoid committing is ludicrous, as it will force us to hold agents responsible for events beyond their control willy-nilly. This horribly misconstrues Frankfurt's argument. In a great many cases, when we are inclined to absolve an agent for an event which he could not avoid, the agent commits the act *only* because he could not have done otherwise and not simply because he could not avoid it. Jones, for example, does not do as he does only because he could not do otherwise; he does what he does also because he wanted to vote for candidate A. Frankfurt absolves the agent if the act was committed only because he could not have done otherwise. He states, "He will not be morally responsible for what he has done if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise, even if what he did was something he really wanted to do."¹³ So we cannot hold an agent responsible for actions outside of his control, even if he really wants the event to take place. If the "really wanting" plays no role in the event coming about—the want must be causally efficacious. This likely does not mean that "wanting to commit the act" is particularly special to Frankfurt, but only that the want is evidence to the fact that the agent acted for more reason than just because he could not do otherwise—and so he is not immediately absolved.

¹³ Frankfurt, Harry G. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): p.839.

Frankfurt states that if “he did it *because* it was what he really wanted to do,... it is not correct to say that he did what he did only because he could not have done otherwise.”¹⁴

So, by Frankfurt’s reasoning, desire for an event to come about is insufficient by itself for blame; there must be a factor which makes it so that he acts as he does, but *because* of some other additional factor such as because he really wanted it to occur. So an agent completely under another agent’s control would not be held responsible, even if he was really enjoying what the controlling agent was making him do, because the actual instantiation of the act can be described as such that he commits it only because he could not do otherwise; his intentional states play no actual role in the instantiation of the event and so he is not blamed for it. What actually matters to Frankfurt is that, if the event comes to pass as a result of something an agent does, and that “something” is more than just because he could not do otherwise, then he can be held responsible.

This seems to explain why, for example, if an agent’s life is threatened by some other agent, and must, in order to stay alive, commit some morally appalling act, we absolve the threatened agent. His cry is one of “I did it only because I had no choice.” We absolve him, it seems, because the act was committed not because he wanted it, but because he saw himself as having no options and because that lack of options is the only reason why he committed it. Let us consider a scenario in which, on the other hand, another agent (let’s call him Jason) attacks me while I am on my way home to kill my kitten. Jason says to me as he pulls out a deadly weapon, “Sir, I am forcing you, by virtue of threatening your life, to kill your kitten when you get home.” If my reply is, “Funny thing, Jason, I was actually on my way home to do just that,” and his reply is, “Ok, cool. But seriously, if you don’t do it, I’ll make you do it,”

¹⁴ Frankfurt, Harry G. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): p. 839.

I should not be absolved—even though I cannot do otherwise! Despite the fact that I could not do otherwise (as I will either do it by my own will, or be forced to do it), it seems that many readers would blame me for the murder of my kitten, regardless of my lack of choice, because my lack of choice plays no role—but my intention, in this case, does. In other words, my wanting to commit the act is the cause—it is why the event comes about.

Now, once again, Frankfurt's example is a much cleaner one than mine because removes, or at least appears to remove, choice from the equation. My kitten-killer example most likely leaves room for philosophers to argue over whether or not I had a choice to kill my kitten or not, etc. However, if one examines Frankfurt's argument, one can see that it suffers from no such flaw. Jones knows nothing concerning his lack of options, even though he will vote for candidate A no matter what his original inclination. Nevertheless, to absolve him for an act which required no intervention on Black's behalf seems unreasonable. If Jones wants to commit the act, wills the event into existence, intends it, and then commits it—regardless of the fact that he was going to do it no matter what—he seems morally responsible.

Why, in this case, is Jones not absolved? It is for this reason that I introduced my kitten-case. What it teases out is that that we do not absolve Jones because there is a factor independent of his lack of an alternative possibility—namely, intention—which is the reason why the act is committed. So despite his lack of control, we blame Jones, because he did not do it only because he could not do otherwise. In this case, the reason why Jones does as he does is not because he could not do otherwise but because he wants to do as he does. Recall that wanting an event to come into being is not sufficient for blaming the agent, but in this case his wanting to vote for A is the reason why he votes for A. The question then becomes,

“But what if Jones’ intentions were such that he could not want to do otherwise? Do we still hold him responsible?” In this case, Jones votes for A because it is his intention to do so—because he wants to vote for A, but what if he wants to vote for A or intends to vote for A only because he cannot intend or want otherwise? Is the answer as simple as he is morally responsible for voting for A but not responsible for wanting or intending to vote for A? I will take this concern up in the next chapter.

Ch. 3 Prima-Facie Counter-Examples

It seems to be a fair assumption that Frankfurt believes an agent can still be held responsible despite a lack of alternative possibilities due to the fact that some other factor, such as his intention, may be the reason why he acts as he does. In this case, it is the agent’s intention that we should actually be concerned with in judging an agent because the fact that he could not do otherwise plays no role in why he commits the act. To quote Frankfurt, “The fact that a person could not have avoided doing something is a sufficient condition of his having done it. But, as some of my examples show, this fact may play no role whatever in the explanation of why he did it.”¹⁵ If an agent performs an act intentionally, regardless of whether or not he can do otherwise, he should be held responsible for it, because the event is the same one which he intended and it is brought about not because he could not do otherwise but, in this case, because he intended it.

It seems that in cases where the agent cannot do otherwise, the only things which belong to the agent which can help to bring about an event are things internal to the agent, as the external is not something under his control. It seems that it is largely these internal events—intentions—which can act as a locus of responsibility for Frankfurt, even in cases

¹⁵ Frankfurt 836.

where an agent cannot do otherwise. In other words, what Frankfurt is blaming the agent for cannot just be because he brought about the event—otherwise agents who commit an event only because they could not do otherwise would also be morally accountable—but because he intended to bring the event about and his intention is a reason why it did come about.

Assuming that I am correct, and it is true that Frankfurt believes that intentionality is the locus of responsibility in these cases, then one wonders if Frankfurt is providing us with true counter-examples. In other words, is his example one in which the agent truly cannot do otherwise? It seems that the answer is dependent on whether one considers the ability to intend otherwise an “ability to do otherwise.” If one does not, if the argument that “the ability to do otherwise” omits for some reason the ability to intend otherwise, then it seems that I have no case. Let us assume though, that intending is similar to other events in the world in that it is not mystical or spiritual—instead, intentions are events and, as such, the result of causal factors. If this assertion regarding intentions is true, then it seems that Frankfurt’s examples, at least as originally presented to us, are not actually counter examples.

In the case of Black and Jones, there is no reason to believe that Jones is restricted from intending otherwise. If this is true, then the incompatibilist may argue that Frankfurt’s examples only *seem* to work because they have the appearance of situations in which the agent cannot do otherwise, but, in fact, the agent can do otherwise... he can *intend* otherwise, and in making that choice force Black to intervene. If, then, Black does intervene and forces Jones to vote for A, then Jones will have voted for A only because he could not do otherwise. Thereby, according to Frankfurt, he cannot be morally responsible. Perhaps Frankfurt intends that Jones cannot intend to do otherwise, in other words his choice is such that he has no alternative possibilities, but then, to quote Stewart Goetz,

Thus, any appearance of a causal over-determination involving Black's device [the device which can force Jones to vote] is *illusory* because, reiterating a point already made, without the obtaining of causal determinism in the actual sequence of events, Black's device cannot prevent Jones from making an alternative choice. And with the obtaining of causal determinism in the actual sequence of events, the question about the compatibility of determinism and moral responsibility has simply been begged against the incompatibilist.¹⁶

What Goetz is pointing out is that if Black cannot prevent Jones from intending otherwise, then Jones has alternative possibilities. On the other hand, if Jones cannot even intend to do otherwise, then it seems that Frankfurt is not just presenting us with a case of an agent who cannot do otherwise in regards to one event, but, instead, a case in which Jones is a victim of causal determinism—all of his actions, and intentional states, are such that he cannot do otherwise. If this is the case, and Frankfurt is presenting us with a case of causal determinism, then his ability to undermine PAP is severely limited. Conversely, if this is a case which does not assume causal determinism, but, instead, is only a case in which an agent lacks alternative possibilities, then the fact that we all agree that Jones is blameworthy acts as a counter-example. If Goetz is right and Frankfurt is not just removing alternative possibilities, but he is also imbedding causal determinism into the case, then he is only reiterating the old compatibilist thesis—that our intuitions are such that we can blame agents in a causally determined world and it need not be irrational and so is begging the question, says Goetz.¹⁷

Conversely, it may be that Frankfurt is not presenting us with a situation in which we are actually blaming the agent when he cannot do otherwise. We are blaming Jones, the incompatibilist may argue, for not intending as he should *and* he could have intended otherwise; therefore, it is not irrational to blame Jones for not intending otherwise. This seems to work clearly in the kitten-killer example, as the concern in the first place seems to be my

¹⁶ Stewart Goetz. "Frankfurt-Style Counter Examples and Begging the Question." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29, no. (2005): p. 88.

¹⁷ Goetz p. 88.

intention to kill the kitten. The advocate of PAP can argue that we would not blame the agent in the same way if I had some sort of kitten-killing disorder which prevents me from being able to intend other than killing kittens. This is because, so says Goetz, we absolve agents in cases in which they cannot do otherwise not just because of the truth of PAP but because “he is not free to choose otherwise *because of causal determinism*.”¹⁸ In other words, PAP is indicative of causal determinism, and that is why we absolve agents who do not have alternative possibilities. In cases in which agents do not have alternative possibilities, but the world is not causally determined, as in Frankfurt’s cases, the agent can still be held responsible. Goetz’s point is that if Frankfurt attempts to preserve his counter-examples and restricts Jones’ intentions so that he cannot intend otherwise, he is not just introducing a lack of alternative possibilities into the example, but he is also introducing causal determinism. Regardless of whether Goetz is correct, there certainly seems to be a tacit agreement that if an agent’s actions are such that he cannot do otherwise, and his intentions are also such that he cannot do otherwise, then he cannot be held responsible. Frankfurt supposedly counters this claim by presenting us with a case in which an agent cannot do otherwise and is still blameworthy, but this does not necessarily attack PAP as Goetz describes it because Frankfurt’s examples are such that it seems that Jones can intend to do otherwise.

If the Frankfurtian restricts even Jones’ intentions, he can present us with a situation in which Jones is being blamed for his intentions as they do result in the event coming about, but they cannot be otherwise. Imagine that if Jones shows an inclination to intend otherwise than to vote as Black wishes, Black will intervene and force Jones to intend as Black sees fit. This seems to solve the problem until one realizes that the incompatibilist will simply take another step back and argue that Jones can still do otherwise in that he can show the inclination that

¹⁸ Goetz p. 88.

will force Black to change his intentions. Nevertheless, if Jones can show the inclination to vote otherwise, it does not seem that we are dealing with a case in which Jones truly cannot do otherwise.

The Frankfurtian may again counter by stating that these inclinations are also such that Black can control them if he wishes, and it seems that the advocate of PAP respond as he did before, by taking a step back and blaming the agent for whatever it is he did that was not under Black's control. So, what if we simply move this sequence back all the way? If we assert that there has never been *any* mental event that Jones has had which Black could not change to suit his will, do we still blame Jones for his actions? The difficulty here is the realization that Jones, now, by definition, cannot even conceive of thinking other than Black wills. The advocate of PAP is likely to assert that when we blame Jones for not intending as he should, the only reason why we can blame him is by blaming him for being born an agent who has never had the inclination to do anything that would cause Black to intervene. This seems ridiculous, what reason do we have to blame him for being born as he is? Even by Frankfurt's definition, Jones would be born as he is only because he could not do otherwise, and so he would be absolved. The dialectic develops in the following way:

1. Frankfurt asserts that he presents a case in which PAP is false because Jones does not have alternative possibilities and, yet, our intuitions are such that we do blame Jones.
2. The advocate of PAP agrees that Jones does seem blameworthy, but notes that this does not act as evidence that PAP is false because Jones does have an alternate possibility—he can intend otherwise.

3. Frankfurt responds that the case can be altered so that Jones cannot intend otherwise and, yet, still does as he does without Black's intervention and so he is blameworthy and lacks alternative possibilities.
4. The advocate of PAP argues that Black's ability to restrict Jones' intentions is based on Black's ability to observe Jones' inclinations to do otherwise, so Jones still has an alternative possibility in that he can force Black to intervene by demonstrating a one of these inclinations.
5. Frankfurt replies by arguing that Black can also restrict Jones' inclinations such that he cannot, even in the smallest way, begin to form the desire to do otherwise. Nevertheless, Black never has to use this power, and so Jones is morally responsible.
6. According to Goetz, Frankfurt has now embedded causal determinism in the case and, therefore, to assert the truth of compatibilism in the case is to beg the question.

Frankfurt's defender is likely to respond to claim #6 by arguing that Frankfurt does not assert that compatibilism is true, but only that PAP is false. But, if this is the case, Frankfurt is still asserting that PAP is false by using the example of a causally-determined world. So Frankfurt may be accomplishing something amazing, he is not only proving that alternative possibilities are not necessary for an agent to be held morally responsible, but that an agent can rationally be held responsible for his actions in a causally determined world. The question is of course, what is it we are holding the agent responsible for? We cannot blame Jones for actually not doing otherwise, as doing otherwise in this case is a physical impossibility. We also cannot blame him for not intending otherwise, as this is also a physical impossibility. Jones, in this

case, is largely being held responsible for being an agent who has never even had the inclination to do otherwise than Black wills; essentially, he is being blamed for being born the way he is, which is an event over which he has no control.

The event “Jones was born such that he would never cause Black to intervene” is an event for which Jones is in no way responsible. Moreover, notice, as causal determinism is built into the case—all of Jones’ actions are such that they as they are the direct and only possible result of his previous actions and intentions. So, it seems that Jones is forced in a way to do as he does. He does not just lack alternative possibilities; he must do as he does. At any instance in which we blame Jones, we are blaming him for an event which was necessitated by a previous event—not just one lacking alternative possibilities. And so it is the same with every event which follows his birth (which is an event over which he has no control): every event is one which is necessitated and, so one over which, it at least seems, he has no control. I will return to this point later in this paper as Fischer attacks the assertion that Jones does not have control. Frankfurt can, in this way dodge the bullet that he is not actually presenting counter-examples. He can assert that Jones has absolutely no ability to do otherwise even regarding Jones’ intentions or inclinations, but this can have significant consequences.

Ch. 4 Is Frankfurt Begging the Question?

Unfortunately, the argument that Frankfurt begs the question is not so easily dismissed. As David Widerker points out, Frankfurt’s case is supposed to be one which does not assume causal determinism.¹⁹ To quote Frankfurt, “There may be circumstances in which

¹⁹ David Widerker. “Libertarianism and Frankfurt's Attack on Alternative Possibilities.” *The Philosophical Review* 104, no. 2 (1995): 248.

a person performs some action which although they make it impossible for him to avoid performing that action, they in no way bring it about that he performs it.”²⁰ Frankfurt’s first step is to try to prove that there can be cases of a lack of alternate possibilities which are not also causally deterministic. If causal determinism is already embedded in the case, then he is attempting to demonstrate that an agent can lack alternative possibilities in a non-determined world but doing so by providing us with an agent who is causally determined. Frankfurt’s case is intended to be one which demonstrates the falsity of PAP without assuming causal determinism. The example of Jones is intended to be such that the events leading up to Jones’ action do not necessitate that Jones do as he does; instead, it is supposed to be Black’s ability to force Jones to act in certain ways which removes alternative possibilities. David Widerker argues that these inclinations, which he terms “flickers of freedom” produce the following dilemma for Frankfurt: either the inclinations that Jones exhibits (let’s call their summation “F”) are something which can result in Jones doing otherwise or they are not. If Jones having F is something which can result in his doing otherwise, it is hard to see how Jones does not have alternative possibilities, even though the actuation of the event is blocked off to him by Black. On the other hand, if F is not something which can result in Jones being able to do otherwise, then Jones’ act is necessitated *regardless of Black’s intervention*.²¹ In other words, Jones cannot do otherwise than he does, not because of Black’s ability, but because of causal

²⁰ David Widerker. "Libertarianism and Frankfurt's Attack on Alternative Possibilities." *The Philosophical Review* 104, no. 2 (1995): 248.

²¹ David Widerker. "Libertarianism and Frankfurt's Attack on Alternative Possibilities." *The Philosophical Review* 104, no. 2 (1995): 247-250.

determinism. This is a key problem for Frankfurt capitalized on by Robert Kane, Al Mele, and David Widerker and one which even worries Fischer.

It seems that in order for Frankfurt to remove all alternative possibilities from his example he must create a case in which Jones acts are necessitated and so he lacks alternative possibilities not because of Black but because of causal determinism. As Goetz points out, Frankfurt is then creating the illusion of a case in which Jones lacks alternative possibilities because of Black, but, in reality, he lacks alternative possibilities because of causal determinism. Specifically, the dilemma is this: either Jones can exhibit flickers of freedom which can result in him doing otherwise, or he cannot. If the flicker can result in him doing otherwise, then Jones has alternative possibilities. If it cannot result in his doing otherwise, then Jones' actions are necessitated, no matter what inclinations/flickers he exhibits. By describing Jones as a character whose flickers of freedom cannot result in him doing otherwise, we eliminate the need for Black as a factor to restrict Jones' actions; Jones cannot even conceive of doing otherwise, and so all of his actions are more than just determined, they are necessitated.

If Jones' actions are such that they are necessitated by causal determinism, Frankfurt does not present us with a case whereby that which restricts Jones ability to act (which Frankfurt claims is Mr. Black) is not the reason why Jones acts; instead, Frankfurt presents a situation in which that which makes it impossible for Jones to do otherwise (causal determinism) does bring about Jones' decision. In other words, if causal determinism is built into the case, then Jones acts only because causal determinism necessitates that he does, and, so, even by Frankfurt's own lights, Jones may be absolved because Jones acts *only because he cannot do otherwise* (because his actions are necessitated by causal determinism.)

One might argue that Jones also acts because he wants to act as he does, so it is not a case of Jones acting only because he cannot do otherwise. One should keep in mind, though, that his wanting to do as he does is also causally necessitated and more importantly, because Jones cannot do otherwise, his want is not something which could bring about him doing otherwise. His wanting to do as he does is not a reason why the event comes about, because regardless of his want, the event will come about. One may argue that in the actual sequence of events (the one in which Jones votes for A), Jones wanting to vote for A is the reason why he votes for A, but this intentional state determines that Jones acts as he does, so it undermines Frankfurt's claim that he provides an argument in which that which restricts Jones' alternatives does not also bring about the event. This is a deep concern because if Jones' actions are causally determined, therefore Jones is compelled to act the way he does. An agent who is forced to commit an act is generally morally absolved, even by Frankfurt.

There is a significant question regarding whether I am giving Frankfurt's critics too much credit. How is it that he is begging the question, as opposed to simply stipulating that the world can exist in a certain way and then pointing out that we can still be held morally responsible in it even if the world did exist in that way? The conditional supported by PAP is "If an agent is morally responsible (p), then he has alternate possibilities (q)"; what Frankfurt is pointing out, though, is that the lack of alternative possibilities does not entail the negation of moral responsibility. The conditional is not true. Frankfurt could point out in response to Goetz that regardless of whether or not the lack of alternative possibilities is due to causal determinism, agent Black, or any other reason, his example is still one in which the agent does not have alternate possibilities and, yet, we still hold him responsible.

What Frankfurt's defender is missing, though, is that for Frankfurt's argument to work, that which restricts Jones' actions cannot also be the reason why he commits the act, or else at the very best, we have an example of an agent who acted as he did only because he could not do otherwise. Consider the following example: imagine that Mr. Black is so invested in the election of candidate A that he does not allow Jones to commit the act "Jones votes for candidate A" without interference. In other words, Mr. Black is so desperate to see the event come to pass that he preempts Jones' already pre-existing inclination to vote for A and uses his power to make Jones vote for A. Notice, there is a counter-factual in this case which states, "had Mr. Black not forced Jones to vote for candidate A, Jones would have voted for A of his own volition." However, despite the counter-factual, we do not blame Jones in this case. At the very least, Frankfurt does not blame Jones in this case, because Jones wanting to vote for A alone is insufficient for blame. *The only reason why Jones acts is because his action was caused by Black.*

Do not confuse this with the counter-factual that Jones would have done it even without Black's interference. In the actual sequence of events, Jones acts only because of Black's power, and it is this actual-sequence with which Frankfurt is concerned. Moreover, there seems to be a very good reason to absolve Jones in this case: we regularly want events to come about over which we have no control and so we should not be held responsible for them. So, what we come to realize is that if Jones lacks control over the act, then he must be absolved—by Frankfurt's own lights.

I am not convinced that begging the question is necessarily the best way to describe the way the Frankfurt's argument fails; nevertheless, if Frankfurt removes all possibilities of flickers of freedom, then Jones' action is now necessitated because the actual-sequence is

such that it makes him do as he does. The only reason why Jones acts in Frankfurt's example, in the actual sequence, is because of causal determinism. Recall that if we remove from Jones the ability to be moved by a flicker of freedom to do otherwise, then we can also remove from the case Mr. Black's possible interference and Jones will still lack the ability to do otherwise; Jones act is necessitated not because Mr. Black may interfere but because his actions are necessitated by causal determinism. The key point here is that Black is not necessary in the case to make it such that Jones cannot do otherwise, because Jones' flickers of freedoms are such that they cannot result in his doing otherwise. So, Jones' actions are such that the same thing that restricts Jones' actions is the same thing which causes him to act.

For Frankfurt to effectively demonstrate the falsity of PAP, this cannot be the case; Jones cannot be forced to act in this way—if he is, then he meets Frankfurt's criterion that he acts only because he could not have done otherwise and is therefore absolved. I suspect that philosophers like Goetz assert that Frankfurt is begging the question because Frankfurt is no longer presenting us an example in which Jones is only lacking alternative possibilities, he is presenting us with an example in which Jones is both lacking alternative possibilities and his actions are caused by that which restricts his ability to do otherwise. There is, therefore, little or no difference between Frankfurt's case and the case in which Black actually does cause Jones to act.

If this is the case, then it may not be that Frankfurt is actually begging the question (because he is not embedding the truth of the conclusion in the premises) if we view his example as the positing of a scenario in which Jones lacks alternatives but may still be morally responsible. Nevertheless, he is presenting us with a case in which it seems that Jones' action is not caused by that which restricts his actions—but this is an illusion. Once we

see past the illusion, we realize that this is actually a case in which Jones' act is caused by the same thing that restricts him. So the description of Jones' act is significantly different in a world in which causal determinism is embedded and his flickers of freedom cannot motivate him to even try to do otherwise. In Frankfurt's initial example, the event "Jones votes for A" can be described as "Jones votes for A because he wants to vote for A." In a case in which Jones' wants are irrelevant to his actions, "Jones votes for A" must be described as "Jones votes for A" because it is necessitated that he votes for A." It cannot be said that he votes for A because he wanted to, because that want is irrelevant to the actual sequence of events in a way that it is not in Frankfurt's original example.

It may be argued that Jones' desire, in this case, is part of the causal chain and, so, even in the case where Jones' flickers of freedom are restricted, he acts because he wants to and because of causal determinism. This claim leads to problematic conclusions. For example, consider a case in which Jones does not want to vote for A but Black uses his power to change Jones' mental state so that Jones does want to vote for A. This case would then also be one in which Jones is still responsible, despite Black's interference, because Jones' wanting the event to take place was part of the causal chain. What we begin to see here is that Frankfurt's account is missing something essential—namely, control. Jones' lack of control over his wants in both the case of Jones lacking flickers of freedom which can cause him to act differently, and the case where Black changes Jones' desires, can provide a reason why Jones is morally absolved, even though his desire is part of the causal chain.

Ch. 5 Revisions to the Counter-Examples

It is likely that Frankfurt does not intend that Jones' intentions are free. Jones' ability to intend otherwise would make it such that his counter-examples are not cases in which the agent cannot truly do otherwise. We should consider his examples, then, with the idea that he does not want to appeal to intention in mind. However, the analysis may then go something like this: these are not true counter-examples because Jones did intend to vote for the candidate, despite his lack of alternative possibilities, and it is for this that we are blaming him. Moreover, he had the ability to intend otherwise, so your examples are not true counter-examples." The Frankfurtian may then reply that it is a mistake to care about intentions because the counter-examples still may hold even if the agent's intentions are determined. We are blaming the agent because factors of his own, without interference, result in the action. If the Frankfurtian asserts that the counter-examples remain situations in which an agent cannot do otherwise—and, therefore, the agent does not even have flickers of freedom—but still wishes to maintain that alternative possibilities are not necessary for responsibility, he may do so. He can assert that Jones cannot desire or intend otherwise, but we still blame him for voting for candidate A, not because his intention is somehow exempt from constraint, but because intention, regardless of alternative possibilities, is the locus of moral responsibility. So the Frankfurtian will have demonstrated that the lack of alternative possibilities plays no role in why the agent acts. His intentions, regardless of their origin, are what we blame him for; so, if those intentions result in the act then we can blame Jones—regardless of the necessitated nature of Jones' actions and intentions.

The Frankfurtian could argue that it would be irrational to ignore the fact that our intuitions tell us that Jones is morally responsible—*even though he is living out a causally determined sequence*. The Frankfurtian can avoid the charge that he is begging the question

by pointing out that we still are intuitively compelled to hold Jones morally responsible, even though we know that he exists in a causally determined universe. His example then acts not as a counter-example in which he has definitely proven that a) Jones does not have alternative possibilities, b) Jones is responsible, and c) that which restricts Jones' actions does not force him to act. It acts more as a kind of intuition pump which motivates us to agree with Frankfurt because, upon reviewing the case, we agree that a) Jones does not have alternative possibilities and b) our intuitions tell us that he is still responsible, because c) that which compels him to act is not necessarily a coercive factor, as it aligns perfectly with all of Jones' intentions. He states clearly that, "The principle of alternate possibilities is false" and argues for the truth of Jones' moral responsibility because in a possible world exactly like his case, but without the existence of Black, Jones is still held responsible. The addition of Black—without the interference of Black—does not change the fact that Jones is morally responsible because Black does nothing.

However, either Jones does have alternative possibilities in the world in which Black does nothing because Jones has, at the very least, flickers of freedom, or b) Jones' flickers of freedom are such that they cannot result in Jones doing otherwise, so Jones will do as he does regardless of Black. This world is causally determined. In this second case, Frankfurt's argument is decimated.

A response to the argument that Frankfurt begs the question by creating a world in which Jones is compelled to act as he does may be that we treat Frankfurt's examples as intuition pumps which, in the end, do not demonstrate so much what we think about alternative possibilities, but, instead, what we think about intentions. The case becomes one in which the agent cannot do anything other than what he does, and what we realize is that we

don't really care about that, we care about what the agent actually intended. For this to suffice though, we may commit ourselves to the belief that it really doesn't matter if the agent can't intend otherwise. We assert that intention is what we blame people for, and whether or not they have the ability to intend anything else, we will continue to hold them responsible because of it.

The power behind Frankfurt's argument—that many of us share the intuition that Jones is still responsible—seems to dissipate when we take the argument to this extreme. Jones, when we remove his ability to even think in any other way, seems to become something of a charity case. He is deficient in an essential way and unable to engage in fully human adult functioning. He is an agent in which all of his beliefs, feelings, intentions, choices, motivations, etc. are such that they cannot be otherwise. If he believes that he actually has the ability to change any of those things, he is delusional. There are external factors which would prevent this change; even worse, as he lacks the ability to produce flickers of freedom which can result in him even intending to do otherwise, he cannot indulge any thought or feeling which is not determined.

A Frankfurtian could just reply that as what we are trying to address is the problem of *compatibility with determinism*: then Jones is really not an exception at all—as we are all, if determined, unable to intend otherwise. In a fully determined world, agents cannot intend other than as they do. So Jones is no less part of the moral community than any of the rest of us; he, therefore, cannot be exempt. But, this may not necessarily be true for Jones as it seems that Jones lives in a special kind of determined world: Jones' world is fated such that no matter what he does, the events will take place, whereas, even in a causally determined world,

it seems that agents can be authors of the future; they may lack the ability to do other than they do, but that need not mean that events will come to pass regardless of what they do.

Even so, if we commit Jones' actions to being causally determined, this, once again, leads the Frankfurtian into the problem as described by Goetz. If the situation he provides us is one which is causally determined, then it seems that he is begging the question. If Jones lacks alternative possibilities, and causal determinism is built into the case such that Jones' actions are determined, it seems that Frankfurt is doing nothing more than stating that despite causal determinism, an agent can be held morally accountable—which was his initial claim: that PAP is false and, therefore, he begs the question—as he has not provided us with a case in which that which restricts Jones' alternatives is also not that which causes him to do as he does. He must be able to provide us with a reason why, in this causally determined world as he has described it, Jones is still morally responsible. If he is compelled to act—and it seems that Jones is compelled if his actions are causally determined—then he is absolved, even in Frankfurt's account. Even worse, it seems that the kind of determinism which necessitated Jones' actions is even more stringent than that which would necessitate the actions of agents in a causally determined world.

Many compatibilists, argue that the crux of the counter-example is that an agent may, in every possible way, be unable to intend, desire, or think otherwise, but, if there is no actual intervention, the agent is still held responsible because it is the agent's unmolested brain states that result in his committing the act. If Jones' flickers of freedom are such that they cannot bring it about that Jones does otherwise, then Jones' actions are necessitated, and not by Black, but by causal determinism. Even so, many of us, when presented even with the most stringent case of Jones' actions being causally determined, believe that Jones is responsible

due to the fact that Jones is not interfered with by Black. What the compatibilists do is assert that there is a difference between this super-restricted case and the case which I presented earlier of Jones being forced by Black to change his intention. They want to assert that even in the super-stringent case, Jones has a kind of control that he does not if Black actually interferes and changes his intentional states. So, it is this unimpeded intention which actually matters.

The argument may then continue in the following vein: Jones cannot do otherwise, in order to maintain the integrity of the counter examples, he also cannot intend otherwise—so whatever it is that we are blaming him for, it is not due to his ability to do otherwise. What Frankfurt's examples do for us, then, regardless of causal determinism, is help us locate the locus of moral responsibility using our intuition. Frankfurt's examples may, despite the problems of assuming casual determinism, remain quite powerful because, from our limited perspective, they help us determine how to ascribe praise and blame when dealing with actual problems in the world. The Frankfurtian counter-examples then act as a kind of evidence for what we actually consider to be the locus of responsibility—namely, intention.

Given this reply, when considering his examples there seem to be at least two options for blaming agents. We can blame them for their consequences (which they cannot do other than in a causally determined universe) or blame them for their intentions (which they also cannot do other than—unless we want to allow them a flicker of freedom, which then makes it a case in which the agent actually can do otherwise). The question becomes, “if alternative possibilities do not matter why should we defer to intentions? What is so special about intention?”

Ch. 6 Intention vs. Consequence

To this point I have argued the following: Frankfurt tells us that alternative possibilities are not necessary in order to hold an agent morally responsible. He does that by providing counter-examples that are supposed to be cases in which an agent cannot do otherwise, and yet we hold the agent responsible. My first contention is that these examples are not cases in which the agent cannot do otherwise, as it seems that he is pointing us towards blaming the agent for his intentions. These intentions are not, in Frankfurt's examples, described as things which are restricted in the same way as are the agent's actions. If it is true that Frankfurt does allow for the agent to intend otherwise, it seems that it is not the case in which his examples demonstrate that an agent can be held responsible even though the agent cannot do otherwise—as he can intend otherwise.

It may be that the Frankfurtian can reply by arguing that by “can do otherwise,” we do not mean he can intend otherwise—we are only referring to actions which take place out in the external world. If this is the case, though, why worry about absolving the agent when he or she acts “only because he could not do otherwise”? It seems that if we absolve Jones for voting for candidate A because Black forces him to, it has to be because there is something different between him and the Jones who votes for candidate A because he wants to do so. Either way, the act itself is not instantiated in the world any differently; whatever it is that we are blaming or absolving Jones for it must be something going on inside his head.

The Frankfurtian may argue that even though intentions do count, the examples still work even if the intentions are such that the agent cannot intend otherwise. But, if he or she grants that Frankfurtian counter-examples still work in a world in which causal determinism is true, then what difference is there between intention and consequence? Intentions are things

which are determined; consequences are things which are determined; yet, for some reason, we should absolve the agent for an act if he commits it only because he could not do otherwise? How is that agent, who we are absolving, different from the agent who commits the act because he wanted to commit the act? Granted, it might be something as simple as one agent is displaying traits which we praise (not wanting to commit bad acts) and the other is displaying traits we condemn (wanting to commit a bad act). This does not resolve the problem though, because it seems that if the only difference between them is that one commits a bad act of intention, and the other commits a good act of intention, we have still not determined what is special about intention. Moreover, as consequences are much easier to measure and observe, if neither intention nor consequence is something particularly special, why not just blame agents for consequences and be done with it? As opposed to trying to find out what was actually in the agents head we can just blame them for the bad acts that we can actually observe.

It may be argued though that there is something special about intention: an agent has much less control over his consequences than he does over his intentions. For instance, he can commit actions for which the consequences are the result of pure luck. Given this, perhaps what we are actually interested in is not intention at all, but, instead, control. Jones is absolved, if Black intervenes, because Jones lacks control, he is not absolved if Black does not intervene because he maintains control. This discussion brings us to the work of perhaps the most influential philosopher to address the problem of Frankfurtian counter examples—Fischer. It is his arguments which will be examined in Part II.

Although Fischer believes that Frankfurt's account points out something very important about control, it does seem that Frankfurt, at least at some points in his writing,

appeals to more than just the idea of control. Consider the fact that Frankfurt absolves an agent if he commits the act only because he cannot do otherwise. But, it seems that this certainly points us away from consequence as the locus of responsibility as we are focusing on the cause and not the effect of the action. The difference between an agent who is absolved and an agent who is not is whether or not he committed the action only because he could not do otherwise, not because of how the events turned out. Frankfurt points us toward the reasons why an agent acts. From this we can see that if an agent commits an act *because* he wants to he can be held responsible for the act. Frankfurt is asserting that we should blame agents for those reasons and regardless of whether the agent can do otherwise.

Having said this, there is at least one more good reason to assert that if Frankfurt is not locating intention as the locus of moral responsibility, he should. Consider, that it seems that his argument that an agent should be absolved “if he acted only because he could not do otherwise” tells us that if any other fact acts as a reason why the agent acts he may be considered responsible. It is intuitively plausible that Jones could act as he does because he has been fed misinformation about candidate A and so believes that candidate A is truly the best person for the job, but had Jones known that candidate A was actually a kitten-killer, for example, he would never have voted for A. In this scenario, it is not the case that Jones votes for A only because he could not do otherwise: he also votes for A because he has been led to believe, mistakenly, that A is a good candidate. Nevertheless, we are likely to absolve Jones in this case. So, it may well be that Jones acts for more reasons than only because he could not do otherwise, and is still absolved. Considering Jones’ intention, then, plays a very important role, it acts to indicate cases in which the agent acts for additional factors for which we consider him responsible, or it can act as an indicator that he acts for an additional factor

which acts to absolve Jones. Contrary to what Fischer will tell us regarding control and moral responsibility, I believe that what Frankfurt's argument does most effectively is demonstrate that we are deeply invested in why the agent acts as he does and that our allocation of moral responsibility largely revolves around the agent's intention.

Part II: Fischer and the Problem of Mr. Black

Ch. 7 Fischer's Solution to the Problem

Fischer rejects the sort of dilemma I presented in Part I—that either Frankfurt admits that the agent can intend otherwise and so he actually does have alternative possibilities or he restricts Jones' intentions, in which case he is assuming causal determinism. He argues in “Responsibility and Control :A Theory of Moral Responsibility” that the one horn of the dilemma is only indicative of “flickers of freedom” which are insufficient to ground moral responsibility and even if, in this particular case, there are alternative possibilities, this does not mean that it is in principle impossible for one to develop Frankfurt-style cases in which there are no robust alternative possibilities.²² So, Fischer is unmotivated by this dilemma, he presents his own account for other reasons.

Fischer is motivated by the “Consequence Argument” as described by Peter Van Inwagen.²³ Essentially, the argument states that in a causally determined universe all of our behaviors are the result of the past in conjunction with the laws of nature. In such a world all of our behaviors are, in essence, compulsory. Fischer describes it as follows:

Given the definition of causal determinism, it follows that my current choice to continue typing ... is entailed by true propositions about the past and laws of nature.

²² John Martin Fischer. “Compatibilism.” *Four Views on Free Will*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007. p. 60.

²³ Robert Kane. *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will. Fundamentals of Philosophy Series*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Thus, if I were free (just prior to my actual choice) to choose (and subsequently do) otherwise, then I must have been free so to behave that the past would have been different or the natural laws would have been different. But intuitively the past is "fixed" and out of my control and so are the natural laws. I cannot now do anything that is such that, if I were to do it, the past would have been different... or the natural laws would be different. It appears to follow that... I am never free to choose and do otherwise.²⁴

Although Fischer recognizes the power of Van Inwagen's argument, he also recognizes that it is by no means a settled matter. (As an aside it should be noted that in presenting his argument for compatibilism—which he calls "semi-compatibilism" due to his argument that freedom does require alternative possibilities—he has no intention of providing support for the Consequence Argument.) Instead, his purpose is simply to provide a way to demonstrate the necessary conditions for moral responsibility regardless of whether the Consequence Argument is sound. What is important to Fischer is that he provides an account of moral responsibility in which we can be held accountable for our actions in the face of the fact that the Consequence Argument seems to rule out the possibility that we are free to choose and to do other than we do. This differs from Frankfurt's approach because Fischer will argue that what actually matters is what kind of control the agent has, as opposed to Frankfurt's argument that it is the reasons why the agent acts that matters. It is likely that there are cases in which an agent acts only because he could not do otherwise and, therefore, be absolved by Frankfurt and, yet, maintain the kind of control which Fischer argues is sufficient and necessary for moral responsibility.

Fischer presents an account which relies heavily on a distinction he generates between two kinds of control: there is regulative control and guidance control. Although regulative control requires the ability to both prevent and bring about alternate sequences of events,

²⁴ John Martin Fischer. "Compatibilism." *Four Views on Free Will*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007. p. 54.

guidance control only requires that the agent acts from his own reasons responsive mechanism—there must be a possible world in which the agent can recognize and respond to a reason to do otherwise. It is only guidance control that is necessary for moral responsibility. Fischer states, “Guidance control, and not regulative control, is the control that is associated with moral responsibility; that is, guidance control in itself... satisfies the freedom-relevant condition of moral responsibility. If this is correct, then the indirect challenge to our moral responsibility (based on the possible truth of causal determinism) can be sidestepped.”²⁵ According to Fischer, it is not the freedom implied by the ability to do otherwise which is the locus of moral responsibility, but the freedom imbedded in the ability to bring about an event through one’s own reasons-responsive (subject to practical deliberation) mechanism.

Fischer states, “Recall that it is not enough for the proponent of the regulative control requirement to identify just any sort of alternative possibility; rather, he needs to find an alternative possibility that is sufficiently *robust* to ground attributions of moral responsibility, given the regulative control picture.”²⁶ A flicker of freedom is too weak to ground attributions of moral responsibility, according to Fischer, when it is clear that it is a flicker an agent could have and, yet, still lack the necessary control for moral responsibility. Imagine a scenario in which an agent is forced to act, and yet is allowed to raise his eyebrow as he pleases. He may raise that eyebrow all he wants in support of the act and, yet, this alternative possibility, to raise or not raise the eyebrow, is insufficient to blame him for the act he is forced to commit. In order to be a robust the alternative possibility must be such that if it does come about, the agent would do otherwise than he would have if it did not come about.

²⁵ Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Law. Cambridge University Press, 1999. p. 34.

²⁶ John Martin Fischer. “Compatibilism.” *Four Views on Free Will*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007. p. 60.

Frankfurt attacks the first horn of the dilemma in the following way: if Jones does have flickers of freedom such that they can result in alternate actions, Fischer argues that they are likely insufficient for moral grounding. He attacks the second horn by arguing that if Jones does not have flickers of freedom which can result in alternate actions, this does not mean that it is in principle impossible to produce a case in which Jones does not have alternate possibilities and Jones' actions are not causally necessitated. Fischer, then, is putting the onus his critic to prove 1) that the flickers of freedom which may exist in current Frankfurtian examples are such that they are sufficiently robust enough to ground moral responsibility and 2) that it is not possible to generate a Frankfurtian-style counter-example in which there are no legitimate alternative possibilities.

Michael Della Rocca responds to Fischer's claim that flickers of freedom are insufficient for the grounding of moral responsibility in his paper "Frankfurt, Fischer and Flickers." Not only does Della Rocca respond that according to Fischer's, flickers of freedom are sufficient for the grounding of moral responsibility, but also he points out that in Fischer's own words, it is extremely difficult to provide Frankfurt-style examples in which the world described allows for no alternative possibilities. He quotes Fischer:

[I]t is hard to see how a Frankfurt-type example could be constructed which would have absolutely *no* such flicker. For a Frankfurt-type case must have an alternative sequence in which intervention is triggered in some fashion or other, and it is hard to see how to avoid the idea that the triggering event can serve as the flicker of freedom.²⁷

Of course, for Fischer, this need not be a significant problem because he essentially wants to ignore the alternative scenarios and focus on the actual sequence of events. Della Rocca argues, though, that if there is a possible flicker which an agent could have, but did not result

²⁷Michael Della Rocca. "Frankfurt, Fischer, and Flickers." *Nous* 32, no.1, 1998. p. 100.

in an alternate sequence, the absence of that feature is necessary for the actual sequence “Jones votes for candidate A to obtain.” (What Della Rocca is doing is distinguishing between flickers which actually could result in an alternative sequence and ones which could not—such as the “raise eyebrow” example.) If the fact that Jones does not exist in the state F is not causally determined, the fact that he could be in state “F” or not be in state “F” results in the fact that Jones’ action is not determined by external factors. As a result, Della Rocca points out that

[A]n incompatibilist would hold that Jones’ responsibility for his action stems, at least in part, from the fact (if indeed it is a fact) that his actions about Jones himself are such that he was not F. Since the flicker of freedom guarantees that there is this lack of external determination the flicker can itself be seen as helping to ground ascriptions of responsibility i.e. the flicker can (together, perhaps, with certain other features) suffice for moral responsibility.”²⁸

Most importantly, this reply does not rely on the alternate sequence. Jones’ being “not F” is a component of the actual sequence of events. If the flicker is such that by Fischer’s own lights that there is a possible world in which this flicker could have obtained and Jones would have responded to it (and can do so with regularity) then the flicker seems to be sufficient for what Fischer terms “moderate reasons-responsiveness” (which I will discuss in detail later). This moderate reasons-responsiveness and the fact that the flicker is Jones’ own should be sufficient for Fischer to acknowledge it as robust enough to ground moral responsibility by his own account.

Having said all of this, it is not the first horn of the dilemma upon which I will focus most of my attention; it is Fischer’s reply to the second horn of the dilemma with which I will concern myself. He argues that Frankfurt need not be begging the question. Instead, according to Fischer, the set-up which removes the possibility of alternative paths for Mr. Jones also

²⁸ Michael Della Rocca. “Frankfurt, Fischer, and Flickers.” *Nous* 32, no.1, 1998. p. 102.

plays no relevant role in the choices or actions of Mr. Jones. It is also, then, irrelevant to his moral responsibility. According to Fischer the agent need not be able to both prevent and bring about the event. This ability is what Fischer terms “regulative control.” Fischer reasons as follows, “So the distinctive element added by the Frankfurt-type examples under the assumption of casual determinism, is this: if the relevant agent is not morally responsible, it is not because of his lack of regulative control.”²⁹ What Frankfurt’s counter-examples do then, according to Fischer, is demonstrate to us that regulative control is not necessary for moral responsibility.

What Fischer must prove is that regulative control is not necessary for moral responsibility, as regulative control is what the Consequence Argument denies us. First, I should clarify the distinction that Fischer makes between regulative control and guidance control. Regulative control is essentially total control of an event. One who has regulative control can prevent the event from occurring, as well as bring the event about. To have regulative control of an action is to have the ability to do otherwise. Guidance control is the control one has if one’s action results from one’s own reasons-responsive mechanism. The agent may not be able to prevent the event, but it is the result the agent’s own mechanism which can respond to reasons. Because this kind of control does not require alternate possibilities, Fischer argues, “Both mechanism-ownership and reasons-responsiveness are entirely compatible with causal determinism; thus, I contend that even if causal determination threatens regulative control, it is perfectly compatible with moral responsibility.”³⁰ As causal determinism does not prevent agents from having reasons responsive mechanisms, guidance

²⁹ John Martin Fischer. “Compatibilism,” *Four Views on Free Will*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007. p. 60.

³⁰ *Ibid* 60.

control is not threatened by causal determinism. So the question becomes, “Is all that is necessary for moral responsibility guidance control?”

Fischer argues that this separation of responsibility from regulative control is in essence what is demonstrated by the Frankfurtian examples and in examples like John Locke’s locked room argument. Locke describes a situation in which an agent freely chooses to stay inside a room which he does not know is locked; he cannot leave the room, but he does not know this, so when he chooses to stay in it, it is a kind of free action. In both Locke’s example and Frankfurt’s example the agents take actions which arise from their own will without interference (so the actions are their own) and those actions are ones which are the result of practical deliberation—and so it is reasons-responsive. What agent Jones is demonstrating in the Frankfurt’s example is that one can have guidance control without having regulative control. This guidance control, says Fischer, is what is necessary for moral responsibility. This is what Frankfurt’s examples tease apart for us; we can lack regulative control and yet still have guidance control, and, if Fischer is right, we then can be held morally culpable for our actions.

Ch. 8 Fischer and Two Initial Concerns

It seems that Fischer may be using a bit of philosophical sleight of hand. There are two ways in which what we are buying from Fischer and what we are being sold are not necessarily the same things. The first is that his argument, at least via his examples, seems to be one which actually addresses fatalism and not determinism. The second is that this argument may, in reality, be the old compatibilist standard that freedom to commit an action, as long as it does not involve coercion, only requires that one be free of restraint and that one

has the power to commit the act if one wants to commit the act. The first problem is not fatal to his argument, but I do believe that it misdirects the reader into having intuitions regarding responsibility and fatalism which he or she would not necessarily have in regards to causal determinism. The second problem may be more serious; Fischer may only be providing us with the same compatibilist argument in shiny new packaging—one which suffers from the same problems that Fischer claims to avoid.

Examples like Frankfurt's and Locke's, are not just cases in which agents cannot do otherwise, they are cases in which a particular event will occur—regardless of what the agent does. This is a kind of fatalism, which should not be confused with causal determinism. In determinism, an agent's actions bring about events, and they are therefore subject to counterfactual possibilities—if the agent did not act as he did, a different event would have taken place. The future may not be a garden of forking paths for the determinist, but it also has not been laid out in advance either. In Frankfurt's example, though, Jones will vote for A *no matter what he does*. The event will occur; it is, in essence, fated. What he is pointing out is that it is the causal role of Jones' reasons that matters in delegating moral responsibility. This is not necessarily true for Fischer.

As I stated previously, this need not be a problem for Fischer, but it does deceive the reader in the following way: cases of fatalism are cases in which an agent may or may not want a particular event to come about, and, yet the event comes to pass regardless. In these cases, the fact that the event comes about regardless of the agents' intentions seems to imply that the agent is free to intend to do otherwise. Those intentions need not also be fated—in some conceptions of fatalism the agent is still condemned to commit the act, but he or she can rail against fate. We, then, as observers, can blame the agent for his intentions or absolve him

for the action if he performed the act solely because he could not do otherwise. But, this is distinct and different from a case in which the agent cannot will, intend, or desire to do otherwise than he or she does and, yet, the future is not pre-written; whether or not a particular event comes to pass can be dependent on whether or not the agent acts in a particular way. Some of what moves us intuitively about Jones is the fatalistic nature of his predicament. Fischer paints a picture where we still feel that if Jones wanted to, he could rail against fate, due to Fischer's admission of flickers of freedom, despite the fact that it would change nothing.

Fischer's appeal to reasons-responsiveness acts as evidence to my claim. He describes Frankfurt's example as a case in which not only is the agent the initiator of the act, but he or she does so for reasons. In causal determinism it is not as if we have an agent who is trapped in a room, capable of willing otherwise and, yet, unable to leave. In this case, it seems that we can point the finger at him and say, "Ah well, despite the fact the he is fated to stay in the room, he both initiates the act of staying in the room and wants to stay in the room." It may be that Frankfurt and Fischer present us with fatalistic examples which bring about powerful intuitions in part because the agents willingly choose to do as they do. However, if they did not, they would be forced to commit the act but could, perhaps, rail against it—in essence it would be against their wills and they could display flickers which indicate that the act is against their wills. One can imagine raging against fate in ways that causal determinism does not usually bring to mind. In the case of causal determinism, that raging is the necessary consequent of the summation of previous factors, but that same raging, like every other event, impacts future events. In fatalism, rage all you want, you cannot change what will happen. Having said all of this, Frankfurt and Fischer are still presenting us with examples in which an

agent cannot act other than he does and many of us are still intuitively compelled to hold him responsible for his act because there is no intervention by any other factor forcing him to do as he does.

My second concern focuses on the possibility that Fischer may not really be presenting us with an argument that is sufficiently different from the older version of compatibilism. Consider the older version of compatibilism: the compatibilist asserts that deeper-robust appeals to freedom and responsibility are essentially nonsensical. The compatibilist tells us that if an agent commits an act, and does so willingly and willfully, there is nothing more necessary for responsibility. It does not matter whether or not the act and these willings are all things about which we cannot do otherwise. Moreover, to appeal to a deeper sense of freedom, one in which our willings are “our own,” makes no logical sense. We obviously are not prime movers, and to seek a kind of total control and freedom from causal chains for our wills is nonsense, says the compatibilist.

The compatibilist, of course, makes sure to make room for coercion as something for which we are not responsible because, say some compatibilists, we intuitively rebel against the idea of another agent forcing us to commit an act. In the case of determinism, there is no agent to rebel against, there is no other will than our own bringing about our actions. There are just causal chains which result in our wills and our actions, which, in every meaningful way, are our own. This account is rather similar to Fischer’s in the following way: there is an assertion that in order to be morally responsible, the act must be “our own,” and although the act must be our own, the reasons and intentions which result in the act only need be “our own” in a weak sense. We then, according to the older account, have enough meaningful freedom of will to be held morally responsible. All that is necessary for responsibility is that

we are the cause of the event and that our action is one which is the result of our reasons (it is one which results from our will), which may be the result of things outside of our control. Fischer also recognizes that our intentions arise from causes outside of our control and does not think that for them to be “our own” needs to mean anything more than that they are in us and are not the result of coercion of another agent. The older version asserts that we have “enough” freedom to be held accountable and he is arguing that we have “enough” control to be held accountable. These may be synonymous, if by “free,” Fischer means that our actions are our own and result from our will. The reason this criticism may be a significant one is simply because the older compatibilist account faces many challenges (largely presented by the Consequence Argument), and, therefore, so may Fischer’s.

Ch. 9 The Problem of Mr. Black

Nevertheless, Fischer’s arguments continue to demonstrate to us that an agent can have enough control over an event for us to blame him for the event, even in the face of the Consequence Argument. What Fischer may be doing, then, is not providing an argument substantially different from the older compatibilist argument, but, instead, presenting an argument which presents the older arguments for compatibilism from a new perspective which demonstrates to us that the consequence argument can be side-stepped. Assuming that this is all true, a concern comes to my mind that bothers me far more than the ones above. It is simply this: “What about Mr. Black?”

I will begin with a brief aside: it has been pointed out to me that Black may not have regulative control. It may be that he also only has guidance control. In other words, he may only be able to force Jones to vote for A but be unable to prevent Jones from not voting for A,

in this case, his control is severely limited. First, I see little reason to believe that this is the intention in the case as Frankfurt and Fischer paint it. If Black has mind control, or is a nefarious neurosurgeon who has the ability to force Jones to vote or the ability to implant a chip in his brain without Jones' knowledge, it seems unlikely that he can only trigger Jones in one way. Having said this, it is not an impossibility that he lacks the ability to prevent Jones from voting for B, but even if Black cannot prevent Jones from voting for A, he still has substantial control over Jones. For this reason, it is interesting that Jones may be more blameworthy when there is an agent who can and will force him to commit the act. Nevertheless, let us say that Black does have regulative control for the sake of my argument and can both force Jones to vote for A and force Jones to not vote for A.

Consider the following scenario: Jones votes for candidate A, and candidate A wins. Due to this fact, things go horribly wrong. Moreover, Jones' vote is a critical one. Jones' friends, upon finding out that he voted for A, are livid. Moreover, his crime is made far worse by the fact that had he not voted for A, their lives would be far better. So, they decide to string Mr. Jones up. They drag him outside, throw a noose over a tree limb, and place Jones on a horse and a noose around his neck. Now, to further complicate matters, imagine that Black, being an active observer of Jones' actions feels that it is his moral obligation to step in to defend Jones and try to save his life. He tells Jones' friends that he in fact had regulative control over Jones' action. He could have prevented the act from coming into being, *and he would have made sure that the event would take place regardless of Jones' will*. What does our mob do? Well, they may inquire whether Black interfered at all. Upon his reply that he did nothing, they decide to hang Jones anyway (after all, he did have guidance control). Now, what do we do with Mr. Black, do we hang him as well? Remember, Black *did nothing*. So,

for what can we blame him? It seems that Mr. Black may walk away from our mob not only unharmed, but truly innocent.

It seems reasonable to assert that choosing to continue to follow a particular course (in this case of not preventing an event) is still an action, if one has regulative control. Mr. Black, in essence, brought the event about. His action to bring that event about is an omission. Moreover, he intended that the event take place, it does take place, and it would not have taken place had he willed otherwise because he would have forced Jones to vote for whichever candidate Black supports. Now, this is significantly different from the man who believes he can make it rain and it just so happens that it does rain that day. In Black's case, he has so much control over the event that its occurrence really does depend on his letting it happen. Consider the following example. Mr. Black's child finds a fork and walks past Black towards an electrical wall outlet. He tells Black that he is about to place the fork into the outlet. Now it happens that the child is small and slow, so it is well within Black's power to stop the child without endangering either Black or the child, but Black does not because Black is sadistic and wishes the child to suffer. As a matter of fact Black has already decided to force the child to electrocute himself even if the child changes his mind last second. If Black does nothing to prevent the child's act, what excuse will he use to deny his responsibility?

Is it sufficient to say that the event was not the result of Black's action, and so Black is not responsible, despite both the fact that he really wants the event to come about and the fact that he will ensure that it will come about? I would hold Black completely responsible for the child's death, despite his lack of action, and it seems that so would Fischer. His choice not to act to prevent the event is the event for which I would hold him responsible, and that event is one which directly resulted in the child's death. In his discussion of omissions, Fischer argues

that the case of moral responsibility with regards to actions is symmetrical in regard to omissions. An agent is responsible for his omission if the omission is such that he has guidance control of that omission. As he both acted in a way which killed the child and intended that it take place, and, according to Fischer, he has guidance control of the omission, he is responsible. But this is also problematic; consider, again, the scenario of Black and Jones.

Keep in mind that for Fischer's argument to work, Frankfurt's case must be one in which there are no robust alternative possibilities for Jones. The problem deepens because Jones' intentions must also be determined, or at least relegated to being only "flickers of freedom." Otherwise, a critic could argue that Frankfurt and Fischer are not providing us with true counter-examples. Imagine Jones' reaction to the news that, not only was his action one over which Black had regulative control, but so were his (Jones') robust intentions. Now of course, our angry mob will quickly reply, "But Black never actually had to alter Jones' intentions!" Jones could respond that this does not necessarily negate Black's responsibility for them. Black could have made Jones' intentions otherwise, but he chose not to, and in doing so took on a level of responsibility for those intentions. It may well be that Fischer is relegating us to conclude that when one does not have guidance control, one is not responsible. Similarly, because the event is his own, it seems that Jones could make a powerful point in arguing for his lack of culpability by noting that his own intentions are not things for which he is the uncaused cause, which is a significant problem for Jones being responsible for the event "Jones is responsible for the event 'Jones intends to vote for A.'" These willings are the result of luck, his upbringing, genetics, natural laws, and so forth. Now, normally, he might argue, he would agree that he is responsible for them because, after all, he

can change those intentions, or at least try to change them, but in this case he can do neither. We are therefore blaming him for his intentions which are not initially caused by him, and are things he cannot change.

I am not arguing that in order to be held responsible, Jones must be the uncaused cause of his own intentions. Instead, I am arguing that as he is not the uncaused cause of his intentions. His intentions are such that he cannot make them other than they are, thus he would have good reason to argue that he is not responsible—or at least not as responsible as Mr. Black. Mr. Black has ability to make Jones intend otherwise, but Jones does not. If I am right, Black, then, is *also* responsible for the event Jones voted for A. We have an agent, Black, who intended and actually acted to bring about an event and we have another agent, Jones, who only had guidance control over the event; are they both responsible? If they are not, how do we mediate who is more responsible, as it does seem that the one with more control should be more responsible? But, this does not seem to be a quantifiable matter. One answer does come to mind, which is the following: Black and Jones are actually responsible for different events, and, therefore, should be held morally responsible for different events. Specifically, Black is responsible for the event “Jones votes for A” and Jones is responsible for the event “Jones intends to vote for A”. It seems that Fischer might seem sympathetic to this argument, as he states,

On this account, there may be two steps: a certain kind of mechanism issues in the bodily movement and then a process take place that connects the bodily movement to some event in the external world. In order for the sequence (involving both steps) to be appropriately responsive to reason, the mechanism leading to the bodily movement must be moderately reasons-responsive, and the process leading to the event in the external world must be sensitive to the bodily movement.³¹

³¹ John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Law. Cambridge University Press, 1999. p. 132.

So there are cases in which an agent, according to Fischer, is responsible for the omission, but not responsible for the event which seems to result from the omission. For example, an agent may believe that she can make it rain (and be mistaken in that belief) but choose not to try to make it rain. She would be responsible for the omission on Fischer's account—the choice to not try to make it rain—but not for the fact that it does not rain, because that event is not actually sensitive to her omission, despite her belief to the contrary.

The case of Jones and Black, though, does not meet this criterion. According to Fischer, Jones' action is something over which he has guidance control, and so he is responsible, but it also seems that Black's omission—his choice not to interfere and to allow Jones to vote as he does—is also something over which Black has guidance control. Moreover, Black has control over both Jones' intentional states and his action, thus Black is also responsible for Jones' action. When considering the case of Black and Jones, one may be inclined to dismiss the fact that they are both responsible, as it simply seems to be a case of two agents both being responsible for the same event—in the same way that two burglars may work together and so be responsible for the same burglary.

What is interesting about the case of Jones and Black, though, is not that they are both responsible for the voting of candidate A but that they are both responsible for the event “Jones votes for candidate A.” Specifically, both Jones and Black are responsible for Jones' own action and for his intention. This does seem odd, but that need not be a problem. Fischer may simply be pointing us to something that we were unaware of before: that two agents can both be responsible for one agent's action. Keep in mind that they are not just both responsible for the actual event as it comes about, but in this particular case, they are both responsible for the actual intentional states and action of the agent. Nevertheless, as Black can

actually change Jones' intentions and Jones cannot, it at least seems that there should be a difference between the two. The case seems incredibly close to one of coercion. Granted, Jones commits the act unimpeded, and so this is not just a simple case of Black taking control of Jones and Jones enjoying the ride.

Nevertheless, Black, by Fischer's own account, does have guidance control as well as regulative control of Jones. My intuitions though are such that Jones should not be responsible if another agent has control of his actions and intentions. These intentions are meaningless, though, unless I can give a reason. The reason which I will provide for the difference between Black and Jones, which will dictate that Black is responsible and absolves Jones, is that Jones' actions and intentions are not reasons-responsive, as Fischer contends. Simply, in regards to them, Jones does not have a reasons-responsive mechanism. In order to defend this position, I must first explain Fischer's account of reasons-responsiveness.

Ch. 10 Fischer's and Ravizza's Account of Reasons-Responsiveness

In their book, *Responsibility and Control*, Fischer and Mark Ravizza present a highly detailed account of moral-responsibility. They argue that Frankfurt's counter-examples point us towards what actually matters in moral responsibility—the actual sequence of events. Events which could have, but did not, play a role in the agents' deliberation regarding the act are intuitively such that they should not play a role in our judgment about the moral responsibility of the agent. What actually matters is if the agents' action is "his own," and if that action is appropriately reasons-responsive. To be his own, largely, only requires that it results from the agent's personal non-coerced reasons-responsive mechanism—and so it is on this reasons-responsiveness that much focus is directed.

To be reasons-responsive in a strong sense, says Fischer, requires that the agent would 1) recognize the sufficient reason to do otherwise, 2) intend to do otherwise in response to that reason, and 3) be able to actuate that intention. In this way, agents cannot be said to be strongly reasons-responsive if they do not know about them, if they are epistemologically unapproachable, or if their intention to act on the reason is blocked by some intervention, or if their attempt to actuate that intention is blocked by some intervention. But what Frankfurt shows us, says Fischer, is that this strong reasons-responsiveness is too strong and so it is more than is needed for an agent to be held responsible. What is actually important is not all of those factors, but instead that there is a possible world such that the agent could and would do otherwise provided with sufficient reason.

He terms this criterion of there being at least one possible world in which an agent can respond to reasons “weak reasons-responsiveness.” Fischer argues that this is too weak because it allows for agents to respond to a reason which may be completely illogical and such that we cannot understand why the agent would respond to that reason, but not to another almost exact reason—which may mean that the agent himself is irrational. Fischer argues that what is necessary for moral responsibility is “moderate reasons-responsiveness,” which requires weak reasons-responsiveness plus that the agent shows regularity in recognizing reasons and that the agent, when he does otherwise, does so because of the reason. Adding these two new components enables Fischer to hold an agent accountable who has the mental capacity to recognize good reasons regularly and is only accountable if there is an appropriate connection between his reasons and actions (he acts because of his reasons).

This rejection of strong reasons-responsiveness as necessary for moral responsibility is motivated by Frankfurt’s counter-examples. Due to the fact that our intuitions tell us that

Jones is still responsible for his action, strong reasons-responsiveness cannot be necessary for moral responsibility (if our intuitions are correct) because Jones does not have the ability to have alternate intentions or act on those alternate intentions even given a good reason to do so. It does seem, though, that Jones would show regularity in ability to recognize reasons and the ability to connect his reasons to his actions in the actual sequence of events; there are also possible worlds in which Jones responds to reasons to vote for other than candidate A and, so, he meets the criterion of “moderate reasons-responsiveness.” It is important to realize that Fischer argues that there is a possible world in which Jones responds to reasons to do otherwise from the standpoint of the actual-sequence of events. It seems, that, at least *prima facie*, Fischer can argue that because Jones’ action results from his own reasons, that if there were sufficient other reasons, then he would not be motivated to act as he does due to his own reasons, and due to Black’s control he would be motivated to act due to Black’s’ reasons. In this way, there is a possible world in which Jones responds to reasons to do otherwise.

This seems to leave Fischer as having to deal with the horns of a dilemma, though. If we are able to blame Jones because of the kinds reasons-responsiveness demonstrated by Jones in the Frankfurtian counter-examples, it seems that we can ground moral responsibility in a flicker of freedom. Fischer might be committed to this because by his account it is Jones’ ability to respond differently to sufficient reason which seems to identify him as a moral agent. Although Jones cannot actually act otherwise, Fischer argues that he has weak reasons-responsiveness because there is a possible world in which Jones responds to reasons to do otherwise. He states,

(WRR): As with strong reasons-responsiveness, we hold fixed the operation of the actual kind of mechanism, and we then simply require that there exist *some* possible scenario (or possible world) – with the same laws as the actual world – in which there

is a sufficient reason to do otherwise, the agent recognizes this reason, and the agent does otherwise.³²

It does not seem that the Jones case is clearly one in which the agent is responsible only due to the fact that he acts as he does so unimpeded; he is responsible also because he has a kind of power—he has the ability to respond to a reason and *not act differently than he does* but, indulge a flicker of freedom which for one instant indicated that he wills to do otherwise, forcing Black to act. It seems then that the incompatibilist can argue that it is this flicker of freedom—as in Della Roca’s account—enables Jones to be treated as an object of praise and blame, without it he could not be rationally treated as such. This of course begs the question (as Della Roca points out). What Fischer is failing to do, though, is provide us with an account which definitively proves that these flickers of freedom—and hence the ability to do otherwise, even in the smallest of ways—do not exist in the Frankfurtian counter-examples, and so they may be sufficient for grounding moral responsibility.

Nevertheless, recall that Fischer does state that we do not have definitive proof that it is, in principle, impossible to construct a counter-example which removes all flickers of freedom and the agent is still held morally responsible. For the sake of argument, let us consider the Jones case one in which all flickers of freedom have been made impossible and, moreover, due to the nature of the actual-sequence of events, we are inclined to hold Jones responsible. Despite the fact that this world is a world which seems to assume a kind of causal determinism for Jones, we still must address our intuition that he is responsible. This world, though, leaves Fischer on the second horn of the dilemma which is that Jones cannot even meet the criterion for weak-reasons responsiveness in this case; his reasons are such that they result from other reasons in the actual sequence, but they do not seem to be reasons

³² Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Law. Cambridge University Press, 1999. p. 63.

responsive. So, then, the dilemma is this: either Fischer allows for flickers of freedom in regard to Jones' ability to respond to reasons, in which case the incompatibilist may argue that these flickers act as a kind of alternative possibility and so we have not definitively proven that 1) alternative possibilities are not necessary for moral responsibility and 2) that flickers of freedom are not robust enough to ground moral responsibility. Quite the contrary, it seems that Fischer's example demonstrates the exact opposite: the flicker in the Jones case seems to be what ground his reasons-responsiveness and hence his moral responsibility, or Fischer argues that the Jones case removes all possible flickers of freedom, in which case it seems that Jones' actions do result from reasons but are not responsive to them.

Fischer's response to this, though, is simple. By his account, Jones need not be able to respond to reasons in the actual world. There only need be some possible world in which Jones can respond to a reason to do otherwise, and, so, Fischer would respond to the above criticism by arguing that even if Jones has no flickers of freedom in the actual world, as long as there is a possible world in which his mechanism can respond to reasons, then he can be held morally responsible. The question then becomes, "Is this kind of reasons-responsiveness sufficient for the grounding of moral responsibility?" Note that for Fischer, flickers of freedom are not robust enough to ground moral responsibility, but, interestingly, the potentiality of an agent to respond to a reason in even a distant possible world is sufficient to ground ascriptions of moral responsibility. In the following chapter I will argue that this particular notion of reasons-responsiveness leaves open for moral consideration possible worlds which are not sufficiently morally relevant to Jones' action, and, yet, by Fischer's account, supposedly make Jones a proper object of praise and blame.

Ch. 11 Reasons-Responsiveness and Reasons-Resultance

Fischer tells us that in order for an agent to have guidance-control “he must act from his own reasons-responsive mechanism.”³³ This means, in essence, that the action is one which is the result of reasons and practical deliberation by the agent. On Fischer’s and Ravizza’s account, agents are not just responsible when they are reasons-responsive; an agent can only be responsible for a particular act if he or she is acting from his or her own reasons-responsive mechanism. Making this distinction eliminates the possibility of blaming the agent for actions which belong to the agent, but which are not the result of his own reasons (such as epileptic fits or mind-control). The agents in Frankfurtian counter-examples have guidance control because, as long as Mr. Black does not intervene—in part because the actual sequence of events follows Jones’ reasons, and because it is such that there is a possible world in which Jones does respond to a sufficient reason to do otherwise—his act is reasons-responsive. I will provide an argument that Jones is not responsible for his action because Jones’ action does not result from a reasons-responsive mechanism in the actual world.

I state this because it seems rather clear that, despite Fischer’s argument to the contrary, Jones does not meet the criterion for weak reasons-responsiveness if what we are talking about is the actual world as described in the Frankfurt/Fischer case. In the actual world, if the case is such that there is no reason with which Jones could be presented which results in his not voting for A due to the fact that Black will force him to do so. Granted, there are possible worlds in which Black keels over from a heart attack and, therefore, cannot force Jones to vote for candidate A, but I take Fischer’s point to be most relevant when the question of possible worlds is directly connected to reasons and to the actual world. Moreover, this is

³³ Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Law. Cambridge University Press, 1999. p. 81.

not unfair to Fischer, as he repeatedly asserts that it is the actual sequence of events with which we should be concerned when dealing with moral responsibility.

My concern regarding Fischer's possible worlds account is that, although he does require that the natural laws be the same, he says little about Jones' counter-part in the possible world in which Jones can respond to reasons. For example, it seems that agents who are brainwashed must be held morally accountable on Fischer's account. Although they may be brainwashed in the actual world, and thereby lack the ability to consider reasons, they are acting from a reasons-responsive mechanism because there is a possible world in which they were not brainwashed and so can respond to reason. My intuition may simply differ from Fischer's account, but given the additional problem of Mr. Black—the fact that both Black and Jones are responsible for Jones' actions and intentions—it seems that the possible world scenario may simply allow agents to be held responsible too easily. Even given Fischer's moderate reasons-responsiveness approach in which an agent must be able to recognize reasons with regularity, the problem of brainwashing and Mr. Black remain due to the fact that there need be no highly illogical nature to the way in which the coerced agents' actions result from their reasons.

Fischer may argue that problems of brainwashing need not be problems for him; in this case the action does not stem from a mechanism which is the agent's own. Given his criterion, I see little reason to concede this point. If an agent has been effectively brainwashed over a long period of time, and truly believes that his intentional states are his own, I do not think that Fischer can provide an account of ownership that would not necessarily require that an agent be an uncaused cause of his own intentional states. We are all regularly convinced by other agents to change what we want, desire, and think. There must be some reason why

brainwashing is a case in which an agent is morally absolved other than just ownership. Moreover, if, in the case of brainwashing, an agent actually has the ability to deliberate practically and can respond to good reasons to do otherwise, I see no reason why a brainwashed agent should not be held accountable for what he does. Instead, it is my argument that it is only in the cases in which the brainwashing results in the agent's being unable to consider other reasons and effectively indulge in practical deliberation that he or she should be absolved. In contrast, by Fischer's account, that same agent must be held responsible because he or she acts from a mechanism which is moderately reasons-responsive; granted, it has been deeply influenced by other agents, but not to the extent that it no longer belongs to the brainwashed agent.

It seems, then, that the question, "Is there a possible world in which the agent responds to a relevant reason?" may allow too many cases which are intuitively problematic. In order to narrow the scope of the question and to locate the qualities of the agent which are both actual and relevant to his responsibility, we should consider whether or not the agent's mechanism was actually able to respond to reasons. The question regarding possible reasons-responsiveness is most relevant when it is stated as "Is there a possible reason that if presented to Jones, he would do otherwise than he does in the actual world?" Or even, "Is there a possible reason such that if presented to Jones he would have wanted to do other than he does in the actual world?" What we realize is that given Black's control over whether or not Jones can want and do otherwise makes the answer to both of the questions "no."

Although there may be a possible world in which Black keels over, or something akin to this, what actually should matter in regards to the actual sequence of events is Jones' ability to respond to reasons, not his potential ability. Given a world in which Black can control

Jones' intentions, wants, desires, etc., there is no reason which could actually dissuade Jones from doing as he does. So I contend that his mechanism is not reasons-responsive in a world in which Mr. Black can and will ensure that Jones will act in a particular way. In order for an agent's action to be at least weakly reasons-responsive, it should result from a mechanism for which there is a possible reason to which he could respond in the actual world.

Given the description of Jones' case, his actions are only reasons-resultant. By "reasons-resultant," I mean that the event is the direct result of reasons on the part of the agent, which, similar to reasons-responsiveness, eliminates epileptic fits and mind control as cases of control on the part of the agent. The phrase reasons-responsiveness should, instead, be used to describe only those mechanisms which *actually can respond to reasons*. In the actual world, his actions result from reasons, but this does not necessitate that the world is such that his mechanism can respond to reasons. An agent's mechanism is reasons-resultant if the mechanism is such that the agents' actions result from reasons which are the psychological cause of the action, but that does not mean that the same mechanism is also reasons-responsive. It may produce actions which are the result of reasons, but that same mechanism may not be able to respond to different reasons, it is not responsive to practical deliberation.

Fischer may likely to object that what actually matters is the actual-sequence and that the actual mechanism is reasons-responsive. My reply is that Jones' mechanism does indeed result from particular reasons, but it does not meet the criterion, "There is a possible reason to which Jones can respond in a world in which Black can control Jones and wants him to vote for A. The actual sequence results from reasons, but it is not even weakly responsive to

reasons, as it is so deeply restricted. In this way, I argue that Jones' mechanism is only "reasons-resultant."

This distinction is important because concepts like fatalism remove reasons-responsiveness as possible for agents in regards to the fated events. Reasons-responsiveness is irrelevant to the outcome. As I have pointed out, it seems that the Frankfurtian cases are ones which are fatalistic. Jones' actions may be reasons-resultant, but not reasons-responsive. Moreover, it may well be that while reasons-responsiveness and ownership is sufficient for moral responsibility, reasons-resultance and ownership may not be. Consider the following scenario: an agent—let's call him George—has reasons for an action he is about to commit. In this scenario, though, let us also imagine that once he has made the decision to commit the act, he is no longer able to change his mind, despite any reasons which may come his way. So, his decision to act is reasons-responsive but his execution of that action is not. Reasons from other agents cannot have an impact on his decision, nor can reasons of his own. The reasons-resultant nature of his act is insufficient for moral responsibility in George's case according to Fischer. George, in this case, is essentially a prisoner in his own mind—he is in effect a moral zombie. Despite the fact that there may be a possible world in which George is not restricted in this way, that particular possible world does not seem relevant to George's moral responsibility. We would likely argue that although his action is the result of reasons of his own, his inability to respond to even the most extreme reasons (say the act is one which result in his own harm, death, or in the harm or death of a loved one) makes him an inappropriate object of moral blame. This is not to say that possible worlds or counterfactuals are innately irrelevant to problems of moral responsibility, only that in the case of determining

if an agent has a reasons-responsive mechanism, what actually matters in regards to moral responsibility is if the agent has the ability to even consider reasons.

Certainly, George would meet the exemption requirements described by Strawson. This example becomes extremely forceful when one considers the possibility that these new reasons, to which he cannot respond, face him with consequences which he does not want. George, in essence, is an extreme compulsive, and it seems that despite the reasons-resultant nature of his action, his lack of reasons-responsiveness makes him an inappropriate object of moral responsibility. In other words, if an agent's practical deliberation cannot effect whether or not the event will take place, we are disinclined to view the agent as having sufficient control for moral responsibility. Note, that in this case I am not describing an agent who is just stubborn and unwilling to change his decision. Instead, I am describing an agent who, for whatever reason, cannot change his decision. In Frankfurt's examples, the agent's action, intentions, and reasons are not reasons-responsive. They are only reasons-resultant. The fact that an agent's actions are ones which result from his or her reasons may not necessitate that the agent is morally responsible for them, as in the case of George the compulsive.

It may be that some may completely disagree with my intuition. One may see George as completely blameworthy and may be rather confused by my assertion that George may not be responsible. To this my reply is in the form of a question: "What then is the difference between an agent whose actions are only reasons-resultant and an agent whose actions are also reasons-responsive?" This question is an important one for the delegation of moral responsibility. Consider that the difference between the two, if there is any, is described as the difference between an agent who is about to commit an act and one who has already committed the act.

This presents a potential problem for my account, though. A past action may be reasons-resultant but it is no longer reasons-responsive; the action is the result of reasons, but, as it is in the past, cannot be responsive to reasons. For example, my action of typing right now is one which is not only reasons-resultant, but also reasons-responsive. My continuing to type not only results from my reasons but also is responsive to my reasons: the event is one which would respond to reasons like “I should stop typing because I need a break.”

Looking at it from this perspective, though, provides the exact opposite intuition than I find in the case of “George the Moral Zombie.” It seems that an agent who is about to commit an act and who can consider reasons for and against the action is considered by us to be *less* responsible than an agent who has already committed the act. This is largely because blaming an agent for an action which has not yet come into existence seems rather unreasonable. The difference here cannot be just because of the reasons-responsiveness or resultance. It makes no sense to think of reasons-responsiveness to be a feature which makes an agent *less* responsible than those which are reasons-resultant. Then again, the only events which are truly reasons-responsive are ones which have not yet occurred.

It seems that my mistake here is comparing events which may take place and events which have already taken place, which presents problems particular to the past and future. Instead, let’s consider both as past. Events can be past and be considered reason-responsive when considered from that moment in the actual timeline. The agent, at that past time, had the ability to respond to other reasons. So my account does not make use of the same modal semantics as Fischer’s because I am not discussing the potential of the agent to respond to reasons. Although I am dealing in counter-factuals, determining whether or not there is a possible world such that he could have responded to sufficient reasons, but instead,

determining whether or not, at that time, he had the actual ability to respond to different reasons. In Frankfurt's examples, Jones' action is still not even counter-factually reasons-responsive. Moreover, it seems that he lacks a reasons-responsive mechanism in all relevantly similar possible worlds. No matter what reasons with which he is presented, no matter his deliberation, and no matter his own reasons, the event will take place. The event is only reasons-resultant as it does result from his own reasons. On the other hand, the event of my taking a break from typing (in the past) is both reasons-resultant and reasons-responsive when considering counter-factuals. We can imagine that had different reasons come to mind I could have chosen to not take the break. When considered this way, we can see a significant difference in these two cases: one is a case of an agent who could not do otherwise regardless of his reasons and yet his action does result from his reasons, and the other is a case of an action that both results from my reasons and is responsive to my practical deliberation.

So what then of George's case? When we consider his action as one in the past, do we hold him responsible? George acts because of particular reasons, but also, his action could not be affected by other reasons, no matter how significant. Once again, it seems that George is a compulsive, and depending on the degree of compulsion, he may or may not be responsible. At least, though, in George's case, the event was not necessitated. The fact the action was only reasons-resultant is significant, because had George been able to consider other reasons, it was possible that he would not have brought the event into existence. Jones, though, has even less control: not only could other reasons not have dissuaded him from his act, but all avenues which may have resulted in any flicker of freedom have been blocked off for him in the actual world—including intentions, desires, motivations, willings etc. Moreover, the act was one which would come to pass no matter what, unlike George's act which can or cannot

come into being. When we blame Jones, we blame an agent who could not have prevented the event, could not have been dissuaded even by the most significant of reasons, and could not even intend otherwise.

Given the nature of this example, it seems that we would have to blame George and Jones similarly. Consider that we would also be required to, for the sake of consistency, continue to blame agents for their actions in a world in which there is a God who has decreed that all events will take place as she wills, made it impossible for us to even consider doing other than she wills, and decreed that we cannot intend otherwise than she wills. Obviously, the God example will fail if God also places all events into motion because one could argue that our intentions and actions are not our own—they are only an extension of God's will. These events had been placed into motion with God's intention of bringing the event into place, and not our own. Even Dennett and Fischer are unwilling to blame us in a situation if our behaviors are the result of someone else's intentions. Consider, instead, that the possibility that this god did not actually set the events into place. She walks into an already unfolding universe and notes that she wants it to unfold in particular ways. She wants to minimize her own impact, so when she doesn't have to act, she lets it unfold as she wills without interference. All of a sudden, we are able to place blame, as long as God doesn't interfere. But, what if God involves herself with all of the minutia? In that case, every thought and intention is one which God's will can change in order bring about her will.

What, then, is the difference between an agent with whom God does interfere and the agent with whom God does not have to interfere? It seems that Fischer's concept supports the idea that one of them has guidance control and the other does not. I suggest that this is an insufficient distinction: the situation is more clearly described as the first agent's actions are

reasons-resultant and the second agent's are not. The problem is that to assert that the agent whose actions are reasons-resultant has any meaningful control in a world which is fatalistic to this extreme degree is deeply counter-intuitive. Perhaps some of the agent's acts are such that they are the result of unimpeded practical deliberation, but the agents in this world are unable to actually change even the weakest intention. This agent would be, for all intent and purposes be existing in individual non-reasons-responsive spheres—there is no possible world in which an agent could even consider a different act, no matter how persuasive the reason. This does not mean that he or she cannot be an object of praise or blame, but, instead, that Fischer's argument that this kind of reasons-resultance counts as a significant kind of control is mistaken.

The wonderfully ironic result of my analysis is that although Frankfurt's examples may be examples in which the agent only has a mechanism which can produce reasons-resultant actions and, therefore, may not be morally accountable, this does not necessitate the same result for a causally deterministic world. Although there is good reason to believe that Jones lacks so much control as to not be responsible in Frankfurt's and Fischer's worlds, the world of causal-determinism lacks the fatalistic nature of the Frankfurtian scenario and the one I generated concerning God. Simply, as I pointed out earlier, causal determinism is distinct and different from fatalism. In a causally determined world our actions *are reasons-responsive*. They are not just reasons-resultant because, in most circumstances, we can practically deliberate on reasons and respond to them. So it may well be that we have more control in a causally-determined world than Jones does in Frankfurt's counter-example.

From this distinction between reasons-resultance and reasons-responsiveness, it seems that I can make another claim regarding responsibility: an agent should only be held morally

responsible for those actions of his which result from his reasons-responsive mechanism and that mechanism is responsive to reasons in the actual world. Actions which are only reasons-resultant are ones for which an agent lacks the sufficient control necessary to be an object of praise or blame. In other words, he or she may still be subject to coercive forces such a mental illness or a fatalistic scenario which is so deeply fatalistic that even his or her own basic thoughts and feelings are fated. Even in a situation in which those thoughts and feelings are his or her own, they lack the responsiveness to reasons which make an agent a proper object of praise and blame.

Ch. 12 The Consequence Argument and Other Considerations

Van Inwagen's Consequence Argument does present a significant problem for the attribution of moral responsibility in a causally determined universe by my account in the following way: events (and actions) which are past are, by definition, are no longer brought about through a reasons-responsive mechanism. They were reasons-responsive at one time, but this is no longer the case. And, so, I may be committed to accepting that agents can only be held responsible for acts as they commit them—while they remain reasons-responsive. I do not think this need be a fatal criticism for two reasons: 1) my account may act as evidence to support the fairly common intuition that agents are not as much to blame for events that are past—otherwise we would not make excuses like “what is past is past.” Perhaps our desire for punitive measures gets in the way of rational allocation of moral responsibility. Moreover, punitive attribution of moral responsibility in a social sense seems to be directed towards prevention, and, therefore, does not necessarily map cleanly onto the discussion of moral responsibility in a strictly philosophical sense, and 2) the compatibilist retains the ability to

allocate praise and blame in regards to events as we commit them, while they remain reasons-responsive. The proponent of the Consequence Argument may reject this and argue that even in the present our actions are not truly reasons-responsive because our actions are such that they cannot be otherwise, and, therefore, any counter-factual imaginings are nonsense. In response, I contend that he or she is not just committing himself to causal determinism, but also to fatalism in regards to our actions because they are such that they will be as they will be, regardless of reasons.

One may also attempt to defend my argument by pointing out that there is a deep distinction between the metaphysical and epistemological in regards to moral responsibility. We may, in actuality, be only concerned with what it is that agents believe is the case, rather than what actually is the case, as we may never be able to obtain the point of view necessary to determine if causal determinism is true and, moreover, whether that results in a kind of fatalism in regards to our actions. As long as agents believe their actions are reasons-responsive, they can be held responsible when we ignore the metaphysical perspective and consider only what the agent can know. Interestingly, this results in Jones once again becoming morally blameworthy, as he believes that his actions are reasons-responsive, despite the fact that they are not. Intuitively, though, I dislike this picture and prefer one in which moral responsibility is not so deeply subjective. Otherwise, some agents may be held responsible while others are absolved in cases in which the only difference is whether or not they believe in fatalism, for example.

Nevertheless, the Consequence Argument presents a legitimate problem for my account and any account which holds agents responsible for the actual sequence of events while acknowledging that the world is such that it was not possible, given the factors leading

up to the actual sequence, that the sequence progress otherwise. Simply, it is nonsensical to blame or praise an agent for not committing an event which he could not commit. Even Fischer would not blame the agent for an event which his bodily action or inaction could not effect. This axiom seems to be imbedded in our idea that what is possible and impossible is important in moral responsibility, and it is likely an important aspect the “ought implies can” principle presented by Kant. So given this, and given the possibility that accounts like mine allow moral responsibility to be assigned in a causally determined universe, we end up with a somewhat asymmetric result if we agree that blaming agents for not doing things they could not do is unreasonable because we can praise and blame agents only for their actual sequence action in causal determinism and, therefore, we also cannot rationally state that they should have done otherwise in anything more than a wishful-teleological sense. The state of our moral ascriptions would be such that we could tell an agent that he is bad for doing a thing due to his reason-responsiveness, but we also cannot rationally state that he should not have done that thing. Given the nature of a causally determined universe, an agent's actions affect the outcome of future events (unlike a fatalistic universe) but each action, nevertheless, is the necessary consequence of the summation of the events preceding it. The agent who commits a bad act, then, is one who can be blamed due to the reasons-responsive nature of his act, and, yet, we cannot rationally tell him that he should not have done it in anything other than in a wishful sense.

Fischer's program is, thus, one which leaves us with two problems: as agents are responsible for omissions on his account, both Black and Jones are responsible for Jones' actions and intentions. What we come to realize is that, especially in the case of Black and Jones, an agent can have a kind of guidance control but lack a reasons-responsive mechanism;

the agent's action may instead be only such that it is produced by a reasons-resultant mechanism. Mr. Black, then, has far more control than does Jones due to the fact that his reasons are responsive and he can both act to bring about the event and prevent its occurrence. Jones should not be held morally responsible because his lack of reasons-responsiveness leaves him exempt from the moral community: he lacks the ability to produce an action which is the result of reasons which is sensitive to any other reasons. There is no reason such that Jones' decision to act will be impacted or changed, no matter how powerful, due to Black's interference in the actual world.

The realization is that Fischer's concept of ownership should be robust enough to recognize that a lack of a reasons-responsive mechanism on the part of an agent denies the agent full ownership of his actions as he can act against his own interests and even his will. This kind of compulsion is something for which we have sympathy, and as it is a kind of compulsion, Fischer should recognize that Jones is compelled to do as he does not only because the actual sequence necessitated that he do so, but, also, that he is compelled by Black because Black removes from Jones his reasons-responsive mechanism in this instance. Moreover, agents in a causally determined world may not be compelled in this way; they may maintain reasons-responsive mechanisms and it is this mechanism which is necessary for moral responsibility.

However, this mechanism may be insufficient, as it does not enable us to present agents in that universe with deontological shoulds. We are regulated to, if we wish to be rational, only presenting teleological shoulds. For an agent to be morally responsible for an event, it is likely that he needs more than just reasons-responsiveness; it is likely that we should be able to rationally tell him, "You should have done otherwise," and actually mean

that he actually should have done otherwise. Conversely, this need not mean that we cannot state that he should have done otherwise in a teleological sense due to his reasons-responsive mechanism. We should also then realize, when doling out praise and blame, that to treat the agent as a prime mover, who actually was physically capable of committing a different act given all of the same preceding events is irrational; instead, we should treat the agent as part mover and part moved, both a victim and one who willingly brings about events. For this reason, though it may be that we are morally responsible, it seems that we should not blame ourselves too much or praise ourselves too much either.

In the end, the Frankfurt/Fischer model fails in two important ways when the model includes causal determinism or fully restricts Jones. First, the power of Frankfurt's model is in demonstrating that we care more about why the agent acts than PAP would lead us to believe. Frankfurt, very powerfully, points out that an agent's intentional states can make the agent blameworthy, even when the agent is fated to commit the act. However, when the model is one that assumes causal determinism, or restricts Jones fully, Jones is no longer a fit member of the moral community. In other words, what Fischer misses is that it is important to us that an agent deliberates using a mechanism which actually has the capacity to deliberate fully. Fischer attempts to distract us from this intuition by arguing that the agent in question still has a reason-responsive mechanism, but upon examination of his account, what we realize is that in the Jones-Black case Jones is only potentially reasons-responsive. Whilst it may be true that there is a possible world in which he can respond to sufficient reason, this is not an ability he has in the actual world. If we blame Jones, then, we are in effect blaming a moral zombie and then asserting that it is still rational to do so because he is potentially not a moral zombie. Simply, the possible world in which Jones is actually reasons-responsive, as opposed

to just reasons-resultant is not near enough to assert that his is morally responsive in both. More importantly, by both Frankfurt's and Fischer's own reasoning, what we are most concerned about is not the counter-factual, but, instead, the actual sequence. In the actual world, Jones is a moral zombie—his mechanism for practical reasoning cannot be swayed by any reason, no matter how powerful.

There is a difference for blaming an agent for committing an act and blaming an agent as if he could have done otherwise. The first is the kind of moral responsibility that they may be entitled to use—they can point at agents and say, “Well you committed that act, and it was the direct result of your intentional states (regardless of restrictions), and so shame on you for what you have done. You have not brought about the world as we wish it to be.” Even if they are correct, and this is reasonable (ignoring my concerns about zombie-ness), what Frankfurt and Fischer seem to be trying to smuggle in—but should not—is the ability to also say to that agent, “You really should have done other than you have done.” When confronted with the Consequence Argument, statements using this kind of language are not rational. Moreover, moral language which presupposed this kind of imperative should be avoided, as it makes an irrational claim—that an agent should have done the impossible. It may well be that in the actual world Jones' actions are reasons-resultant, but if there is no reason which can dissuade Jones from doing as he does, not only is he essentially a moral zombie, but if those actions are also necessitated, our ability to use “shoulds” to indicate what he actually should have done is greatly restricted. In this way, Jones may not be a proper object of moral ascriptions at all. Having said this, as causal determinism need not necessitate fatalism and eliminate robust reasons-responsiveness, it is not certain that agents in a causally determined universe cannot be held accountable, at least to some degree.

What I have done in this work is consider the soundness of Frankfurt's argument that PAP is false and the implications of this for holding agents responsible in a causally determined universe. It does seem that Frankfurt is presented with a serious problem when we consider whether his case of Jones and Black restricts Jones' intentions. If Jones' intentional states are restricted, it may well be that Frankfurt begs the question as Goetz contends. Nevertheless, Frankfurt does seem to be pointing clearly to the fact that many of us to continue to hold Jones' responsible despite Jones' lack of alternative possibilities.

What Fischer's work does is present us with the possibility that the reason why we continue to hold Jones responsible, is because of the kind of control that Jones seems to maintain. He contends that because Jones has guidance control of his actions, Jones is morally responsible. My contention has been that Jones does not have sufficient control to be held responsible because, despite Fischer claim to the contrary, Jones does not actually have a reasons-responsive mechanism and, so, Jones also does not guidance control. Instead, it seems that Jones' actions are only reasons-resultant as he cannot actually respond to reasons—even in relevantly similar possible worlds.

Finally, what we come to realize is, despite this problem, the Consequence Argument does not necessarily restrict an agent in the same way that Jones is restricted in the Frankfurtian counter-examples. It can be reasonably argued that agents in a causally determined universe retain reasons-responsive mechanisms and so their actions are not only reasons-result—unlike Jones' actions. This does not negate the problems presented by the Consequent Argument, though. Causal determinism does prevent us from being able to state rationally that an agent should do otherwise than he did, as doing otherwise was impossible.

Therefore, although we may hold the agent morally responsible, we cannot rationally state he should not have done as he did.

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