



***MUST* INDETERMINATE RATIONAL ACTIONS BE RANDOM?**

Abstract

One powerful objection to libertarian accounts of free will is that, if actions involve any element of indeterminism, those actions are random. Such actions are thought to be random because the only factors that can aid in explanation are reasons, and reasons seem grounded in determined factors of actions. I challenge this objection through two lines of inquiry. First, I question whether indeterminism entails randomness, and I conclude that it does not. Second, I analyze how reasons are supposedly associated with determinism. The insistence that reasons explain only if determinism is true begs the question against libertarian views. I call the most entrenched version of this thinking “the reason-reason fallacy of anti-libertarianism” (or the r-r fallacy). Examples of the r-r fallacy typically commit a category mistake concerning how and what reasons explain. Others simply mistake our practices of providing explanations with the nature of the objects of those explanations.

Keywords Free Will · Libertarianism · Indeterminism · Randomness · Acting for Reasons

A common objection to free will libertarianism complains that the very undetermined acts libertarians insist ground valuable aspects of human existence (e.g., autonomy, moral responsibility)¹ are, in fact, random.²

1 Libertarians may insist that indeterminate acts are required to ground a variety of philosophically relevant aspects of human behavior, and they need not address all such candidates to qualify as libertarians. For example, Robert Kane (1996) argues that, without libertarian free will, the *significance* of our behaviors is compromised (i.e., the meaning of our “free actions” achieves mere “surface level” significance). See especially chapter six.

2 In this paper, I accept, for argument’s sake, that randomness does preclude free will. Here, I argue that indeterminate rational actions are not random. However, the question of whether randomness is, in fact, incompatible with free will is worthy of investigation. For an argument that randomness is compatible with free will, see Calude et al. (2016).

Since intentional actions are explained in reference to reasons for the action, and since indeterminism severs the connection between an agent and their reasons for action, we cannot explain why the agent performed the act. In contrast, if the world were determined, explanatory reasons for actions would be quite informative, supplying robust narratives connecting free actions to an agent's practical reason. For example, Richard Double attacks libertarian views as "destructive to the rationality of human decisions" (Double, 1995: 57). For Double, human behavior can only be rational if our reasons directly bring about our free acts. Similarly, Galen Strawson states, "it is specifically *qua* reasons-reflecting, reasons-determined things that actions must be shown to be free." (Strawson, 1995:19). To such thinkers, indeterminate "rational" actions cannot be free actions because, whatever the reason for them, a completely different action could have been taken instead.

I contend that these and related complaints are mistaken. To defend libertarians against such objections, I take a two-pronged approach.³ First, I examine what objectors could possibly mean by an action being *random*. I argue that no notion of randomness is necessarily implied by indeterminate rational actions, and randomness occurs in both a determined and an undetermined universe. This consequence suggests that scholars who object to libertarianism on these grounds misconstrue the nature of indeterminism, randomness, or both. Second, I consider how reasons that factor into action explanations supposedly require determinism, ultimately showing that they do not. I argue that objections based on this complainant commit some version of an informal fallacy I call *the reason-reason fallacy of anti-libertarianism* (r-r fallacy). These objectors take explanation a step too far, demanding a reason for a reason. Either these thinkers demand a reason for a reason because they erroneously commit a category mistake concerning different types of reasons, or they misunderstand how explanatory reasons explain by confusing *how* we communicate such explanations and *what* the objects of such explanations are.

Executing this two-pronged approach requires outlining certain vocabulary and principles up front—some of which will be most useful in the final sections of this essay. While the approach is technically two-pronged, the first prong transitions smoothly into the second through a discussion of randomness *qua* arbitrariness. To show the connection between these approaches, I devise a series of thought experiments in section I. that resurface throughout the essay (various iterations concerning Gwen and her uncle, Charlie). Whenever an idea requires further illustration, but the idea is more localized to a sub-argument, I offer a new example or thought experiment.

3 While I do not identify as a free will libertarian (I align more with contemporary agnostics (see Kearns (2015) for a discussion of such burgeoning positions)), I take up the mantle of defending them here in the spirit of fairness. While the libertarian must answer many objections and challenges, the charge of "randomness" should not be one of them.

I. Explanations and Types of Reasons

I refrain from committing to a notion of what constitutes a *reason*; however, certain parameters are required. For example, some philosophers consider reasons to be nothing more than considerations that could come into play when deciding to act. This view allows reasons to be facts about the agent's internal mental states as well as facts about the world. The latter type is employed when discussing *external* reasons, or reasons that exist independently of whether the agent recognizes them. Some externalists about reasons deny the existence of internal reasons, (those stemming from the agent's psychology).⁴ In contrast, strictly internalist views of reasons only recognize mental states as reasons.⁵ For example, Humean views consider reasons belief-desire pairs, rendering all reasons subjective and internal.⁶ Since this paper addresses anti-libertarian complaints about how an agent's reasons can be appropriately connected to their rational actions, I shall focus only on internal reasons.

To illustrate the difference, imagine that there is an external reason for Gwen to pull the plug when her uncle Charlie is on life support—a reason of which Gwen is not aware. Perhaps Charlie is secretly wealthy, and he has bequeathed his vast estate to Gwen upon his death. This reason is irrelevant to Gwen's decision to pull the plug (or not).

Even if such facts jointly constitute “a motive” for Gwen (or someone in her position) to pull the plug, they are not reasons in the sense at hand in this discussion. As things stand, these reasons are *merely* external reasons. Gwen's ignorance of these facts precludes them from having any influence over her decision. Only reasons to which the agent can respond can serve as explanations for an act that is attributable to (i.e., reflexive of) the agent.

Reasons as Causally Influential

This project is compatible with any account of reasons as causally influential.⁷ Indeed, it appears that the scholars who object to libertarian accounts

4 For example, T. M. Scanlon (1986) recognizes reasons to be facts about a state of affairs, which may or may not relate to the agent's psychology.

5 For example, Bernard Williams argues that for something to be a reason, it must be a reason for the agent (i.e., be one that the agent has, subjectively speaking). He therefore denies the plausibility of any “external” reasons (2002: 101-113).

6 For instance, Michael Smith (1995) and Donald Davidson (1963) take this view. Davidson argues that to consider primary reasons (those reasons involved in reasons-explanations of actions) in any other light renders explanations unintelligible.

7 While noncausalist libertarian accounts may not employ this language, there is an analogous way in which reasons can explain causally (though, not as efficient causes). One might need to adopt a richer notion of causation—perhaps something closer to Aristotle's notion. For Aristotle, all primary substances and events have four types of causes. One is the standard notion of causation we most frequently discuss today—*efficient causation*—

on the grounds described above all maintain that, when an agent acts for a reason, the reason caused the agent to act. This position, often referred to as *the causal theory of action*, gained popularity after Donald Davidson argued persuasively that intentional actions are caused by an agent's reasons. Otherwise, argued Davidson, pointing to the agent's reasons would not explain the action in question. For example, if an agent flips a light switch to illuminate a room, they may simultaneously be alerting a prowler to the fact that someone is home. But if the agent does not know about the prowler, the agent cannot be flipping the light switch for that reason. Even if it is true that alerting the prowler might be a good reason *to* turn on the lights, that reason cannot explain why the agent *did* turn on the lights, because the agent did not turn on the lights *for that reason* (Davidson, 1963: 686–688).

Davidson's argument illustrates not only that intentional actions are not caused by external reasons of which the agent is unaware, but also, agents can have multiple reasons for acting and only perform the action for a subset of these. For example, imagine an alternative world in which Gwen* is aware of Uncle Charlie*'s otherwise secret wealth and his legally binding will to bequeath it to her. While Gwen*'s knowledge theoretically could factor into a nefarious deliberation and choice to pull the plug on her uncle, imagine that it does not. Instead, imagine that Gwen* aspires to be a decent person who would never kill (or allow someone to die) for money. In fact, Gwen* loves her uncle very much, and *it is because* Gwen* loves Uncle Charlie* that she pulls the plug. Uncle Charlie* made it clear to Gwen* that he never wanted to be kept alive on life-support. In this scenario, Gwen* has two reasons to pull

which is whatever initiates the motion bringing about an effect. In addition, Aristotle identifies a material cause, which includes the matter and its properties of all substances involved, and a formal cause, which encompasses at least the physical form or shape of an object (e.g., literally, the side of a pyramid is triangle-shaped), and also nature (i.e., essence) in natural beings (e.g., human nature in human beings). Aristotle's fourth cause is the *final* cause, which is the purpose or end of a being or event (*Phys.* II.3, 194b16–195a3; *Meta.* I.3, 983a24–32, V.2, 1013a24–1013b3). For example, a noncausalist like Ginet could argue that, while the reason did not initiate S's free action (i.e., the reason is not an efficient cause of the action), as part of the matter, content, and purpose of the action taken, the reason still has explanatory power (if I understand him correctly, this is what Ginet believes. See especially Ginet 1989 and 1990:143). So, even if S's reason to do laundry did not efficiently cause her to start doing laundry, it shaped, defined, and guided her laundering. Ginet does not explicitly adopt this broader view of causation. Instead, he argues that reasons are not causes: "the statement that a person did A in order to satisfy their desire D will be true if the person, while doing A, intended of that action that it contribute to satisfying their desire D, a condition that does not entail any causal connection between the explaining desire and the explained action" (Ginet, 2016: 219). Given this description of intentional action, Ginet could, in my opinion, adopt a broader (e.g., Aristotelian) view of causation, which would allow him to join the causal theory of action camp without altering his view. Of course, he would still deny that explanatory reasons *efficiently* cause intentional action, but the causal theory of action only requires that one's reasons *actually* cause one's action (and material, formal, and final causes are causes).

the plug on her uncle. However, it is possible (and preferable) that she does so only in response to the loving reason. The only way to make sense of the fact that Gwen* acted for one of these reasons and not the other is that one of them was the motivating reason (i.e., the reason that caused her to act).

Different Roles Reasons Play

Regardless of one's specific view of what constitutes a reason for action, it is broadly accepted that internal reasons can serve in different capacities when agents act. For example, there is, *prima facie*, a difference between an explanatory, justificatory, contrastive, and sufficient reason. As just noted, a reason explains when referring to it illuminates what caused an action or event. Motivating reasons explain intentional acts when the agent actually employed the reason when acting.

A motivating reason only justifies one's behavior if it both explains the behavior and shows that the behavior was normatively choiceworthy. For example, if Gwen* pulls the plug on her uncle's life support because he didn't want to be kept alive on machines, her knowledge of his wishes not only explains why she pulled the plug, but also it justifies her choice, provided that it is morally right to honor one's previously declared wishes about life-sustaining treatment (and I assume that it is).

Justificatory reasons for which one acts are distinct from motivating reasons in general because motivating reasons can explain bad decisions and actions. For instance, imagine that in a different universe, Uncle Charlie** previously made it clear to Gwen** that he *does not* want to be taken off life support, should he ever find himself in that position. If Gwen** pulls the plug, and if she does so because she wants to inherit her uncle's wealth now and cares not a wit about his prior declaration, then the reason, *if her uncle dies, she inherits a lot of wealth* explains but does not justify her choice. Referring to one's motivating reasons renders their actions intelligible even if those actions are morally deplorable.

Contrastive Reasons

Reasons are contrastive when they explain why an agent did not perform a specific act. For example, in our third Gwen scenario, Gwen** pulls the plug because she wants to inherit her uncle's estate. If someone were to ask why Gwen** didn't just wait for Uncle Charlie** to die naturally to inherit the estate, we might offer the contrastive compound explanation, "because she wanted the inheritance now, and because she does not care a wit about what he wanted." Her desire to inherit the estate explains why Gwen** pulled the plug; her impatience and callous disregard for her uncle's wishes explains why she did not do something else instead (i.e., wait to pull the plug later, or never).

When we presume the world is determined, or when we consider situations in which no agents are involved, we tend to treat contrastive explanations as completing some simpler explanatory narrative. For example, if a bridge has many fractures at its base, and it collapses, we might offer a simple explanatory narrative (SEN):

SEN: *The fractures at the base of the bridge made the structure unstable, so it fell.*

This simple explanation is incomplete. After all, those fractures did not appear mere seconds before the collapse. A victim's family member might ask, "Why did it have to collapse when *she* was on the bridge!? Why couldn't it collapse last week?" While it is true that the fractures had been there for many months, the bridge collapsed on this specific day (and not before) for several reasons (many of which can serve as contrastive explanations):

- 1) Prior warm weather caused the bridge material to expand just enough to compensate for the cracks.
- 2) Traffic across the bridge was light, consisting of primarily small, lighter cars.
- 3) The cracks had been growing larger over time.

In combination, we have a complex explanatory narrative (CEN):

CEN: *On this day, the size of the cracks and the temperature rendered the bridge only capable of sustaining a few cars. But heavy traffic left many vehicles parked on the bridge. The weight exceeded the cracked bridge's capacity, and that is why the structure could not hold.*

Let us call a CEN that offers multiple contrastive reasons a *complete contrastive explanation*. Let us employ the word "complete" in a restricted sense—perhaps relative to our curiosity and demand for explanation. Nevertheless, while we may *feel* as though complete contrastive explanations complete the picture *truly*, we acknowledge that a much larger number of contrastive explanations (perhaps an infinite amount) exists.⁸ For example, we could add to the above the gravitational pull of the Earth, moon, and sun at that time of day and on that day of the year. We could compare the properties of the fallen bridge's concrete with alternatives that—had it been built with those instead—might have prevented a collapse. We could consider optional buttresses that, while unnecessary at the time the bridge was built, would have prevented the collapse, had they been built. We could calculate any number of counterfactual scenarios that might have made a difference. Since contrastive explanations illuminate why something *didn't* happen, the number of available contrastive reasons likely exceeds our appetite for them.

8 For a recent interesting account of contrastive reasons, see Justin Snedegar (2017). Snedegar argues that there are no reasons *simpliciter*. All *pro tanto* reasons are reasons relative to some set of alternatives; reasons "obtain" in specific contexts, all of which have some contrastive aspect.

When we consider reasons why an agent intentionally did one thing as opposed to an alternative (a combination of explanatory and contrastive reasons), we are often satisfied with very little. For instance, in the first iteration of Gwen and Uncle Charlie, one contrastive reason is simple and satisfying; Gwen did not keep her uncle on life support because she had no internal reason to do so. Imagine that Gwen and her uncle's loved ones cannot afford to pay for hospital care. While none of them knew of his wealth, they all knew Uncle Charlie's position on life support, and they unanimously respect an individual's right to determine one's own end-of-life treatment. Gwen does not keep her uncle on life support because Gwen *literally* had no reason whatsoever to do so. If we are only concerned with why Gwen did what she did, given what she knew and believed, keeping fixed all other facts, we are satisfied with the reasons (both explanatory and contrastive) that we've considered.

Sufficient and "Enough" Reasons

Above I stipulated that Gwen had no reason to act other than she did. If negative observations can be reasons, perhaps the absence of reasons favoring alternatives is sufficient for rendering one course of action the only rational option. Typically, a reason is considered *sufficient* when it guarantees an action. This sense of "sufficient reason" suggests either determinism or, at the very least, practical necessity. In both instances, the agent will have and act for that reason. If the world is determined, then every aspect of it is determined; therefore, all motivating reasons are, in a sense, sufficient reasons. Alternatively, even in an undetermined universe, one might be guaranteed to have and respond to a reason under specific circumstances. For example, if we may take Martin Luther's declaration, "Here I stand, I can do no other," literally, every aspect of his motivational system precluded alternative intentional behavior. Absent alternative reasons, we are *practically necessitated* to act on the reasons we do have.

A sufficient reason leaves no room for alternatives. While this understanding of "sufficient reason to act" is technically compatible with both a determined and an undetermined universe (in the latter case, only occasionally and in virtue of practical necessity), it still lacks something. Libertarians need a similar vocabulary to defend themselves against randomness objections, and I wish to introduce a term for an alternative notion of "sufficient reason" to do just that. Unlike the traditional take on sufficient reasons, which implies necessity, let us call a reason an *enough-reason* when an agent could act on it given the current state of affairs and laws of nature. If the world is indeterministic, one could have an enough-reason to intentionally ϕ and still *not* ϕ .

This classification is needed for several reasons. First, one could have multiple enough-reasons to take different courses of action, all of which

are mutually exclusive. An agent cannot respond to all such reasons simultaneously. This term affords libertarians the ability to discuss strong reasons for action that aren't sufficient (i.e., necessitating). This classification is also needed if we agree that agents can have internal reasons to do something that are *not enough* for the agent to act, which is different from merely refraining from acting on an enough-reason. For example, recall Gwen*, who knows that she stands to inherit much wealth if she pulls the plug on Uncle Charlie*. Since Gwen*'s life could improve with an influx of wealth, inheriting this wealth is a reason for her to pull the plug. But let us stipulate that this reason is very weak. After all, Gwen* is a loving person who aspires to be an even better person daily. While she is not immune to wishing for such a windfall, and she may even entertain the thought of this "silver lining" to pulling the plug, her reason, *pulling the plug makes me rich*, is not enough for her to intentionally act on it (given her total motivational system).⁹ This is not to say that it couldn't eventually take on the role of being enough-reason. Much like how a reason an agent first possesses and later acts on gains the status of motivating reason, a reason for an action can, at time *t*, not be an enough-reason, but it can later become an enough-reason if Gwen*'s situation, psychology, or motivation change.

For instance, if Gwen*'s daughter is kidnapped by vicious people who threaten to kill the child if Gwen* fails to pay a large ransom, Gwen*'s reason to pull the plug for the inheritance might be elevated to enough-reason status. Still, we can imagine that, while an enough-reason, Gwen*'s reason to pull the plug for money is not *sufficient reason*. It is not motivationally impossible for Gwen* to pull the plug for the other reason (that it's Uncle Charlie*'s wish not to be on life-support). In this imagined scenario, we have what libertarians always insisted was possible: a situation in which an agent can act on a reason, or not.

Let us create a new iteration, Gwen*!, to consider not only *for which* reason to act, but also, which action to take. In this scenario, the kidnappers demand the money by tomorrow morning. Luckily, Uncle Charlie*¹ had his trust designed to transfer all his money into Gwen*!'s account the moment his death certificate is entered into the system. Also luckily, Uncle Charlie*¹ is an organ donor with a rare blood type; he is the only known match for Gwen*!'s son, who has a life-threatening heart condition. Unfortunately, Gwen*!'s son is out of the country. Flying home and being prepped for surgery will take more than 24 hours. If Gwen*! saves her son, honoring Uncle Charlie*!'s wish to be an organ donor before taking him off life-support, his death certificate will not be entered into the system in time to pay the ransom. Gwen*! can only access the money in time to ransom her daughter if she pulls the plug

9 This idea is similar to my notion of *sincerity* of moral attitudes, which comes in degrees, requires exceeding a baseline threshold, and may or may not be enough to move one to act (Anton, 2015: 134-43).

now. In this scenario, Gwen*¹ has an enough-reason to pull the plug on Uncle Charlie*¹ now, and Gwen*¹ has an enough-reason to keep Uncle Charlie*¹ on life support. In this tragic situation, Gwen*¹ has enough reason to do either of two contradictory things, and neither of the enough-reasons is a sufficient reason. Therefore, regardless of which act she takes, Gwen*¹ truly could do otherwise intentionally (i.e., for a different reason).

It is essential to libertarian views of free will that the agent could have done otherwise. A libertarian could analyze Gwen*¹'s situation and say confidently that Gwen*¹ will choose to act on either enough-reason A or enough-reason B; but the libertarian cannot (and should not) say that whichever reason the agent does act on, the agent could not have acted for the other reason instead (i.e., the libertarian cannot and should not provide a *complete contrastive explanation*).

I shall use the above terms throughout the remainder of this essay. I shall employ the new notions of *enough-reasons* and *complete contrastive explanations* in analyzing the anti-libertarian complaint that indeterminate rational actions are so random that the motivating reason of such an act cannot be used to explain the act at all. But first, let us clarify what we mean by an act's being *random*. On the one hand, something is random if it occurs outside of any pattern or is fundamentally unpredictable. On the other hand, something can be random if it is arbitrary; that is, it is done for no particular reason. For convenience's sake, for the remainder of the paper, I shall apply the term 'random' to concerns of patterns and predictability and the term 'arbitrary' to issues concerning reasons. Let us now consider each sense in light of free action.

II. Randomness

Sometimes people behave in predictable ways. Such behaviors are predictable, one may think, because they are determined. Behaviors can be directed by one's personality, habits, and environment; and we detect such direction through patterns in past behavior. Recent moral psychological research suggests that knowledge of a person's situation can help predict their behavior (Doris, 1998 & 2005). So, we must ask ourselves whether a libertarian picture of free action necessarily contradicts these intuitive observations.

Probabilities and Patterns

Libertarians need not deny the relatively predictable patterns found in human behavior. It seems possible that a series of undetermined events could occur, falling into recognizable patterns. They need not have a common cause determining they occur as they do. For example, suppose that the result of coin-flipping in a quantum-mechanistic world is undetermined. One may

flip a coin 40 times and the coin could come up heads every third flip, but this does not mean there is a causal law or force determining that it come up heads *exactly* on those instances. Furthermore, the pattern does not even suggest probabilistic causality; it's not as though the "cause" raises the chances of the effect, since the probability of a coin landing on one side is $\frac{1}{2}$ (50%), and not $\frac{1}{3}$ (33.333...%). If coin-flipping were such an undetermined activity, it is possible that it not be random *qua* patternlessness.

The same follows when applied to agents who act for reasons. For instance, imagine that nine times out of ten, your uncle Louis accepts your offer of a beer. Perhaps Uncle Louis has more reasons to accept your offer than he does to reject it. Still, we have no reason to think he is determined to accept your offer at any given moment, nor should we believe that Uncle Louis is forced to accept your offer more often than he is allowed to reject it. While it is likely that Uncle Louis will accept your next offer of a beer just as he did the last time, he may not. Therefore, it does not follow from the fact that an agent could act differently than they do (in the libertarian sense of "could") that she must act unpredictably or outside of patterns.

Predictability

Similarly, anti-libertarians would be wise not to argue that a high degree of predictability in human action suggests that agents *cannot* act other than they do. Consider two famous studies often discussed in situationist literature (Doris, 1998, 2005). In his obedience studies, Stanley Milgram found that roughly 67% of people will shock another person to the brink of death on the say-so of a person in a lab coat.¹⁰ Naturally, these findings were alarming, least of all because fewer than 67% of people think themselves capable of such behavior. Situationists point to such studies to suggest that most people do not act for their own reasons, but rather their behavior is a response to their situation. Similarly, anti-libertarians might argue that, while most people *think* they could resist the pressure to follow an unjust authority, those people are mistaken. But neither conclusion follows from the evidence. Even if most people choose to follow the authority figure, it does not follow that they *had* to do so. After all, 33% of participants did not.

A different study has even greater findings, and anti-libertarians might simply refer to these instead. Alice Isen and Paula Levin (1972) wanted to test whether a minor stroke of good fortune would affect the recipient's willingness to help a stranger in need. To test this, they observed patrons of phone booths. In some phone booths, a dime was placed in the return slot, whereas in others, the slot was left empty. After a subject checked the coin return, Isen and Levin would note the subject's findings (i.e., whether they

10 Milgram 1963. See J. Burger (2011) for an "updated" look at Milgram's findings in light of similar studies conducted at various times across five decades, which all yield similar results.

found a dime) and send a confederate actor to “trip” and drop many papers very near the subject. Their findings were statistically significant. There was an 87.5% chance that a subject who found a dime would help pick up the papers; however, only 4% of subjects who did not find a dime helped.

One must admit that this discrepancy is stark.¹¹ Nevertheless, if we consider reasons causes, we must also concede that one must *have* a reason to act intentionally *for* that reason. Might it simply be the case that, most of the time, most people don’t have a reason to help strangers pick up dropped papers? Might it be the case that finding a dime is an enough-reason to become mindful of small fortune in general, making one more responsive to small misfortunes? As depressing as this sounds,¹² it does not undermine libertarian free will (or suggest that responding to such reasons is random). At most, such studies suggest that the reasons we have can be sensitive to factors beyond our control. Still, 4% of those who did not find dimes helped, suggesting that the mere observation of a person in need of assistance can be an enough-reason to help. It appears to have been “enough” for that 4%. It may also have provided an enough-reason for the remaining 96%, but that 96% followed a different competing enough-reason to keep moving.

In either case, such uniformity is not *incompatible* with an indeterminate universe. Indeterminacy is, strictly speaking, *not* being fully determined. The universe can be more or less indeterminate. We could live in a world in which few things occur in reliable patterns according to probability. As it happens, the world in which we do live involves a substantial degree of predictability. For example, a stone will fall down *every* time I toss it, and, at any given moment, two-thirds of humanity can be convinced to harm another person in the name of science. I am profoundly confident that I can predict future results of the former type of example; I am less confident that even the same

11 This study has not gone unchallenged. See Miller 2003 for critiques of the process and challenges to the conclusions drawn.

12 We may interpret these findings in a positive light. While they do suggest that most people need an incentive or “attention trigger” to do what is the bare minimum of human decency, these findings also suggest that it does not take much to prime most people for extending kindness. Even in 1972, finding a dime was no serious windfall. Therefore, we can take from these studies the knowledge that we can increase the probability that other people will be kind if we take the initiative to put “proverbial dimes” out into the world. For this reason, I routinely assign students studying situationism to safely and respectfully perform three random acts of kindness, observe the immediate behavior of their “subject” (within reason, of course), and write a paper analyzing their experience. While I have not tracked the data across the years, I can report from memory that 1) most recipients respond positively and 2) many students who report initial reluctance to perform acts of kindness (usually because they are shy or suffer from anxiety) also report an immediate uptick in motivation to perform the next kind act if they detect positive feedback from their most recent subject (typically through overt gratitude or observing the subject “passing on” the kindness (e.g., holding a door open for someone as they leave, or paying for the next person’s “drive-thru” order after my student first paid for theirs)).

people will be among the two-thirds in the latter case every time. In both cases, a distinct pattern of predictability exists.

Since there is nothing about libertarian accounts that precludes agents from acting consistently, then there must be something else afoot that urges objectors to view libertarian actions as haphazard. Perhaps objectors find libertarian indeterminism haphazard in comparison to determinism. In other words, could there be something inherent in the notion of determinism that requires actions have patterns? As Daniel Dennett points out, there is not. He writes, "When a system designer or programmer relies on a "random" generation process, it is not a *physically undetermined* process that is required, but simply a *patternless* process" (1995: 54). Dennett adds that when a computer generates a sequence of responses that are patternless, "the sequence is a perfectly deterministic and determinate process" (*Ibid.*).

If randomness (as "patternlessness") does not necessarily follow from indeterminism, and it may follow from certain instances of determinism, then perhaps this kind of randomness is not the real issue grounding anti-libertarian randomness objections. Indeed, I think the accusation that indeterminate actions are arbitrary is far more compelling.

III. Arbitrariness

Arbitrariness differs from "patternlessness" in several important ways. A choice is *arbitrary* if it is done for no particular reason, suggesting that arbitrariness applies specifically to beings capable of acting for reasons. In addition, while atypical, one can arbitrarily choose such that one's actions are patterned. For example, Bill could arbitrarily select lottery numbers each week that happen to correspond with family members' birthdays. Perhaps the numbers occur to Bill because of some unconscious neurological tendency to arbitrarily select numbers from series he memorized in the past, such as dates, telephone numbers, and credit card numbers (as opposed to generating new number combinations). However, if Bill does not select the next person's birthday the following week *because* it is the next person's birthday, Bill's choice is still arbitrary. Objections of arbitrariness are, therefore, distinct from objections concerning patternlessness. These objections focus on reasons for acting. However, as I shall now argue, most of these charges beg the question against libertarians.

Arbitrary as Irrelevance

A reason for action might be arbitrary if it is unrelated to the matter at hand. For example, imagine that Spencer hits John, and John demands from Spencer an explanation for Spencer's behavior. If Spencer responds, "Because it is Tuesday," he would have provided John with a "consideration" that is utterly irrelevant. Instead of agreeing with Spencer that this explanation justifies his

behavior, and instead of castigating Spencer for the assault, John might refrain from blaming Spencer altogether, for Spencer seems to be irrational in some responsibility-undermining way. In such instances, the reason explanation does seem contrary to free will and moral responsibility. But libertarians do not sketch an account where unrelated beliefs or desires can cause actions. So, libertarianism is not open to charges of this kind of arbitrariness.

Arbitrarily Unrestricted

Behavior might be arbitrary in another sense if it is unrestrained and automatic. For example, if Ashley were to randomly start dancing the hokey pokey, to her surprise as well as to everyone else's, her behavior would seem unreasonable in the relevant sense. Such behavior resembles more an involuntary spasm. Indeed, this behavior is unlikely free, as even Ashley does not understand her own motives. But libertarians do not claim that actions appear unreasonable to the agent. On the contrary, many libertarians require that agent's feel as though they behave freely for any behavior to be considered free.¹³

Similarly, libertarians can explain how completely undesirable behavior is not up to the agent to perform. Imagine that Ashley despises the hokey pokey so much that one would have to offer her an alarmingly large sum of money to get her to even consider performing it. We might conclude that, absent any such offer, Ashley cannot voluntarily perform the hokey pokey (she has no enough-reasons). It does not follow that Ashley cannot act freely in other regards. Libertarians can (and probably should) claim that, at any given time, a limited number of options are open to an agent—not only due to external constraints, but also, internal ones. The libertarian can make such a claim while maintaining that multiple options are still available to the agent. It is not essential to a libertarian viewpoint that an agent be able to perform *any* old action. Libertarians can maintain that only those actions supported by reasons are genuine “live” options for a free and responsible agent.

Arbitrary by Chance

A third way that we describe behavior as arbitrary is when it *happens by chance*. Objectors to libertarian views might resort to this wording when launching a randomness objection. For instance, A. J. Ayer (1954) writes:

Either it is an accident that I choose to act as I do or it is not. If it is an accident, then it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise; and if it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise, it is surely irrational to hold me morally responsible for choosing as I did. But if it is not an accident that I choose to do one thing rather than another, then presumably there is some causal explanation of my choice: and in that case we are led back to determinism (p. 275).

13 For example, Carl Ginet maintains that an *actish phenomenal quality* must accompany all freely uncaused actions (1990, pp. 11-15 and 20-25).

Ayer suggests chance is the opposite of determinism. But the opposite of determinism is indeterminism. Do all indeterminate actions happen by chance? What does it mean *to happen by chance*, and why would it undermine holding someone morally responsible?

Let's first rule out several bad answers. Ayer cannot mean that some goddess who personifies chance caused the action (though, that *would* be responsibility-defeating). Chance is not an agent, nor is chance a force. Likewise, chance is not an object; it does not interact with other objects. Finally, chance is not itself an event. It is not a link in a causal chain the way that events are.

To my mind, chance is a way of thinking of certain events. When it is unpredictable whether event B or event C will follow event A, it might be said that, on this occasion, "chance would have it" that event B followed. What is meant in such an explanation is simple; event B was not determined to occur, but it did occur. In this case, chance *just is* another term for indeterminism. Libertarians needn't respond if this is all that the objection amounts to, for libertarians stipulate in their accounts that free action is not determined action. If an anti-libertarian retorts, "But then free actions happen *by chance*!", the libertarian can simply reply, "If '*by chance*' you mean *indeterministically*, then, yes. That is what I said."

Perhaps the clearest example of distinguishing chance from indeterminism is provided by Aristotle. He describes chance (*tuchē*) as something that could have had an end or purpose, but did not (*Phys.* II.5, 196b17–23). For instance, if I take a walk and leave my purse at home, I do not intend to bring my cellular phone with me. However, I do bring my cellular phone with me *by chance* since I had forgotten that I left my phone in my coat pocket. While on my walk, I put my hands in my coat pockets and realize that I do indeed have my phone with me. When I happen upon the scene of an accident, it is lucky that I have my phone with me, and I can call emergency services for assistance.

What would be the equivalent to such scenarios in deliberation? It is difficult to imagine acting without a reason and, by chance, we discover one in the nick of time (as if we had one in our pocket all along). This is what objectors seem to be accusing libertarians of claiming—that an agent acts without reason and happens to pick up a reason along the way. This objection does not apply to event-causal libertarians. On those accounts, reasons that factor into intentional action do not suddenly appear; they were there prior to deliberating (and may have even initiated deliberation). Similarly, one would create a strawman if one depicted the agent-causal position as one illustrating a "bored" agent-cause who *wants to act* but has no reason *to act*. If this were a commitment of the libertarian, it would be difficult to explain. However, this objection presupposes that action initiation and reasons-responsiveness are two separate temporally sequential events. Neither the event- nor the agent-causal libertarian claim this to be the case. Not even noncausalists supply such a picture. To suggest that the noncausal libertarian imagines an uncaused action initiation in search of a reason borders on slander.

Whether the picture is noncausal, agent-causal, or event-causal, reasons can predate decisions to act on them without those decisions being causally determined by those reasons. An awareness of reasons and a decision to respond to a reason can be different mental activities. But when an agent undertakes the latter, it needn't be the case that what is a necessary condition for responding to a reason (that the reason is present) is a sufficient condition for responding to that reason.

Arbitrary as Insufficiently Grounded

Finally, one might suggest that libertarian action is arbitrary because it is not sufficiently grounded. As Ayer suggests in the passage quoted above, there isn't enough behind the adoption of a reason to ground why that reason and not another was acted upon. When objectors resort to this sense of arbitrariness, they beg the question by insisting that the libertarians provide a complete contrastive explanation. The objector wants to know why the motivating reason was sufficient to move the agent to action whereas others were not. But libertarians deny that any reason is sufficient for free action. Furthermore, according to the libertarian, it isn't the case that other reasons were insufficient for action. If the action is free in the sense that libertarians mean, there were multiple enough-reasons for action prior to the agent's choice.

The libertarian can still point to *the* reason for which an agent acted as an explanatory reason. Explanatory reasons are positive. They explain *why* S ϕ -ed. When the anti-libertarian demands a contrastive explanation, they demand negative explanations (e.g., why S didn't ψ). The anti-libertarian may insist that they are really asking "Why did S ϕ *instead of* ψ ?" But the libertarian would be right to complain that *instead of* is another way of saying *and not*. For instance, the libertarian could argue that their opponent has asked why *p* below is true:

p: S ϕ -ed & $\sim$ S ψ -ed

As a conjunction, all the libertarian must do to explain "that *p*" is to explain why each of *p*'s conjuncts is true individually. Imagine that the libertarian first explains why S ϕ -ed. They do so by offering the reason for which S ϕ -ed. Now, all that is left to do is explain why $\sim$ S ψ -ed. Depending on the action and the agent, S may not have ψ -ed simply because S ϕ -ed, and ϕ -ing excludes the possibility of ψ -ing. This is the case with Gwen^{*1}'s tragic decision. If Gwen^{*1} pulls the plug on Uncle Charlie^{*1} now to get the money to ransom her daughter, by doing so, she has rendered herself incapable of ψ -ing (i.e., of keeping Uncle Charlie^{*1} alive long enough for her son to arrive and receive the heart). In this instance, providing Gwen^{*1}'s reason for pulling the plug when she did does, in fact, explain *both* why Gwen^{*1} pulled the plug *and* why Gwen^{*1} did not keep Uncle Charlie^{*1} on life-support.

Of course, the anti-libertarian might grow impatient with me. They might retort that I *know what they mean*. In fact, I'm afraid that I do. I think they mean not to ask merely why Gwen^{*1} φ -ed and did not ψ ; I think they want to know *for what reason* (R1) did Gwen^{*1} decide to act on a different reason (R2) to φ (and, what is worse, maybe also *for what other reason* (R3) Gwen^{*1} decided against responding to a reason (R4) to ψ). If I am correct, the anti-libertarian has demanded at least one (if not more) reasons *for* responding to different reasons.

IV. Reasons for Reasons and the R-R Fallacy

There is a difference between analyzing multiple reasons in a scenario to increase the depth of one's understanding on the one hand, and, on the other, claiming that without *other* reasons, a specific reason is not *itself* a reason after all. An example of the former could be our earlier analysis of the reasons (explanatory and contrastive) why a particular bridge fell. An example of the latter might be demanding a complete contrastive explanation for why an agent intentionally acted *because* the motivating reason alone "explains nothing."

I call this line of objection the *reason-reason fallacy of anti-libertarianism* (r-r fallacy). The r-r fallacy is the inference from the belief that a reason is explanatory (since it was the reason for which an agent acted) to conclusions about how that reason must connect to other reasons. For example, one might commit this fallacy by demanding the causal history of how the agent got that reason in order for it to explain their action. Alternatively, one might demand evidence that the reason was going to be effective (e.g., complete contrastive explanations, evidence that the motivating reason was a sufficient reason rather than an enough-reason). The r-r fallacy gets its name because, when committed, the complainant goes a step too far in demanding explanation. They demand explanation for an explanation. But it is a category mistake to treat individual explanations as though they cannot explain absent other reasons. We shall consider several cases below.

Reasons All the Way Down

But first, I acknowledge that the reader might be confused. What's wrong with asking for a reason for a reason? We talk of nesting reasons all the time. For example, why did I go to the store? To buy bread. Why did I buy bread? To make a sandwich. Why did I make a sandwich? Because I was hungry. So what?

Here's what. Just because something can be a means to an end, and we might wonder to what end someone performs a means act, it does not follow that everything is a means to some other end, or that no reason can constitute a reason if it is not further supported by another reason. If that were the case, it would be "reasons all the way down," so to speak. We would find ourselves

in an infinite regress of explanation. But if explanations only explained *in virtue of* what explains them, then all explanations would be meaningless.¹⁴ Some reasons must be reason enough. Sometimes, the buck just stops.

Let us consider the opposite when analyzing Gwen^{*1}'s difficult decision. Let us suppose that Gwen^{*} freely (though, of course, tragically) chooses to save her daughter. If a relative who only knew of her son's condition asks her, "Why did you pull the plug on Uncle Charlie^{*1} last night before your son could receive the heart?!", Gwen^{*1} can sensibly respond, "Because my daughter was being held for ransom and her captors promised to kill her if I didn't give them Uncle Charlie^{*1}'s money in the morning. But I could only get Uncle Charlie^{*1}'s money in time if he was declared dead."

As tragic as the whole situation is, one thing is clear; if Gwen^{*1}'s relative is a sane, halfway decent person, she will not say anything to the following effect:

"Well, wait. That doesn't make any sense at all. Are you saying that you pulled the plug on Uncle Charlie^{*} last night because you could not save your son? Because it only makes sense to me that you did what you did *to save your daughter* if it is also true that you *could not save your son*."

It's not as though Gwen^{*1}'s relative cannot understand what Gwen^{*1}'s words mean absent some knowledge that Gwen^{*1} could not save her son, or absent the knowledge that the reason Gwen^{*1} saved her daughter was a sufficient reason. The relative will not say this because the explanatory reason for why Gwen^{*1} didn't wait to pull the plug on Uncle Charlie^{*1} is intelligible all on its own (i.e., absent its relation to any other distinct reasons she may have).

But what if Gwen^{*1}'s relative is not a halfway decent person? Might she demand an explanation for Gwen^{*1}'s explanation? Would she say something to the effect of:

"I now understand *why* you did what you did; what I fail to understand is how you were able to decide to act to save your daughter *over* and *instead of* acting to save your son. Was there a tie-breaking reason? How were you able to choose?"

14 What's more, we would eventually find ourselves referring to irrelevant reasons that, nevertheless, constitute sufficient reasons. For instance, if the world is determined, and if $S \varphi$'s at time t , any proposition describing the complete state of S 's mind at time $t-10$ years gives a sufficient reason for $S \varphi$ -ing at time t . For example, suppose I surfed the web in 1993 shortly after the Internet was made available to the public by CERN. An inventory of the reasons in my mind on any day in 1983 (when I was three years old) is sufficient for "explaining" why I surfed the web in 1993. But how, one might ask, does "I want to sleep," and "I want to eat," and "I want to pet the dog," and "Pink Teddy is the *best* stuffed animal!" explain my internet search for colleges? For more on the idea that a demand for contrastive reasons under the assumption that the world is determined risks pointing to irrelevant contrastive reasons (thus, infusing the anti-libertarian account with a different luck (i.e., randomness) problem), see Elzein (2019).

Is it even possible for Gwen*¹ to provide a satisfactory answer to this question? Not without suggesting that one child's life is worth more than the other's (which is not the case). The only way to suggest that Gwen*¹'s decision to save her daughter *over her son* was rational in the sense demanded by the anti-libertarian is to deny the premise that Gwen*¹ had just as much reason to save her son (something we stipulated that she did have). In fact, had Gwen*¹ saved her son instead of her daughter, we would be in the same predicament; we'd be searching for some scale-tipping reason for why she *decided to decide* to save her son over her daughter. Because Gwen*¹ really could have saved either child (in the libertarian sense of "could"), there cannot be a complete contrastive explanation for why she saves the child that she does. This fact does not make Gwen*¹'s action irrational or unintelligible. It's what makes the situation a real dilemma.

Like most philosophical dilemmas of the *Sophie's Choice* variety, if pushed to provide an explanation for why Gwen*¹ saved her daughter and not her son, Gwen*¹ may ultimately exclaim, "Because I could only save one, and I had to choose!" An obtuse and insensitive relative might press on, "So, why did you choose *your daughter*?" The real answer, as unsatisfying as it is, is simple (it is a SEN with a simple contrastive reason):

Gwen*¹ chose her daughter because she had to choose one, and she did not choose her son.

To be clear, the answer would be identical with the words 'daughter' and 'son' switched had Gwen*¹ chosen to save her son. Regardless of who she chooses, we know she intentionally chooses and acts. We know this even though it is impossible for Gwen*¹ to provide a complete contrastive explanation.

R-R Fallacy: A Category Mistake

Unlike Davidson's argument for why explanatory reasons must be causes (i.e., motivating reasons), explanatory reasons do not need complete contrastive explanations to be rendered intelligible. It's not the sort of thing that they are. Similarly, they do not need complete contrastive explanations to *be* explanatory reasons. As noted above, Gwen*¹ could say that she chose her daughter *because* she didn't choose her son. And while that is a contrastive explanation (i.e., because I didn't choose to act on the other reasons), it's not a *complete contrastive explanation*; it does not reveal Gwen*¹'s reason for acting to be a sufficient one (because it wasn't). Nevertheless, Gwen*¹ did not act arbitrarily. She did not act *for no particular reason*. She did what she did to save her daughter's life.

Explanatory reasons are not relative properties that only come into existence through some relation between two distinct beings or substances. It is not as though they are the reason equivalent of "to the left" and "to the right." A motivating reason explains an action provided the agent did act for that reason, full stop.

The R-R fallacy seems to stem from a category mistake. The examples I've provided all confuse the sort of thing motivational reasons are and how they factor into action explanations. Explanatory reasons are one type of reason, and contrastive reasons are another. While both can be used to explain, neither requires the other *to be the sort of thing that it is*—to qualify as a reason. Similarly, bleach and soap both clean. It's not as though for bleach to be bleach (or for bleach to clean) it *must* be accompanied by soap. These are not the sort of things (like *being to the right* and *being to the left*) that can only exist together. Thinking otherwise is a category error.

Explaining Anomalies

When explaining a free action, the libertarian points to the actual reason for the behavior—the one for which it was done. However, it may not have been the only reason in favor of the actual behavior, and there may have been other reasons in favor of contrary behavior. This is the case because acting on any relevant reason explains something, and it explains something irrespective of other available reasons not actualized. Indeed, this is true even when the actual course of events was unlikely.

For example, imagine that Amber's motivational set renders a .75 probability that she will do the reading for tomorrow's philosophy class (something she believes is best) and a .25 probability that she will watch reruns on the National Geographic Channel instead (something she wants to do because it's fun). While there was a greater probability that Amber would do her reading, her choosing to watch reruns is not inexplicable simply because the actual sequence is contrary to the most likely sequence. The actual sequence is explained by the .25 probability. Even though the reason was neither the best available nor the weightiest, the reason can explain why Amber watched television on this occasion because that reason is *the* reason Amber watched television. Bad or inferior reasons are still reasons, and pointing to them shows the reasonableness of even our akratic actions.

Again, if the anti-libertarian disbelieves Amber, and asks her to give a reason for acting on her reasons in favor of watching the National Geographic Channel, the objector takes the inquiry a step too far. Why must Amber have a reason for acting on a reason that she had? Isn't the reason itself enough? Didn't she choose to act as she did on the basis of the reason for action, and not anything beyond that?

While it is possible that there could be something beyond Amber's actual motivating reason, the libertarian maintains that there need not be. For example, we might suppose that Amber has some neurological anomaly that makes her more susceptible to *akrasia* than the average person. While that might satisfy the anti-libertarian, it does so at the cost of cheating; because we stipulated that Amber had a 0.75 chance of acting according to her better judgment. Changing her backstory to make better sense of her story also changes the odds.

Bait and Switch: Wrong Types of Reasons

It is also possible to commit the R-R fallacy by equivocating between different types of reasons. Amber's choice is explained by her reasons to watch television (i.e., that she wanted to). If Amber's colleague, Erika, were to ask Amber to explain further why she behaved as she did, perhaps Amber could parse her reasons more specifically. She might say that she was sleepy, and it is easier to watch television than it is to read philosophy when one is sleepy. She might add that, as an anthropology major, she especially enjoys shows on the National Geographic Channel. All such reasons are reasons in favor of Amber's choice and, we presume, the reasons for which she acted. But none of these reasons suggests that Amber could not have read her philosophy assignment. She might have instead brewed some coffee, set the DVR to record the television series, and started reading. If Erika were to respond that she now "understands" why Amber couldn't do her philosophy reading, Amber might be offended by the suggestion that she is not an autonomous and responsible student. Amber might tell Erika that she really could have done her philosophy reading; she just didn't do it. She might admit that there is no excuse for not doing the reading even if there is an explanation.

A less noble akratic than Amber might take advantage of someone like Erika, whose impression of the situation leads her to excuse bad choices. One might mistake explanatory reasons for excuses. If we expect explanatory reasons to illustrate not only why someone acted as they did, but also why they *had to do so*, we might not realize that we've shifted from the task of explaining to judging and excusing. But normative reasons and mitigating reasons are different kinds of reasons. We refer to excuses when we are exonerating an agent from blame or responsibility. But not all explanations are excuses.

One might also commit the r-r fallacy by confusing causally relevant explanations for reasons, on the one hand, with the causal determination of actions, on the other. For example, imagine that Amber's other colleague, Tim, pushes the issue further. Perhaps, after some prodding, he gets Amber to admit that she has wanted to be an anthropologist ever since her family visited Epcot Center. Amber reminisces about how well the family got along on that trip. This fond memory was coupled with family viewings of the Indiana Jones movies. The following year, Amber's favorite teacher happened to be the social studies teacher, and this teacher more than anyone else encouraged Amber to go to college. This Freudian analysis of the origins of Amber's affinity for anthropology, while interesting, does not, according to the libertarian, explain why Amber failed to do her philosophy reading. Even if our reasons are determined for us, it needn't be the case that we are determined by them.¹⁵

15 Galen Strawson's argument (1994) that moral responsibility is impossible depends largely on the opposite claim; that if who we are is determined for us, who we become is necessarily determined by the preceding.

Allow me to explain further. Imagine that Ian is decorating his house, and he gives Forrest and Alex the privilege of deciding the color of each room. Instead of asking Forrest and Alex which color they would like for each room, Ian provides them with options. In one room, Ian asks Forrest to choose between red, blue, and yellow. In the next room Ian gives Alex the options of pink, purple, and beige. In a third room, the two must decide together whether hunter green, teal, or lime is the best choice. Are Forrest and Alex not choosing freely because their options are determined for them? Even if they would prefer different colors altogether, it does not mean that they are not choosing freely when they do choose. If Forrest would have preferred to pick the color of the second room, does that mean that he is not acting freely when he selects blue in the first room? It would not seem so. It does not follow from the fact that Forrest and Alex did not choose the options they have that they cannot choose *from* those options.

Asking an agent why she did something and asking an agent why she wanted to do that thing are two separate endeavors. The first is a request for a reasonable explanation for the behavior. The second asks the agent to reflect on the origin of her motives. It is perfectly possible that the former is free and undetermined while the latter is determined. While it might be a matter of *luck* or *chance* that we form the motives that we do, it does not mean that we cannot determine for ourselves which motives to indulge and which to suppress. If an agent's motivational set is sufficiently diverse, the agent can act for reasons in a multitude of ways on a libertarian picture of agency.¹⁶

One could act freely in the sense that libertarians want even if all the reasons available to the person are determined, so long as there are multiple enough-reasons that are genuine options for action. Libertarians who accept this picture could explain both why they performed an act (i.e., for reason *X*) and precisely why they had that reason (influences *Y* and/or *Z* that were out of her control). Even if it were possible for an agent to provide herself with a reason for action, the seemingly deficient causal history is irrelevant to the claim that once present, a reason may be employed. Both the belief that reasons are determined and the view that they are not so determined are, in fact, compatible with libertarianism. Therefore, the above refutation is flawed; for pointing out that one's desires, beliefs, etc. seem to be out of one's control is insufficient for discrediting libertarianism altogether.

16 I say "sufficiently diverse" because we can imagine that a person's influences are so extreme and homogenous that only one type of behavior is possible for her. For example, if a child were to be severely abused her entire youth, she might not have any reason to trust other human beings. Perhaps all her reasons motivate her to avoid others at all costs. Examples such as this one needn't pose a challenge to libertarian views. Libertarians can, much like the rest of us want to do, admit that some people are not responsible given their extreme and unfortunate circumstances. Libertarians, like anyone else, can consider severe abuse agency-undermining.

V Diagnosing Our Confusion

The very nature of libertarianism insists that nothing make an agent perform a free act. For that reason, it is unfair to complain that there is no sensible explanation for why an agent performs one act rather than another that derives from antecedent conditions. The important question to raise instead is *must purpose causally determine the act for which it is done?* That is, is it possible that a free agent could act *for* a reason in such a way that is neither arbitrary nor forced?

The above discussion shows that there is nothing inherent to libertarian accounts that precludes free and rational indeterminate action. However, I am sympathetic that a lingering desire to cling to the objections of the r-r fallacy remains. At this point, I shall consider why this might be the case.

First, I believe that we equivocate between a sort of *intelligibility explanation* and *justificatory/excusing explanations* when we shift background assumptions of a deterministic world to an indeterministic one (much like Erika does above). Second, we fail to see that explanations are accounts of fixed states of affairs, which can result from either indeterministic or deterministic causes. Finally, we fail to distinguish the role of reasons in explanations (that of a fact in a causal chain of an event that is past, therefore, fixed) from the role reasons have in free action (that of an option to either be employed or forsaken).

Causal, Reasonable, and Justificatory Explanations

When we explain the cause of an event or act, we refer to that which brought the event or act about. When we explain the justification for something, we explain the supremacy of an option. In the case of determined events, there is a sense in which the factor we point to in both types of explanations is one and the same. The deterministic cause of an event is also the reason that event happened and nothing else could have happened in its place. The fact that the same *explanandum* is referred to in both types of explanation does not detract from the fact that these are different types of explanation. Neither is deficient in the absence of the other, even if we are used to seeing them together.

When we causally explain an indeterministic event, we are unable to explain *why* that event occurred against all other possibilities (i.e., we cannot provide a complete contrastive explanation). For example, if one were to ask a quantum physicist why a certain radioactive element decayed at a certain moment, the physicist would point to the probabilistic cause. Perhaps it only had a .25 probability of occurring as such. The scientist would still refer to the .25 as the causal reason. If we persist and point out, “but, there was a .75 probability that it wouldn’t do that...so why did it?” The answer would be the same—*because there existed a probability (in this case, .25) and, on this instance, it was actualized*. We are often quite accepting of this type of

explanation for non-human indeterministic events. So why are we so reluctant to accept similar explanations when it comes to human action? After all, isn't Amber's choice to watch television analogous to this one?

Perhaps we should keep separate in our thinking the notions of an act being *reasonable* (it was done for a reason that makes sense of the behavior) and an act being *justified* (normatively speaking, it was the best of all options). Actions done for the best reasons are reasonable *and* justified (i.e., such reasons explain both why the act was performed and why it ought to have been performed over other options). Thomas Nagel recognized that libertarians might say something to this effect. When discussing whether a man accepts a job, Nagel admits that libertarians could say that "intentional explanation...can explain either choice in terms of the appropriate reasons, since either choice would be intelligible if it occurred" (1995, p.38). However, Nagel and others recognize that while either explanation might suffice depending on which action is performed, neither by itself would be able to explain why one action was performed *rather than* another on a libertarian picture. This observation seems correct, and I see no way that libertarians could deny it. The libertarian can begin with the SEN, "Amber chose to watch television," adding the uninformative (but true) contrastive explanation, "*and* Amber did not choose to read her philosophy homework *because* she decided to watch television;" but the libertarian cannot (and does not want to) say that Amber could not have read her philosophy homework.

Determined Factors of Explanation

Libertarian free action is not explicable in the way determinists want.¹⁷ If acts are free in the libertarian sense, they are caused in such a way that the same cause could have yielded completely different effects. That is, any explanation of why one agent ψ -ed rather than ψ -ed will have to be a weak one; for perhaps he could have ψ -ed instead. If one asks why Jimmy hit Tommy, a SEN answer of "Jimmy chose to" explains the cause. However, it does not explain why that same cause did not result in a different effect. If Jimmy had hugged Tommy instead, the SEN would be the same (Jimmy chose to), even though the two acts (hitting and hugging) are typically done for radically different types of reasons.

17 Strawson demands that reason explanations be "fully explicable" (1995, p. 18). He either denies or overlooks (probably the former) that an appropriate response would involve acknowledging that reason explanations of action are always incomplete. Nagel recognizes this point but is dissatisfied with it. He writes, "But this seems to mean that an autonomous intentional explanation cannot explain precisely what it is supposed to explain, namely *why I did what I did rather than the alternative that was causally open to me*. It says I did it for certain reasons, but it does not explain why I didn't decide not to do it for other reasons" (1995, p. 38). While Nagel is clearly disappointed, a libertarian might argue that it would be more disappointing to think all our actions are illusory than to learn that reasons explanations are only *partially* illuminating.

Nevertheless, it must not be overlooked that there is something in the very nature of retrospective explanation that involves determinism.¹⁸ Assume that the world is not determined and that libertarian free will exists (and assume that Jimmy has it). Let us consider the determined factors in Jimmy and Tommy's situation. What factors are determined at the time just before the hitting? Perhaps some of Jimmy's impulses and desires are determined and out of his control. In addition, other trivial facts are determined (such as each boy's size, relative location, mobility, etc.). On the libertarian account, it is not determined that Jimmy *will* hit Tommy. Now, let us consider which factors are determined after the hitting. All previously mentioned factors *plus one more* are determined after the hitting. After the hitting, *that Jimmy hit Tommy* is now determined. It was determined *by* Jimmy. It is determined in the sense that it is in the past and cannot be reversed. It cannot *now* be otherwise that Jimmy hit Tommy, because Jimmy *already did* hit Tommy.

It is for these reasons that we employ the agent's desires, thoughts, and reasons in our explanations of their actions. In one sense, it was because of Jimmy's anger towards Tommy that he hit him. If Jimmy hadn't been angry, he might not have had a reason to hit Tommy. Libertarians might say that reasons are necessary but not sufficient conditions for free action. While Jimmy's anger played a role in his hitting Tommy, it was not *solely* because of his anger that the hitting occurred. Jimmy could have been in that exact mental state and chosen something else. Since the fact that he was angry was Jimmy's reason for hitting Tommy, we refer to that rather than his choice. That Jimmy chose to hit Tommy is obvious. That Jimmy was angry at Tommy for eating his cupcake might not have been apparent. Even if it were, it is not evident that *this* was Jimmy's reason for lashing out. Once Jimmy acts, his action is explicable in these terms because the reason's role is fixed; it is fixed because it was already employed.

We must distinguish between the way we speak when we explain and the objects of our explanation. Referring to beliefs, desires, etc. is informative. However, we mustn't jump to the conclusion that, in referencing such mental states, we identify complete contrastive explanations or sufficient reasons. We still benefit from considering such mental states even if they did not necessitate the behavior, because they paint a richer, more individualized context than the generic SEN, "They chose to." This is the case even if the agent could have chosen otherwise.

18 Nagel makes a similar observation: "The objective view seems to wipe out such autonomy because it admits only one kind of explanation of why something happened—causal explanation—and equates its absence with the absence of any explanation at all...the explanation of an occurrence must show how that occurrence...was necessitated by prior conditions and events." (1995, p. 37).

VI Concluding Remarks

Libertarians require some degree of indeterminism for behavior to be free. As we have just seen, opponents of libertarianism attack such views by trying to show a necessary connection between indeterminism and randomness, claiming that the very condition libertarians maintain is required for free and rational action undermines it. In this paper, I have argued that nothing about indeterminism implies randomness. Indeterministic actions need not be arbitrary nor uninfluenced, and they may occur in rationally comprehensible patterns. While alternative behaviors could have occurred and, if they had occurred, may have been rational, this does not mean that the actual behaviors are irrational. Referring to reasons that were employed in actions helps to explain those behaviors. But explaining explanatory reasons may not be as helpful. At the very least, it should not be required.

Bibliography

- Anton, A. L. (2015). *Moral responsibility and desert of praise and blame*. Lexington Books.
- Aristotle. (1995). *The complete works of Aristotle: The revised oxford translation*. (J. Barnes, Ed.). Princeton University Press.
- Ayer, A. J. (1972). Freedom and necessity. In A. J. Ayer (Ed.), *Philosophical essays* (pp. 271–84). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Burger, J. (2011). Alive and well after all these years. *The Psychologist*, 24(9), 654–57.
- Calude, C. S., Kroon, F., & Poznanovic, N. (2016). Free will is compatible with randomness. *Philosophical Inquiries*, 4(2), 37–52.
- Davidson, D. (1963). Actions, reasons, and causes. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 60(23), 685–700.
- Dennett, D. (1995). On giving libertarians what they say they want. In T. O'Connor (Ed.), *Agents, causes, and events: Essays on indeterminism and free will* (pp. 43–56). Oxford University Press.
- Doris, J. M.
- (1998). Persons, situations, and virtue ethics. *Noûs*, 32(4), 504–530.
- (2005). *Lack of character: Personality and moral behavior*. Cambridge University Press.
- Double, R. (1995). Libertarianism and rationality. In T. O'Connor (Ed.), *Agents, causes, and events: Essays on indeterminism and free will* (pp. 57–65). Oxford University Press.

- Elzein, N. (2019). The demand for contrastive explanations. *Philosophical Studies*, 176(5), 1325–39.
- Ginet, C.
- (1989). Reasons explanations of action: An incompatibilist account. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 3(Philosophy of mind and action theory), 17–46.
- (1990). *On action*. Cambridge University Press.
- (2016). Reasons explanation: Further defense of a non-causal account. *The Journal of Ethics*, 20, 219–228.
- Isen, A. M., and P. F. Levin. (1972). Effect of feeling good on helping: Cookies and kindness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 21(3), 384–88.
- Kane, R. (1996). *The significance of free will*. Oxford University Press.
- Kearns, S. (2015). Free will agnosticism. *Noûs*, 49(2), 235–52.
- Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(4), 371–78.
- Miller, C. (2003). Social psychology and virtue ethics. *The Journal of Ethics*, 7, 365–92.
- Nagel, Thomas. (1995). The problem of autonomy. In T. O'Connor (Ed.), *Agents, causes, and events: Essays on indeterminism and free will* (pp. 33–42). Oxford University Press.
- Scanlon, T. M. (1986). The significance of choice. In *The Tanner lectures on human values* (pp. 151–216). Oxford University Press.
- Smith, M. (1995). Internal reasons. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55(1), 109–31.
- Snedegar, Justin. (2017). *Contrastive reasons*. Oxford University Press.
- Strawson, Galen.
- (1994) The impossibility of moral responsibility. *Philosophical Studies*, 75(1), 5–24.
- (1995). Libertarianism, action, and self-determination. In T. O'Connor (Ed.), *Agents, causes, and events: Essays on indeterminism and free will* (pp. 13–32). Oxford University Press.
- Williams, B. (2002). Internal and external reasons. In B. Williams (Ed.), *Moral luck: Philosophical papers, 1973–1980*, (pp. 101–13). Cambridge University Press.