

A COMPANION TO
FREE WILL

EDITED BY
Joseph Campbell, Kristin M. Mickelson,
and V. Alan White



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A Companion to Free Will

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For Ella Mae (Moore) White
who modeled φίλος and σοφῶς in life

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List of Contributors

Mark Balaguer is professor of philosophy at California State University, Los Angeles. He is the author of four books – *Platonism and Anti-Platonism in Mathematics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), *Free Will as an Open Scientific Problem* (MIT Press, 2010), *Free Will* (MIT Press, 2014), and *Metaphysics, Sophistry, and Illusion: Toward a Widespread Non-Factualism* (Oxford University Press, 2021). He has also published numerous articles on a wide range of philosophical topics in journals such as *Mind*, *Nous*, and *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

Joseph Campbell is professor of philosophy in the School of Politics, Philosophy, and Public Affairs at Washington State University. He is co-founder of the Inland Northwest Philosophy Conference and has helped organize scores of philosophy conferences and public events. Professor Campbell has edited nine books as well as numerous papers for the *Journal of Ethics*, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and *Philosophical Studies*. He is the recipient of the Marian E. Smith Faculty Achievement Award and the Honors Thesis Advisor Award.

Justin Capes is assistant professor of philosophy in the School of Humanities and Science at Flagler College and an Associate Editor for the *Journal of Ethics*. He writes on topics in moral philosophy and the philosophy of action, especially those having to do with free will and moral responsibility. His published work on these issues has appeared in journals such as *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Philosophical Studies*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, *Erkenntnis*, *Social Philosophy & Policy*, among others. He is currently in the process of finishing a book defending the much-debated Principle of Alternative Possibilities.

Florian Cova is a visiting assistant professor at University Geneva, Switzerland. As an experimental philosopher, his research is at the intersection between philosophy and cognitive science and explores how we think about a multitude of philosophical issues: aesthetics, free will, intentional action, or morality. His current work investigates people's conceptions of the meaning of life and the role emotions play in our search for a meaningful life. He is the coeditor of *Advances in Experimental Philosophy of Aesthetics* and has published in journals including *Consciousness & Cognition*, *Mind and Language*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *Philosophical Psychology*, *Philosophical Studies* and the infamous *Asian Journal of Medicine and Health*.

Osín Deery is ARC DECRA fellow and lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Macquarie University, Sydney, and assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy, York University, Toronto. His research is primarily in the philosophy of mind and action. He is currently working on issues in artificial intelligence, including ethical issues related to agency, for a three-year

research project funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC). His monograph, *Naturally Free Action*, appeared in 2021 with Oxford University Press. In 2013, he published a coedited volume with Oxford University Press, *The Philosophy of Free Will: Essential Readings from the Contemporary Debates*. His articles have appeared in *Philosophical Studies*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Synthese*, and *Philosophical Psychology*.

Laura W. Ekstrom is Francis S. Haserot Chancellor professor of philosophy at William & Mary. She is a graduate of Stanford University (B.A.) and the University of Arizona (PhD). Her books include *God, Suffering, and the Value of Free Will* (Oxford University Press, 2021) and *Free Will: A Philosophical Study* (Westview Press, 2000). Her articles on autonomy, moral responsibility, causation, chance, free will, compassion, and suffering have been published in academic journals including *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Synthese*, *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, and *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, as well as in edited collections published by Blackwell, Routledge, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge University Press.

Alicia Finch is associate professor of philosophy at Northern Illinois University. Her research has focused on the metaphysics of free will and moral responsibility, and she has taught courses in metaphysics, meta metaphysics, philosophy of religion, moral psychology, ancient philosophy, feminism, and the philosophy of race. Prior to joining NIU's faculty, she was a post-doctoral research fellow at the Notre Dame Center for Philosophy of Religion and assistant professor of philosophy at Saint Louis University. She received her B.A. in Philosophy and Political Science from the University of Missouri at Columbia, and her M.A. and PhD in Philosophy from the University of Notre Dame.

Meghan Griffith is professor of philosophy at Davidson College. She is interested in moral responsibility, free will, the metaphysics of agency, and other topics related to human action. She has published a number of journal articles and book chapters on these topics. She is the author of *Free Will: The Basics*, 2nd Edition (Routledge, 2022), and a co-editor of the *Routledge Companion to Free Will* (Routledge, 2017). Recent research focuses on the role our narrative capacities play in the development of morally responsible agency.

Ishtiyaque Haji is professor of philosophy at the University of Calgary. He has research interests in ethical theory, philosophy of action, metaphysics, and philosophical psychology. He is the author of *Moral Appraisability* (1998), *Deontic Morality and Control* (2002), (with Stefaan Cuypers) *Moral Responsibility, Authenticity, and Education* (2008), *Freedom and Value* (2009), *Incompatibilism's Allure* (2009), *Reason's Debt to Freedom* (2012), *Luck's Mischief* (2016), *The Obligation Dilemma* (2019), and *Obligation and Responsibility* (2023).

Robert J. Hartman is an assistant professor of philosophy at Ohio Northern University. He works mainly on agency and responsibility, character and virtue, and philosophy of religion. Currently, he is writing a monograph titled *Character and Free Will*. He is the author of *In Defense of Moral Luck: Why Luck Often Affects Praiseworthiness and Blameworthiness* (Routledge 2017) and co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy and Psychology of Luck* (Routledge 2019). His work also appears in journals such as *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Erkenntnis*, *Faith and Philosophy*, *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, *Philosophical Studies*, and *Thought*.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Leftow is William P Alston professor of the philosophy of religion and co-director of the Rutgers Center for Philosophy of Religion, Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University. He is also an Emeritus Fellow of Oriel College Oxford. He is the author of *Anselm's Argument* (OUP, 2022), *God and Necessity* (OUP 2012), *Time and Eternity* (Cornell, 1991), and well over 100 articles in philosophy of religion, metaphysics, and medieval philosophy. For 16 years he was Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion, Oxford University, and a Fellow of Oriel.

Neil Levy is professor of philosophy at Macquarie University, Sydney, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, University of Oxford. He is a wide-ranging philosopher, who has published books and articles on free will, social epistemology, applied ethics, philosophy of mind, and other topics. His major work on free will is *Hard Luck: How Luck Undermines Free Will and Moral Responsibility* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

Ken M. Levy is the Holt B. Harrison professor of law at LSU Law School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He teaches courses in criminal law and has published articles in several areas, including free will and responsibility, criminal theory, and constitutional law. He recently published a book entitled *Free Will, Responsibility, and Crime: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2020).

Kenji Lota is a graduate student in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Miami. Before coming to the University of Miami, he completed his master's degree in philosophy at Concordia University in Montreal. His research interests are in epistemology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of action. His current work explores different ways of understanding interrogative attitudes, the norms that govern those attitudes, and how it relates to free will and action. He has coauthored papers that will appear in *Erkenntnis* and *Ergo*.

Marilyn McCord Adams (1943–2017) spent the longest part of her career as a philosophy professor at the University of California–Los Angeles (1972–1993). She moved from there to the Divinity School at Yale, as professor of the history of Christian doctrine in the medieval and early modern periods (1993–2003). Crossing the ocean, she became the first woman to hold the post of Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University – the first woman to hold that historic post. Her major books were *William Ockham*, in two volumes (1987), *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (1999), *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (2006), and *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist* (2010).

Kelly McCormick is an associate professor of philosophy at Texas Christian University. Her research primarily concerns free will and moral responsibility, with special emphasis on the permissibility of blame and the variety of methodological issues that give rise to disagreement between eliminativists and preservationists. Her first monograph on these issues, *The Problem of Blame: Making Sense of Moral Anger*, will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2022. Her publications also appear in journals including *Philosophical Studies*, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, *Criminal Justice Ethics*, *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, and *The Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*.

Alfred R. Mele is the William H. and Lucyle T. Werkmeister Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University. He is the author of thirteen books and over 250 articles and editor of seven books. He is past director of two multi-million-dollar, interdisciplinary projects: the Big Questions in Free Will project (2010–13) and the Philosophy and Science of Self-Control project (2014–17). His latest book is *Free Will: An Opinionated Guide* (Oxford University Press, 2022). Free will is one of his favorite topics.

Kristin M. Mickelson earned her Ph.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder and spent two years as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden) in the Lund-Gothenburg Responsibility Project. She is now an independent researcher who works on the metaphysics of free will (broadly construed), the logic of explanation, and moral luck. She is particularly interested in redressing anomalies and stalemates that emerged in the free-will debate during the degeneration of the classical analytic paradigm (CAP). Towards that end, she has developed an alternative (non-classical) way of framing the problem of free will – she calls it “The Paradox Paradigm” – which opens up new avenues of research by exposing the dialectical connections between famous paradoxes of control, including the paradox of (in) determinism, the paradox of self-creation, and the paradox of moral luck. Her published work appears in venues such as *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, *Philosophia*, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, and *Social Philosophy & Policy*.

Eddy Nahmias is professor and Chair of philosophy at Georgia State University. His research is devoted to the study of human agency: what it is, how it is possible, and how it accords with scientific accounts of human nature. His primary focus is the free-will debate, including potential threats to free will posed by the sciences of the mind, and conversely, what these sciences can illuminate how free will works in humans. He has published over 40 articles in these areas, and is co-editor of *The Natural Method: Essays on Mind, Self, and Ethics in Honor of Owen Flanagan* and *Moral Psychology: Historical and Contemporary Readings*.

Shaun Nichols is professor of philosophy at Cornell University. His research concerns the psychological underpinnings of philosophical thought. He is the author of *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment*, *Bound: Essays on Free Will and Moral Responsibility*, and *Rational Rules: Towards a Theory of Moral Learning*, and he has published over 100 articles in academic journals in philosophy and psychology.

Derk Pereboom is the Susan Linn Sage Professor in the department of philosophy at Cornell University. His areas of research include free will and moral responsibility, philosophy of mind, and early modern philosophy, especially Kant. He is the author of *Living without Free Will* (Cambridge 2001), *Consciousness and the Prospects of Physicalism* (Oxford 2011), *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life* (Oxford 2014), and *Wrongdoing and the Moral Emotions* (Oxford 2021). He has published articles on free will and moral responsibility, consciousness and physicalism, nonreductive materialism, philosophy of religion, and on Kant’s metaphysics and epistemology.

Robyn Repko Waller is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Sussex. Her primary research interests lie in philosophy of mind and philosophy of cognitive science. She has published papers on agency, free will, causation, moral responsibility, neuroethics, and biomedical ethics in journals such as the *Monist*, *Philosophical Psychology*, *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, *Synthese*, and the *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, as well as forthcoming chapters in academic press anthologies.

Philip Robichaud is associate professor of philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His areas of research specialization are moral responsibility, value theory, and the ethics of behavioral interventions, such as nudges. He coedited with Jan Willem Wieland the edited volume *Responsibility: The Epistemic Condition*, and his journal publications have appeared in *Ethics*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *The Monist*, and *Science and Engineering Ethics*.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Saul Smilansky (D.Phil., Oxford) is a professor at the Department of Philosophy, University of Haifa, Israel. He works primarily on normative and applied ethics, the free will problem, and meaning in life. Currently he is working on the idea of “Crazy Ethics” where matters seem true (or at least plausible) yet absurd. He is the author of *Free Will and Illusion* (Oxford University Press 2000), *10 Moral Paradoxes* (Blackwell 2007), and one hundred papers in journals and edited collections.

Hannah Tierney is an assistant professor in the philosophy department at the University of California, Davis. She has broad philosophical interests, and writes mainly on issues of free will, moral responsibility, and personal identity. Her publications appear in journals including *Analysis*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Journal of Philosophy*, and *Philosophical Studies*.

Manuel Vargas is professor of philosophy at the University of California San Diego. He is the author of *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* and a coauthor of *Four Views on Free Will*. He works on questions at the intersection of agency and morality, and on topics in the history of Latin American philosophy.

Leigh Vicens is associate professor of philosophy at Augustana University in Sioux Falls, SD. Her research interests include metaphysical and ethical questions related to human freedom and moral responsibility, and related topics in philosophy of religion such as divine providence and the problem of evil. She is the coauthor of *God and Human Freedom* with Simon Kittle (Cambridge University Press, 2019) and coeditor of *Theological Determinism: New Perspectives* with Peter Furlong (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). Her publications include articles in a number of journals, and she is currently Book Review Editor at *Faith and Philosophy*.

Kadri Vihvelin is professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California. She has a longstanding interest in puzzles about free will and freedom of action, and has defended controversial claims about both. About free will, she argues that the victim of Frankfurt’s counterfactual intervener retains free will despite his counterfactual shackles. About freedom of action, she argues that common sense is right and philosophical orthodoxy wrong: Lewis’s time traveling Tim really cannot kill Grandfather. Her book, *Causes, Laws, and Free Will: Why Determinism Doesn’t Matter*, was published in 2013 by Oxford University Press. Her work on topics at the intersection of metaphysics and ethics, including causation, dispositions, and the doing/allowing distinction, has appeared in *The Journal of Philosophy*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, and *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, among others.

Ryan Wasserman is professor of philosophy at Western Washington University. His main interests are in metaphysics, ethics, and the philosophy of language. He has published papers in many journals, including *Mind*, *Noûs*, *Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophical Studies*, and *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. He is also the author of *Paradoxes of Time Travel* (Oxford University Press, 2018) and the coeditor of *Metametaphysics* (Oxford University Press, 2008) and has written on various issues relating to free will.

V. Alan White is professor of philosophy Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, Manitowoc Campus. He is the author of numerous articles in metaphysics as well as pedagogy, appearing in *Analysis*, *Erkenntnis*, *Philosophy*, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Process Studies*, and *Teaching Philosophy*, among many other journals and chapters in books. He also

for many years has written and performed dozens of philosophical parodies on his internet site *Philosophy Songs*, where he invites feedback for “encouragement or forgiveness.” He was the 1996 recipient of a Carnegie/CASE teaching award as Wisconsin Professor of the Year, and in 2009 of the University of Wisconsin Colleges Chancellor’s Award for Excellence, presented in Madison, Wisconsin.

Philip Woodward is assistant professor of Philosophy at Niagara University. His research is predominantly in the philosophy of mind and philosophical anthropology, focusing especially on the connection between consciousness and various other aspects of personhood, including intentionality, rationality, and agency. For academic year 2021–2022 he was awarded a residential research fellowship at the Henry Center for Theological Understanding. His publications appear in journals such as *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophical Psychology*, and *Phenomenology & Mind*.

Jessica Wright is an ethicist and policy analyst interested in bias, responsibility, and health policy. She completed her PhD thesis in philosophy, *Owning Implicit Attitudes*, at the University of Toronto. She is currently working on questions at the intersection of ethics and health policy, with a focus on health equity.

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Introduction, *Wiley Companion to Free Will*

KRISTIN M. MICKELSON, JOSEPH CAMPBELL,
AND V. ALAN WHITE

Brackets are used to refer to chapters in this volume (e.g. [10] refers to Chapter 10 of the volume).
A glossary of **bolded** terms is provided at the end of this chapter.

We wish this volume to be a sure companion to the study of free will, broadly construed to include action theory, moral and legal responsibility, and cohort studies feathering off into adjacent fields in the liberal arts and sciences. In addition to general coverage of the discipline, this volume attempts a more challenging and complementary accompaniment to many familiar narratives about free will. In order to map out some directions such accompaniment will take, in this introduction we anchor the thirty contributions to this volume in some common history from which they arise, and attempt to indicate where future work in free will and moral responsibility will—and has already begun to—depart from that history.

1 Preliminaries: Free Will and Determinism

The concept of free will is fraught with controversy, as readers of this volume likely know. Philosophers disagree about what free will is, whether we have it, what mitigates or destroys it, and what (if anything) it's good for. Indeed, philosophers even disagree about how to fix the referent of the term 'free will' for purposes of describing and exploring these disagreements (Nichols [28]). What one person considers a reasonably neutral working definition of 'free will' is often considered question-begging or otherwise misguided by another. Such disputes make it difficult to summarize the **problem of free will**, roughly the debate over the nature and existence of free will, in a clear and uncontentious way. In generic terms, however, the two basic solutions to the problem of free will are **free-willism**, the view that we (ordinary humans) have free will, and **free-will denialism**, i.e. the view that we do not have free will (Smilansky [12]).¹ As stated here, neither denialism nor free-willism constitutes a complete solution to the problem of free will; to be complete, a proposed solution must also tell us a convincing story about what free will *is* (what 'free will' *means*) and that, as it turns out, is a very difficult task indeed.

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One historically popular way of approaching the problem of free will is to ask about the *relationship* between free will and determinism: “Does free will stand in relation R to determinism: *yes* or *no*?” This is just a template for a question, of course. To transform this template-question into a substantive question with a clear meaning, we need to flesh out the template’s free-will relatum, its determinism relatum, and give a precise value to relation R . There is, however, no uncontroversial way to do this. In addition to the standard difficulties raised by fixing the referent of ‘free will’, philosophers hold radically different views about what is – or should be – meant by the term ‘determinism’ (White [3], Vihvelin[14]; see also Beebe and Mele 2002, Shabo 2010), and they identify relations which are as substantively different as correlation and causation when characterising relation R (Mickelson [4]). In practical terms, then, it may be best to think of **the problem of determinism** as a loose collection of disagreements about how to best spell out and answer the template-question, and how (if at all) asking and answering such questions would help us to solve the problem of free will.

The term ‘determinism’ was ushered into the free-will literature in the 19th century, but the doctrine may be traced back to the Stoic’s naturalistic cause-and-effect theory of fate (Bobzien 1998, 2021), which may be contrasted with logical and theological varieties of fate which have also been of traditional interest vis-a-vis free will (Finch [2]). William James, in his influential “Dilemma of Determinism,” tells his audience that “no ambiguities hang about this word [determinism] or about its opposite, indeterminism” (James 1884). According to James, determinism “professes that those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree what the other parts shall be” such that the “future has no ambiguous possibilities hidden in its womb.” Indeterminism, says James, is true whenever “the parts have a certain amount of loose play on one another, so that the laying down of one of them does not necessarily determine what the others shall be” (James 1884). Put another way, **traditional determinism** (i.e. determinism as it was traditionally conceived within the free-will debate) is the doctrine that there is a causal or nomological necessity in nature which makes one unique future inevitable given what preceded it. **Traditional indeterminism** is the negation of traditional determinism; it is true if and only if it is false that one unique future is inevitable relative to any arbitrary moment in time (holding fixed the naturalistic factors which account for the evolution of the physical universe and the facts of the past, if any, relative to that time) (e.g. van Inwagen 1990, p. 277). Hereafter, we use ‘determinism’ as shorthand for traditional determinism and ‘indeterminism’ as shorthand for traditional indeterminism, unless stated otherwise.

Faced with the idea of determinism, many people, especially those working within the Christian tradition (Adams [7]), have argued that no one could exercise free will in a world at which this necessity-in-nature doctrine of predetermination is true; others—including the ancient Stoics—have disagreed. One popular way of tracking this age-old dispute has been to divide philosophers based on their answers to two questions: (1) “Is determinism true?” and (2) “Do we—ordinary humans—have free will?”. Those who answered “yes” to the first question were classified as *determinists*, and they were subdivided based on their preferred response to the second question. Determinists who answered “no” were classified as *hard* determinists, while those who answered “yes” were classified as *soft* determinists (James 1884). The determinists were contrasted primarily with *libertarians*, i.e. philosophers who answered “no” to the first question and “yes” to the second.² The term ‘hard’ in hard determinism indicates that some species of denialism is true. Despite their substantive differences, the soft determinists and libertarians agreed that denialism is false, which is to say that they agreed that free-willism is true.

In an innovative move, a group of philosophers working in the so-called *classical period* of the free-will debate, c. 1965–1985 (van Inwagen 2017), shifted the focal point away from the question of whether determinism is true to more theoretical questions which (according to their diagnosis) lay just under the surface of the pre-classical taxonomy of free-will views. One question was singled out as particularly important:

Is there a *conflict* or *tension* between the very notions of *free will* and *determinism*, such that if determinism were true, it would follow that determinism-related factors, i.e. the causal and/or nomological factors described by determinism, *preclude* free will (as the hard determinists and libertarians propose) or is there no such conflict (as the soft determinists believed)?

To raise the same question in slightly different terms, we could say—following the popular practice of using “luck” as shorthand for *factors beyond one’s control* (Hartman [23], Mickelson [4])—that these theorists were focused on the narrow question of whether or not *determinism-related causal luck* poses a distinct threat to free will. The challenge of answering the question of whether determinism (i.e. determinism-related causal factors beyond one’s control, determinism-related causal luck) precludes human free will is now widely known as **The Compatibility Problem**.

The Compatibility Problem was initially nested within the dominant research paradigm of the classical period: the **classical analytic paradigm (CAP)** (Mickelson [4]). Among CAP’s defining background assumptions, the assumption of **classical possibilism** is especially significant. Classical possibilism may be understood as the conjunction of two claims: (1) the **classical account of free will** is correct, i.e. free will is (some kind of) an ability to do otherwise, and (2) **anthropocentric possibilism**, the view that it is metaphysically possible for an ordinary human to exercise free will, is true (e.g. van Inwagen 1983, Clarke 2003, Vihvelin 2013, Mickelson [4]).

By assuming classical possibilism, CAP theorists (i.e. philosophers working within CAP) restricted the compatibility problem to the **classical compatibility problem**, roughly a debate about which possibilist interpretation of the ability to do otherwise is best. On the one hand, **classical incompatibilists** (e.g. Peter van Inwagen 1983) contend that a person exercises the ability to do otherwise (a.k.a. free will) when performing an action only if there is some kind of *indeterministic leeway* in the evolution of the physical world (see Smilansky [12], Balaguer [19]).³ Since all classical theorists accept classical possibilism, classical incompatibilism comes bundled with the endorsement of a broadly libertarian account of free will.⁴ As such, it is easy for the classical incompatibilist to explain why there is a deep conceptual *conflict* or an antagonistic *incompatibility* relation between the notions of free will and determinism. Since determinism states that there are naturalistic factors (i.e. determinism-related factors) which eliminate all indeterministic leeway in the evolution of the world, to say that determinism is true is to say that the world includes factors which eliminate the type of indeterministic leeway (whatever type that may be) that an exercise of free will requires.⁵ On the other hand, **classical compatibilists** (e.g. Keith Lehrer 1990) argue that indeterministic leeway is not required to exercise the ability to do otherwise. According to the classical compatibilist, the mere fact that determinism-related factors rule out all indeterministic leeway does not mean—*pace* the classical incompatibilists—that determinism-related factors rule out the ability to do otherwise (a.k.a. free will). However, classical compatibilists do not merely reject the classical incompatibilists’ “causal factors” *explanation* for the purported fact that normal humans cannot act freely when determinism; they are also committed, given their assumption of classical possibilism, to a classical version of **compossibilism**, the view that it is metaphysically possible

for an ordinary human to act freely in a world at which determinism is true (Mickelson [4]). As such, the classical compatibility problem may be summarized as the challenge of settling which of two views, classical (compossibilist) compatibilism or classical (broadly libertarian) incompatibilism, is correct.⁶

Challenges to CAP have given rise to other perspectives on the compatibility problem and to fundamentally different interpretations of the problem of determinism. Three challenges are worth noting, given their profound impact on the trajectory of the recent history of the free-will debate. Two of these challenges target the CAP assumption that classical possibilism is true, while the third challenges CAP's implicit practice of framing the problem of determinism as a narrow dispute about the relationship between free will and causal luck.

The first major strike against classical possibilism came in the form of Harry Frankfurt's influential criticisms of the classical (a.k.a. leeway) account of free will (Frankfurt 1969) specifically what are now known as "Frankfurt examples" (Haji [6]). By casting doubt on the classical conception of free will, Frankfurt examples motivated interest in non-classical accounts of free will, especially *sourcehood* accounts (Haji [6], Capes [9]). This, which is perhaps the most well-known critique of CAP's background assumptions, was not considered a fatal flaw in the CAP approach to the problem of determinism. Rather, it led philosophers to think that the term 'free will' should not be narrowly defined to mean "an ability to do otherwise" in generic statements of the compatibility problem. In such contexts, 'free will' should instead be defined in a way that opens dialectical space for a lively debate about which account of free will is correct.

This shift in the working definition of 'free will' led to the popularization of the **neo-classical compatibility problem**, which is (at least superficially) just like the classical compatibility problem except that the term 'free will' is used more broadly. The neo-classical use of 'free will' allows that the classical account of free will may be true, but it also allows that some non-classical account (e.g. a sourcehood account) may be correct. The two recognized solutions to the neo-classical compatibility problem are **neo-classical incompatibilism**, the view that is metaphysically impossible because determinism-related factors undermine free will (neo-classically defined) in worlds at which determinism is true, and **neo-classical compatibilism**, the view that determinism-related factors pose no threat to free will and it is metaphysically possible for an ordinary human to exercise free will (neo-classically defined) in a world at which determinism is true.⁷ Criticism of the classical definition of 'free will' also contributed to the centralization of *moral responsibility* in neo-classical and non-classical definitions of the term 'free will' (Haji [6], McCormick [24]), a point that we return to below (Section 4).⁸

As sourcehood accounts became mainstream, they helped to normalize the idea that, *pace* CAP theorists, anthropocentric possibilism may be false. While some source theorists, including Frankfurt, became neo-classical *source compatibilists* (arguing that it is possible for an ordinary human to satisfy the necessary source condition on free will even when determinism is true, from which it follows that determinism-related factors do not always undermine free will), other source theorists became neo-classical *source incompatibilists* (arguing that determinism-related factors preclude free will in virtue of keeping people from satisfying the source condition—as opposed to the classical ability-to-do-otherwise condition) on free will. Some of these neo-classical source incompatibilists, e.g. Derk Pereboom 2001, 2014, were also concerned about apparent threats to free will posed by *indeterministic* causal factors (i.e. indeterministic forms of causal luck). Such concerns led to the emergence of Pereboom's **hard source incompatibilism**, a species of **anthropocentric impossibilism** which claims that it is metaphysically impossible for an ordinary human (i.e. someone like us, as we are here on Earth) to exercise free will on the grounds that, whether determinism is true or false, some kind of causal luck (i.e. causal factors beyond one's control) ensures that no normal

human satisfies the necessary source condition on free will.⁹ Since hard source incompatibilism clearly speaks against both tenets of classical possibilism—rejecting both the classical account of free will and the assumption of anthropocentric possibilism—it is a decisively non-CAP position.

To be clear, Pereboom's hard source incompatibilism is not an example of full-blooded **impossibilism**, the unqualified view that it is impossible for anyone—even God (Adams [7]; Leftow [11])—to exercise free will. Pereboom is sympathetic to a broadly agent-causal (as opposed to event-causal) libertarian account of free will (e.g. Pereboom 2001, 2014; Vicens [5]) and this keeps him from endorsing unqualified impossibilism. Hard source incompatibilism is an influential view in part because it promises to provide a complete solution to the problem of free will: the “source” part tells us what free will amounts to and the “hard” part signals its endorsement of denialism. The hard source incompatibilist route to solving the problem of free will is attractive, in part, because it allows its proponents to adopt denialism without taking a stand on the truth-value of determinism.

The growing popularity of source accounts of free will has also raised the profile of philosophers who have been arguing for unqualified **impossibilism**. Among impossibilists (e.g. Galen Stawson 1986, Levy 2011, Mickelson 2019b), some argue for the radically anti-CAP view that the specific factors beyond our control which keep us from acting freely are not located in our environment (e.g. states in the remote past or the laws of nature) but are instead located *entirely* in facts about us. Drawing again on the language of “luck,” these source impossibilists contend that causal luck is irrelevant to free will. They claim, instead, that *constitutive luck*—roughly luck in the way that one is constituted, especially in regards to how one is mentally (at least in certain key respects), at the time of action—keeps people from acting freely, no matter what one's environment is like. This **constitutive-luck source impossibilism**, like its rival hard (source) incompatibilism, provides a route to denialism which does not require us to resolve tricky empirical questions about whether determinism is true or false.

Since constitutive-luck source impossibilism is in direct conflict with all three of the CAP tenets discussed above, it is a paradigmatically non-CAP position. It should not be surprising, then, that this view defies classification in CAP-based terms (e.g. Vihvelin 2008, McKenna and Pereboom 2016, p. 151, Mickelson [4]). Since these impossibilists reject the **compossibilist** component of classical/neo-classical compatibilism, they are not “compatibilists” in any traditional sense; but these impossibilists are not “incompatibilists” in the traditional sense either, for they also reject the explanatory tenet of classical/neo-classical incompatibilism which identifies determinism-related factors (i.e. causal luck) as relevant to free will. Just as there is a clear sense in which constitutive-luck source impossibilism is both an *anti-compatibilist* and *anti-incompatibilist* position, there is also a sense in which it is both a compatibilist and incompatibilist position: it is *incompatibilist* insofar as it entails the modest impossibilist tenet of traditional forms of incompatibilism, but *compatibilist* insofar as it denies that determinism-related factors pose a threat to free will (for further discussion, see Mickelson [4], 2015a, 2019b). Philosophers have yet to reach a consensus on whether—and, if so, how—to update CAP-based jargon so that it tracks non-CAP views.¹⁰

The chapters in this volume reflect a variety of classical, neo-classical, and non-classical perspectives on the problem of free will and the problem of determinism. While CAP remains a powerful and popular research framework, alternative approaches promise to raise new questions and inspire fruitful lines of inquiry. A solution to the problem of free will may still be far off, but these new developments should help free-will theorists push back against the common complaint that the free-will debate is still mired in a dialectical stalemate between “compatibilists” and “incompatibilists.”

2 Compatibility Concerns: The Arguments

From the perspective of CAP theorists, the problem of free will is just the problem of determinism, and the problem of determinism boils down to the question of whether the thesis of determinism is logically incompatible with the **classical free-will thesis**, i.e. the thesis that some ordinary human exercises free will (assuming the classical definition of ‘free will’) (Mickelson [4]). The worry, in general terms, is that a certain kind of necessity (determinism) is at odds with a kind of contingency (free will). Looked at in this way, CAP compatibility concerns are part of a family of traditional worries raised by **predeterminisms**, including not only well-known problems about determinism (Campbell and Lota [8]), God’s omniscience (foreknowledge) and the logical principle of bivalence (Finch [2]), but also eternalism (Buckareff 2019), providential determinism, and socio-economic determinism. Many of these predeterminisms involve commitments to scientific, religious, even political world views. For instance, a Catholic might be committed to providential determinism, or a Marxist to socio-economic determinism. This partly explains why some compatibility problems are worrisome to some people, but not to others. If the predeterminism is disconnected to one’s world view, it is easy to give it up. Once we consider compatibility problems broadly—as involving any number of predeterminisms in conflict with free will—it is likely each of us has a worrisome compatibility problem waiting to be revealed.

The problem of determinism remains a popular entry point to the problem of free will, but it is not the only framework which draws upon notions of luck (i.e. factors beyond our control) to raise pressing questions about the nature and existence of free will. Even if one were to show that the future is not perfectly predetermined—by God, the laws of nature, the axioms of logic, or anything else—one would not have thereby made the case for free will. Even if a world without a pre-established future must include some type of indeterminacy, it is by no means obvious which type of indeterminacy is required. This raises a new concern: perhaps the best arguments in the literature, when taken together, will support the conclusion that free will is impossible whether or not there is indeterminacy in the world and, hence, that denialism is true.

From the ancient Epicurean idea that free will might be found in the random “swerve” of Democritean atoms (Pereboom 2009, pp. 17–18) to the modern idea that free will is grounded in the (purportedly) probabilistic behavior of quantum particles (Kane 2003; Balaguer [19]), many people have argued for a tight connection between free will and causal indeterminacy. As we have seen, CAP theorists are committed to solving the problem of free will through a very particular characterization of the problem of determinism and, given their commitment to classical possibilism, classical incompatibilists are committed to a broadly libertarian interpretation of free will. However, even CAP theorists who are committed to a libertarian analysis of the ability to do otherwise respected the worry that causal indeterminacy might “hurt” one’s efforts to exercise free will. For example, van Inwagen’s “freakish demon” manipulation argument (van Inwagen 1983, pp. 130–134) was the first of the so-called *manipulation arguments* (Capes [9], Mickelson 2017) to raise serious concerns about the incompatibility of free will and *indeterminism*. The more renowned *Mind* argument raised the same concerns (Campbell and Lota [8]). (It is called the “*Mind* argument” because influential versions of it were published in the journal of that name.) The *Mind* argument “occurs in three forms” or “three closely related strands of argument that are often twisted together” (van Inwagen 1983, p. 126). All the strands begin with “a certain set of reflections on what the nature of free action must be if the incompatibilist is right,” e.g., supposing the world is causally undetermined but productive of free action.¹¹

Van Inwagen notes there are structural similarities underlying the *Mind* Argument and the Consequence Argument, the most influential argument for classical incompatibilism, suggesting that if one is sound, then so must be the other (van Inwagen 1983, pp. 147–150; Campbell and Lota [8]). In broad strokes, the Consequence Argument is a seemingly simple conditional argument: If determinism is true, then everything we will ever do is a consequence of the laws of nature and states of the world in the remote past (prior to the existence of the first human); since we have no control over the past (Wasserman [10]) or the laws (Vihvelin [14]), we have no control—in just the sense picked out by ‘free will’—over anything we do. Yet, it seems not to matter much if we replace the laws of nature with probabilistic laws. Either way, we have “precious little free will” (van Inwagen 1989, p. 405).

As a CAP theorist, van Inwagen originally presented the Consequence Argument against the backdrop of CAP’s background assumptions, which places constraints on how we interpret this argument’s premises and conclusion. For example, the original CAP-based version of the Consequence Argument (hereafter, the *Classical Consequence Argument*) was specifically an argument for classical incompatibilism. That is, the Classical Consequence Argument concludes that it is impossible to exercise the ability to do otherwise picked out by the term ‘free will’ when determinism is true, from which it follows (given the CAP assumption of classical possibilism) that a libertarian interpretation of the ability to do otherwise must be correct. According to this libertarian account, indeterministic leeway is a prerequisite for exercising the ability to do otherwise, a.k.a. free will.

Here, then, we strike a tension at the core of the CAP program. The Classical Consequence Argument concludes that classical incompatibilism is true, and above we noted that some philosophers believe that there are structural similarities between the Classical Consequence Argument and the *Mind* argument which ensure that if one of these arguments is sound, then so is the other. However, if both of these arguments are sound, it means that people cannot act freely whether determinism is true or false—in which case classical possibilism, a defining background assumption of CAP, is false.¹² The tension may indicate a problem with the assumption of classical possibilism, i.e. perhaps anthropocentric possibilism and/or the classical account of free will is incorrect (Campbell and Lota [8]). Not wanting to give up on such foundational CAP commitments, it is perhaps unsurprising that van Inwagen—an eminent CAP theorist—has responded to the apparent paradox within CAP by adopting *mysterianism*, the view that free will exists but it is a mystery (van Inwagen 1983, 1998, 2000).¹³ For those less committed to the CAP program, the best response to this tension may be less clear—though, minimally, it encourages us to explore other (neo-classical and non-classical) options.

The manipulation argument has become one of the most popular tools for exploring non-CAP approaches to the problem of free will (Capes [9]). Multiple-case manipulation arguments were already in play during the classical period, e.g. van Inwagen’s “freakish demon” argument targeted broadly libertarian accounts of free will (van Inwagen 1983, pp. 130–134) and Richard Taylor’s earlier “puppet” argument targeted compossibilist accounts of free will (Taylor 1963, p. 45). However, manipulation arguments are now used to support a wide variety of conclusions. For example, Derk Pereboom’s influential Four-Case Argument aims to establish neo-classical incompatibilism and to offer some support for the more specific source incompatibilist position that determinism-related causal factors preclude human free will by keeping people from satisfying the source condition on free will (Pereboom 2001, 2014). Other manipulation arguments are more thoroughly untethered from the CAP framework. For example, Alfred Mele’s revised Zygote Argument (Mele 2013, 2017, 2019) is distinctive insofar as it concludes to mere **impossibilism**, the relatively modest

non-explanatory claim that it is impossible for an ordinary human to act freely when determinism is true. Unlike Pereboom’s Four-Case Argument, Mele’s argument is completely silent about *why* impossibilism is true (Mickelson 2015b, 2017, 2021). Kristin Mickelson’s Master Manipulation Argument marks an even more radical departure from the classical program (Mickelson 2019a, 2019b). Like other influential non-classical arguments, such as Galen Strawson’s Basic Argument and Neil Levy’s related “Luck Pincer” (Levy 2011, Hartman [23]), the Master Manipulation Argument concludes to constitutive-luck source impossibilism—which, if true, would mean that the rival explanatory conclusion of the Four-Case Argument is *false* (Mickelson 2015b, 2017, 2019a, 2019b).¹⁴

The expansion of arguments and worries about the relationship between free will and factors beyond our control has generated new thoughts about the problem of free will, and lends force to a relatively new type of worry. With the array of views about free will now available, we can ask “Which reflects the layman’s notion of free will—and how should we respond if it turns out that there is a *conflict* between the view philosophers think is the best and the one endorsed by the folk?”. These and related worries have motivated *revisionism* about free will, the view that the correct solution to the problem of free will clashes with the folk notion of free will and/or common freedom-related practices, e.g. moral praise/blame and punishment (Vargas [13]). While revisionism raises many interesting and pressing questions about free will and metaphilosophical issues facing those who study it, the justification for revisionism will depend largely upon what our best science tells us about its empirical components (e.g. what the folk think about free will).

3 Science and Free Will

From antiquity, many philosophers have viewed the fixity of the world—whether due to gods, causal-like conditions, the principles of logic, or the like—as antithetical to the belief that humans have any control over their lives. When Newtonian physics arose, the specific challenge presented by causal determinism became especially pressing, for it quickly appeared to be foundational for a scientific view of the world. Subsequent centuries strongly reinforced the explanatory and predictive force of Newton’s mechanics with expansion of its influence into other developing sciences such as chemistry and biology, and even began to influence the development of modern psychology through Freud and later more explicitly so with Skinner and Watson’s behaviorism. On the practical side, the use of Newtonian principles became crucial to emergent technologies exhibited in the industrial revolution, providing forceful everyday evidence of their increasingly plain truth.

However, this high tide of determinism ebbed somewhat in the early 20th century with the rise of an alternative account of fundamental reality: quantum theory and the associated idea of probabilistic causation or even outright indeterminism at work in the deepest levels of reality (at least according to some interpretations). These latter interpretations brought new hope to aspiring libertarians but also raised new worries for those who believed that quantum-like indeterminacy in human nature could do nothing to aid a like account of free will, unequipped with any feature that could easily accommodate room for human control over it. In the light of these more recent scientific trends, it is not surprising then that the determinism/indeterminism debate arose and continued to strongly influence free-will theorists as informed by the constantly evolving results of scientific inquiry and emerging theories. As we related earlier, this conflict between determinism and indeterminism was philosophically sharpened and focused in the 20th century, giving rise to CAP’s emphasis on this distinction, and continues in various themes today (see Vihvelin [14] for a detailed contemporary examination of

the concept of causality at work in determinism, for example). It remains to be seen whether CAP or non-CAP perspectives along with further scientific investigation will move us closer to a satisfactory solution to the problem of free will. It is undeniable though that science has been a formative factor in the free will debate in the last century, and more recently has assumed a prominent role in the very methodology of how to conduct that debate.

In the 1980s empirical experiments such as Libet's famously began to lay ground for the still evident stand among many neuroscientists against the existence of free will (assuming that a broadly libertarian account of free will is correct) citing traceable data that unconscious predispositions for choice can be recorded even before any such choices enter the conscious realm (Libet et al. 1983; see also Waller [17]; Levy and Wright [15] examine one facet of this in terms of implicit attitudes). Since these results may be thought to favor determinism of the mind (in some sense) prior to instances of choice, then indeterminism of choice, either conscious or unconscious, would seemingly be ruled out (but see Woodward [16]). Libertarianism thus appears to be completely knocked out of the realm of plausibility (though many following Libet simply then do not make argumentative room for the possibility of a compatibilist/compossibilist view of free will, thus revealing their bias that some broadly libertarian account of free will must be correct; see Cova [18] for discussion). However, many have pointed out that this is a rush to judgment given the uncertainty of what the data really reveals as against several plausible alternatives of how metaphysically choice may work moving from unconscious sources into the arena of how conscious choices are made (Robichaud [21] examines one important aspect of this).

The rise of neuroscience in the latter part of the 20th century also now plays an important—and some say indispensable—role in understanding how free will and action theory issues sort out against the background of studies about the brain and mental behavior ((Waller [17]); on one extreme end Penrose 1989 argues that a quantum theory of brain activity may solve the free will problem and in a way favorable to libertarianism, but see Boolos et al. 1990 for criticism). Indeed, some advocates of libertarianism have insisted that a careful examination of the science of the brain supports that view and speaks against a Libet-style conclusion of his own studies (Balaguer [19]; see also Kane 2003). As we better understand the details of our mental lives in scientific terms, we may discover at least important clues about how to better interpret any role that freedom and responsibility might play out with respect to those findings.

Aside from the determinism/indeterminism debate, the most direct empirical trend of the 21st century involving the free will problem has been in the rise of experimental philosophy—usually termed “X-Phi” (see Nahmias et al. 2005 and Nichols and Knobe 2007 for example; for metacriticism see Cova et al. 2018). The motivation for X-Phi is rooted in familiar claims in previous free will literature (especially the CAP-based distinction between compatibilism and incompatibilism) about the beliefs and attitudes of “the folk.”¹⁵ X-Phi developed in part to inform such claims with real data—statistical surveys that posed specific sets of questions to groups of individuals in order to ascertain real-world beliefs and attitudes about matters of freedom and free will. The idea was that if one could obtain real world data about the intuitions of large groups of people about specific free will-related scenarios then one could tabulate in a comprehensive way overall views that then could factor into free will debates, thus eliminating pure speculation about how “the folk” were disposed to talk in favor of a scientific basis for such claims. In addition, these empirical methods have been extended to include methods testing for psychological factors such as implicit bias, which subconsciously could influence conscious decisions of a free will nature (Levy and Wright [15]). While the significance of this overall avenue of inquiry is still controversial, there is little doubt that these empirical methods will have continuing influence in the ways that forthcoming debates on free will are framed.

4 Moral Responsibility

While the relationship between free will and moral responsibility has always been part of the free-will debate, the latter has become even more prominent as CAP's influence has waned. When the classical (ability to do otherwise) characterization of free will was challenged, philosophers generally agreed that a more inclusive definition of 'free will' was needed for purposes of framing the problem of free will and the problem of determinism. The new definition needed to avoid any details that might be considered question-begging (e.g. by presuming that a classical rather than source account of free will is correct, or vice versa), yet it also needed to be adequately precise to pick out a distinct phenomenon as the topic of debate (lest the free-will discourse devolve into an empty verbal dispute). In response, many philosophers have adopted the practice of using 'free will' to refer to the necessary *control condition*—as opposed to the necessary *epistemic condition* (Robichaud [21])—on moral responsibility, where the latter is understood in the backward-looking, non-consequentialist, type of responsibility associated with *basic desert* (McCormick [24]).

Whether or not one approves of the move towards identifying free will with the type of control required for basic-desert moral responsibility, the moral-responsibility turn in the free-will literature has had its benefits. While moral responsibility is interesting in its own right, the neo-classical practice of fixing the referent of 'free will' in terms of moral responsibility has helped us to approach the problem of free will in new ways and encouraged us to reconsider what the free-will debate is and/or should be about (White [31]). For example, it is commonly agreed that free will is a type of *control* that one exercises in the performance of an action, and that anyone with free will would have, at minimum, the type of control required to make a person praiseworthy and/or blameworthy for their morally-valenced actions. As such, free will seems required to make a person an apt target of the *moral emotions* (Ekstrom [22]) and familiar practices of praise and blame. As such, settling what type of control (if any) is really needed for these things may help us to get a better grasp on what a viable solution to the problem of free will must look like. For example, many free-will theorists have been skeptical of the proposal that 'free will' picks out (or should pick out) the type of control required for ultimate "heaven-and-hell" moral responsibility (Strawson 1994, Adams [7]), a type of responsibility implicit in the belief that God will ensure that humans receive their just deserts, e.g. being tormented in hell in the afterlife. Not only does such *ultimate control* seem to be metaphysically impossible or even incoherent (e.g. Strawson 1994, p. 8; van Inwagen 1998, Mickelson 2019b), but some hold that a comparatively modest type of control—perhaps even more modest than basic-desert responsibility (if there is a difference between the two)—would be enough to support our current moral practices of praise/blame (McCormick [24]), forgiveness (Ekstrom [22]), and reward/punishment. If this is right, then perhaps the idea that free will is intimately connected with some type of ultimate or basic-desert control is mistaken. However, if such practices and policies are justified only if we are at least basic-desert responsible for our actions, then free-will denialism would seem to imply that the time has come to revise these and closely related practices and policies (or at least the justification for them), such as legal policies which recommend harsh punishments for criminal behavior (Ekstrom [22], K. Levy [25], Pereboom [29]).

Among the more recently developed moral-responsibility approaches to the problem of free will are those which focus on the moral agency of the mentally disabled and young children (Griffith [20]) and those which draw upon the well-established literature on the *paradox of moral luck* (Hartman [23]). Since the paradox of moral luck emerged during the classical period of the free-will debate (Williams and Nagel 1976; see also Nagel 1986), it is to be expected that

moral-luck theorists have typically assumed the CAP view of the problem of determinism, i.e. that it is a narrow debate about “antecedent causal luck”. However, the recent convergence of the basic vocabulary between the two literatures—especially the language of *control* and *luck*—has highlighted hitherto overlooked similarities between the two problems. As the cross-pollination of these established literatures increases, we can expect more critical pressure to fall upon the CAP assumption that the problem of determinism is fundamentally a problem of causal luck—as opposed to, say, a problem of constitutive luck (Mickelson 2019b). Future work which explores these non-classical avenues of thought may prove equally useful to philosophers working on the problem of free will and to those philosophers who are interested in free will only insofar as it is related to moral and legal responsibility.

5 The Future

The wisdom of speculation about the future of anything has considerable history against it. From the supreme confidence in Newtonian physics prior to Einstein and Planck to the declaration that World War I was so horrific as assuredly to constitute “the war to end all wars”, there are countless examples of the retrospective frivolity of predicting the future that seem to undercut the wisdom of even the attempt to do so. However, just as the role of hypothesis is central to the work of much science, and has proved its merits time and again even though failures vastly outnumber successes, we believe that some prognostication about the future of free will and action theory might yield some parallel advantage. This is how we approach such an effort in this volume—not only directly trying to predict how things might go in these and related areas (Mele [30], Tierney [27]), but also emphasizing present areas of investigation that might prove much more fruitful in the future.

The major future trend we see in several contributions in this volume is an emphasis on the role of empirical methods in contributing to or even guiding the dialogues on free will and action theory, as we noted above concerning the rise of X-Phi and the increasing influence of neuroscience. Another facet of this empirical dimension to the debates is that there appears to be an increased emphasis on the phenomenology of choice (Deery and Nahmias [26], Robichaud [21], Woodward [16]; also see Mele [30]). How such an introspective factor argumentatively plays off against more traditional empirical treatments of psychological data requires much more investigation.

A separate trend rooted in empiricism is that of a pragmatic approach to the free will problem, which although implicitly present in the literature since at least P.F. Strawson’s influential “Freedom and Resentment” (Strawson 1962), has not been overtly promoted as a dominant theme. Revisionism (Vargas [13]) incorporates some trace of this in its relativizing the adequacy of a concept of free will to its overall workability at any given time (see Ekstrom [22] on this as well). Illusionism (Smilansky [12]) is partly pragmatic by conceding the falsity of libertarianism yet arguing that we need such a concept in moral and legal terms in order to best work as societies (see Levy [25] on how free will is incorporated in matters of legality). In this volume it is argued as well that pragmatism yields the best approach to defining key concepts such as determinism (White [3]), and perhaps is the best overall approach to the entire free will problem (White [31]).

Beyond considerations of the empirical, it appears clear that forms of free will denialism, skepticism, and even to an extent illusionism will expand in influence (Hartman [23], Pereboom [29], Smilansky [12]; also see Vilhauer 2012 and Mele [30] who offer varieties of epistemic skepticism about free will). Though some routes to skepticism, denialism (especially

Pereboom's), and illusionism are extensions of the CAP program, others are firmly outside the CAP tradition (e.g. Galen Stawson 1986, Levy 2011, Mickelson 2019b; see also Mickelson [4]). These non-classical approaches have put considerable pressure on the CAP assumption of classical possibilism, and we believe especially that these forms of skepticism and denialism will increase in influence. Non-classical explorations may well have an influence on future developments in X-Phi as well, leading to better inquiries informed by considerations of the roles of luck in our choices and moral lives and perhaps even leading us to see that intuitions favoring impossibilism are more widespread than currently assumed. Such inquiries could lead to an increased pragmatic concern with reforming our more formal and legal blaming practices in society.

Of course, familiar philosophical approaches in the tradition of CAP or in direct/indirect criticism of it will certainly also maintain significant influence in much or most of the literature (in this volume: Campbell and Lota [8], Mickelson [4], Balaguer [19], Adams [7], Nichols [28], Finch [2], Leftow [11], Mele [30], Vicens [5], Pereboom [29], White [31] for example) and it is clear that this is an important part of moving the field forward by the continued reliance on the time-honored methods of logically-constrained speculation. After all, even in science the source of hypothesis is always the rigorous application of the inventive prowess of the human mind to intriguing problems.

Glossary

Anthropocentric Impossibilism: The view that it is metaphysically impossible for an ordinary human to exercise free will. Anthropocentric impossibilism entails **free-will denialism**, but it does not entail **impossibilism**. **Hard incompatibilism** is a species of anthropocentric impossibilism, though it is *not* a species of impossibilism.

Anthropocentric Possibilism: The view that it is metaphysically possible for an ordinary human to exercise free will. Anthropocentric possibilism entails that **anthropocentric impossibilism** is false and that **possibilism** is true; it is silent vis-a-vis the truth-value of the **free-will thesis** and **free-willism**.

Classical (a.k.a Leeway) Account of Free Will (or the classical definition of 'free will'): Free will is an ability to do otherwise; typically contrasted with *source* accounts of free will. Within CAP, the classical account of free will was assumed to be true, leaving open the debate between **classical compatibilists** and **classical incompatibilists** over which interpretation of the ability to do otherwise is correct.

Classical Analytic Paradigm (CAP): The dominant research paradigm during the classical period (c. 1965–1985) of the free-will debate. The terms 'compatibilism' and 'incompatibilism' were coined for use within CAP, and the background assumptions of CAP play an essential role in justifying the familiar CAP narrative that these two terms named the only two viable candidate solutions to the **classical compatibility problem**.

Classical Compatibilism: The CAP-based view that the **classical account of free will** is correct and that it is metaphysically possible for an ordinary human to exercise free will (where 'free will' refers to an ability to do otherwise) when **traditional determinism** is true, i.e. necessarily, determinism is logically compatible with the **classical free-will thesis** (Mickelson [4]). The "classical" qualifier signals that the classical definition of 'free will' is used in stating the view. The term 'compatibilism' was coined (in the 1960s) as a name for this view.

Classical Compatibility Problem: According to CAP theorists (i.e. philosophers who endorse and work within CAP), the **problem of determinism** boils down to the challenge of settling whether **classical compatibilism** or **classical incompatibilism** is true. Given that **classical possibilism** is a background assumption of CAP, all classical compatibilists and classical incompatibilists were **anthropocentric possibilists**.

Classical Free-Will Thesis: The thesis that free will is (or requires) an ability to do otherwise (i.e. the **classical account of free will** is correct) and some ordinary human exercises free will; put another way, the thesis that an ordinary human exercises free will, where 'free will' refers to an ability to do otherwise.

Classical Incompatibilism: The CAP-based view that **the classical account of free will** is correct and it is metaphysically impossible for an ordinary human to exercise free will when **traditional determinism** is true because determinism-related factors preclude the type of indeterministic leeway that an exercise of free will requires, i.e. necessarily, traditional determinism is logically incompatible with the **classical free-willism** (Mickelson [4]). The “classical” qualifier in the name signals that the classical definition of ‘free will’ is used in stating the view. The term ‘incompatibilism’ was coined (in the 1960s) as a name for this view. (If classical incompatibilism is true, then so is **neo-classical incompatibilism**, but not vice versa.) The Classical Consequence Argument (i.e. the Consequence Argument, as originally presented against the background of CAP) concludes to classical incompatibilism.

Classical Possibilism: the conjunction of two views: (1) free will is (some kind of) an ability to do otherwise, i.e. the so-called **classical account of free will** is correct, and (2) **anthropocentric possibilism**.

Compossibilism: The view that it is metaphysically possible for an ordinary human to exercise free will in a world at which traditional determinism is true; the conjunction of determinism and the **free-will thesis** is metaphysically possibly true.

Constitutive-luck Source Impossibilism: The view that it is metaphysically impossible for anyone (i.e. any metaphysically possible being) to exercise free will because constitutive luck—as opposed to, say, causal luck—prevents people from satisfying the necessary source condition on free will. Galen Strawson’s Basic Argument (Strawson 1994, 2011) and Kristin Mickelson’s Master Manipulation Argument (Mickelson 2021) each conclude to this view.

Free-will Denialism: One of two basic solutions to the problem of free will (the other is **free-willism**). Denialism is the view that no (ordinary human) has free will, i.e. the view that **the free-will thesis** is false. Hard determinism is a common route to denialism; all arguments for **anthropocentric impossibilism** and **impossibilism** are (*a fortiori*) arguments for denialism.

Free-will Thesis: The thesis that an ordinary human exercises free will (where ‘free will’ is neutral between classical and non-classical accounts of free will, e.g. by fixing the referent of ‘free will’ to the control condition on basic-desert moral responsibility). Compare to the **classical free-will thesis**.

Free-willism: One of two basic solutions to the problem of free will (the other is **free-will denialism**). The view that some ordinary human has free will, i.e. the view that the **free-will thesis** is true. Libertarianism and soft determinism are common species of free-willism.

Hard incompatibilism: A species of **anthropocentric impossibilism** which claims that it is impossible for an ordinary human to exercise free will on the grounds that, whether determinism is true or false, some kind of causal luck (i.e. causal factors beyond one’s control) would keep a normal human from satisfying some necessary condition on free will. The “hard” in the name signals that the view entails **free-will denialism**. Notably, hard incompatibilism is a species of **anthropocentric impossibilism** but not (unqualified) **impossibilism**.

Hard Source Incompatibilism: The view that **hard incompatibilism** is true, and the necessary condition which an ordinary human cannot satisfy when determinism is true is a *source* condition and not a classical ability-to-do-otherwise (a.k.a. leeway) condition.

Impossibilism: The unqualified view that it is metaphysically impossible for anyone (i.e. any metaphysically possible being, even God) to exercise free will. Impossibilism entails **denialism**. Galen Strawson’s “Basic Argument” (Strawson 1994, 2011) and Kristin Mickelson’s “Master Manipulation Argument” (Mickelson 2021) conclude to impossibilism. (Notably, **hard incompatibilism** is not an impossibilist view.)

Incompatibilism: The term ‘incompatibilism’ has become an umbrella term and currently has no standard meaning; the same is true of many phrases commonly associated with this term, e.g. “free will is incompatible with determinism”. The term is currently used to refer to **impossibilism**, **classical incompatibilism**, **neo-classical incompatibilism**, **anthropocentric impossibilism**, **impossibilism**, and many other views (e.g. see endnote 10). (The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the term ‘compatibilism’ and the ambiguous phrases commonly used to define it).

Impossibilism: The view that it is metaphysically impossible for an ordinary human to exercise free will in a world (or universe) at which **traditional determinism** is true; alternatively, the view

that the material conditional “If traditional determinism is true, then the **free-will thesis** is false” is necessarily true (i.e. true in all possible worlds) (for more detail, see Mickelson [4]). Some philosophers now use ‘incompatibilism’ to refer narrowly to impossibilism (e.g. Mele [30], Capes [9]; see endnote 10 for discussion). Within CAP, any argument for impossibilism was also (given CAP background assumptions) an argument for classical incompatibilism; outside of CAP, the inference from impossibilism to classical incompatibilism or neo-classical incompatibilism is a fallacious *cum hoc, ergo propter hoc* (“with this, therefore on account of/because of this”) inference (see Mickelson [4] and 2021). Alfred Mele’s revised Zygote Argument (Mele 2013, 2017, 2019; Mickelson 2015b) is an example of an argument for mere impossibilism.

Neo-Classical Compatibilism: The view that it is metaphysically possible for an ordinary human to exercise free will when **traditional determinism** is true, and traditional determinism does not stand in any antagonistic relevance relation to free will (where ‘free will’ is neo-classically characterized in a way that is neutral between classical and non-classical accounts of free will). The difference between **neo-classical compatibilism** and **classical compatibilism** has to do with how the free-will relatum of each view is fleshed out: the latter assumes that the classical account of free will is correct but the former does not.

Neo-Classical Incompatibilism: The view that it is metaphysically impossible for an ordinary human to exercise free will (where ‘free will’ is neutral between classical and non-classical accounts of free will) when **traditional determinism** is true because there is a type of antagonistic relevance relation between free will and determinism-related factors; alternatively: necessarily, determinism is *logically incompatible* with the **free-will thesis** (Mickelson [4]). The difference between neo-classical incompatibilism and **classical incompatibilism** is in the free-will relatum, namely that the latter presumes that the **classical account of free will** is correct and the former does not. Derk Pereboom’s Four-Case Argument (Pereboom 2001, 2014) is a famous argument for neo-classical incompatibilism. See endnote 10 for further discussion.

Predeterminism: Predeterminism is a trans-temporal (past-to-future) form of determining (fixing, setting, etc.) of events and/or the truth-values of propositions, and its forms of determination include principles like bivalence, divine foreknowledge and providence, **traditional determinism**, eternalism, and socio-economic determinism.

Problem of Determinism: A loose collection of disagreements about how to spell out the relation and relata of the template-question “Does free will stand in relation R to determinism: *yes* or *no*?”, and to explain how (if at all) asking and answering one or more instances of this template-question would help us to solve the **problem of free will**. While CAP theorists treated the **problem of determinism** narrowly as a problem of causal luck (i.e. the challenge of settling whether determinism-related causal and/or nomological factors preclude human free will), non-CAP theorists have suggested alternative characterizations (e.g. that determinism scenarios, like manipulation cases, sensitize us to threats posed by constitutive luck).

Problem of Free Will: The debate over the nature and existence of free will. In generic terms, the two basic solutions to the problem of free will are **free-willism** and **free-will denialism**. A complete solution to the problem of free will—and hence a complete statement of free-willism or free-will denialism—must spell out what free will is, e.g. by proposing a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for acting freely.

Traditional Determinism: The doctrine that one unique future (relative to any arbitrary time *t*) is the inevitable result of the naturalistic factors which account for the evolution of the physical world over time (e.g. certain future-fixing causal and/or nomological relations between events in the past and events in the future). Notably, traditional determinism is not open to a so-called “broadly Humean” interpretation (Beebe and Mele 2002), for it affirms the presence of just the sort of necessity-in-nature that broadly Humean accounts of causation/laws of nature (by definition) reject; the doctrine known as “Humean determinism” is a species of **traditional indeterminism**. In this chapter, ‘determinism’ refers to traditional determinism and ‘indeterminism’ refers to traditional indeterminism unless otherwise stated. This is just one of many doctrines which goes by the name ‘determinism.’ (See also endnote 6 and White [3] for further discussion.)

Traditional indeterminism: The thesis that **traditional determinism** is false.

Notes

- 1 The term 'free-willist' has been used as an alternative name for the free-will libertarian (e.g. William James 1921, A.J. Ayer 1968, and Robert Kane 1996) and the term 'free-willism' is commonly associated with the theological position of Armenianism. We do not follow such usage here. The term 'free-will skepticism' is sometimes used to refer to denialism and/or an epistemic position about what we are justified in believing vis-a-vis the truth of denialism (e.g. McKenna and Pereboom 2016, p. 32); we editors prefer to restrict 'denialism' to a claim about the existence of free will and to restrict the term 'skepticism' to epistemic positions (e.g. the view that *we are justified in believing* that denialism is true and/or the more modest view that *we are not justified in believing* that free-willism is true).
- 2 No name was assigned to someone who embraced the conjunction of denialism and indeterminism, i.e. someone who answered the two questions above "no" and "no" (though 'hard indeterminist' would be apt.)
- 3 The terms 'compatibilism' and 'incompatibilism' were, by all appearances, coined by Keith Lehrer in the 1960s and were greatly popularized by Peter van Inwagen, especially van Inwagen 1983.
- 4 A *broadly libertarian account* of free will is one which proposes that it is at least metaphysically possible for someone to act freely, but includes at least one necessary condition which is metaphysically impossible to satisfy when determinism is true (e.g. Vicens [5], Adams [7], Smilansky [12], Balaguer [19]). Notably, one may adopt a broadly libertarian account of free will without accepting free-will libertarianism or anthropocentric possibilism (e.g. Pereboom 2014; Mickelson "Hard Times for Hard Incompatibilism", ms.).
- 5 Another notable feature of CAP is that CAP theorists typically focused on logical relationships between propositions rather than metaphysical relationships between non-propositional phenomena. For example, van Inwagen introduced a logical entailment thesis to capture the traditional metaphysical doctrine of determinism (see van Inwagen 1990, p. 277 for helpful diagrams), and used this entailment thesis as a proxy for traditional determinism in logic-text proofs which aimed to demonstrate that a *strict logical inconsistency* relation holds between determinism and the **classical free-will thesis** (e.g. van Inwagen 1983; see also Mickelson [4]).
- 6 The traditional doctrine of determinism is interesting, in part, because it provides the limiting-case doctrine for minimal actual-sequence leeway, i.e. it states that there is literally zero indeterministic leeway (of any kind) in the world. Assuming determinism, not even God could intervene to prevent the "determined" future from coming to pass (e.g. van Inwagen 1990, p. 277, Sehon 2011, Mickelson 2012). As such, determinism was a useful tool for exploring free will as it was classically characterized. However, philosophers have provided interesting reasons for thinking that there are other—at least equally good or better—ways of defining 'determinism' vis-à-vis the problem of free will (e.g. Dennett 2003, White [3]).
- 7 The neo-classical compatibility problem is evident when philosophers frame the problem of determinism as a debate about whether determinism (determinism-related factors, deterministic causal luck, or the like) is a threat to free will because it keeps people from being able to act otherwise and/or because it keeps people from being an adequate source of their own actions (Mickelson [4]). When philosophers adopt this neo-classical framework, they struggle to classify views—such as **constitutive-luck source impossibilism** (discussed below)—which insist that it is impossible to act freely when determinism is true even though determinism itself is entirely irrelevant to free will. This is notable, given that worries about constitutive luck have been present in discussions of the problem of determinism since its inception, as can be seen in the surviving records of the debates between the Stoics and their critics (see Pereboom 2009, Ch. 2).
- 8 Semi-compatibilism is the result of another notable attempt to re-orient the problem of determinism around the specific type of control required for moral responsibility in order to evade the narrow use of 'free will' established by CAP theorists (e.g. Fischer 1994; Fischer and Ravizza 2006; Fischer and Ravizza 1998). While semi-compatibilists agree that determinism-related factors may undermine some types of control (e.g. "regulative control"), they insist that such factors do not undermine the control required for moral responsibility. The semi-compatibilist sidesteps a direct challenge to

CAP theorists about the meaning of ‘free will’ by taking no stand on what this term does (or should) mean—except to say that *if* a person insists on using the classical definition of ‘free will’ and it turns out that determinism-related factors preclude one’s *ability to do otherwise* (as classical incompatibilists claim), this result would not establish that determinism-related factors preclude moral responsibility; it would, rather, show that free will (i.e. the ability to do otherwise) is not required for moral responsibility. As such, semi-compatibilism is distinct from neo-classical forms of compatibilism which fix the referent of ‘free will’ to the control condition on moral responsibility only insofar as the latter take a stand on what free will is (and what ‘free will’ means) while the semi-compatibilists do not.

- 9 Although Pereboom is not an impossibilist, he is an anthropocentric impossibilist because he denies that a being who has the properties of an ordinary human (i.e. someone like us, as we are in the actual world) can satisfy the “law-overriding” source condition he forwards as part of his broadly libertarian account of free will. That is, hard incompatibilism is a type of anthropocentric impossibilism, but is not a type of impossibilism (for discussion, see Mickelson “Hard Times for Hard Incompatibilism”, ms.).
- 10 As philosophers moved away from the original CAP-based definitions of ‘compatibilism’ and ‘incompatibilism’, they retrofitted the qualifier “classical” to these terms as a way of marking that departure. (The terms ‘classical compatibilism’ and ‘classical incompatibilism’ are also applied to views held by pre-CAP philosophers, which leads to complications we cannot address here.) Adding such qualifiers is one way to show due respect for the methodological principle that philosophers may define their jargon however they like while keeping tabs on the dialectically significant variations currently in use. Following suit, we have applied the qualifier “neo-classical” to single out the initial successors to the classical characterizations. Expanding this tracking device, we wish to identify a few additional recharacterizations which may be of interest to the reader.

As already noted, *neo-classical incompatibilism* has two defining tenets, namely impossibilism and a positive explanatory thesis which states roughly that incompatibilism is true because determinism (determinism-related causal/nomological factors) deprive ordinary humans of free will; *neo-classical compatibilism* is also a two-tenet view, one tenet negates the negative thesis of neo-classical incompatibilism and the other negates its positive thesis (which means that neo-classical compatibilism is not equivalent to mere compossibilism (Mickelson 2012, 2015a)). Some philosophers have proposed that we use ‘incompatibilism’ to denote only the positive thesis of neo-classical incompatibilism and ‘compatibilism’ to name its negation (Levy 2011: p. 1, n. 1; Mickelson 2015b); let these be *anti-classical incompatibilism* and *anti-classical compatibilism*, respectively. Assuming this anti-classical revision, impossibilism is not a defining tenet of incompatibilism but remains a corollary, so the anti-classical redefinition of ‘incompatibilism’ leaves the term’s earlier neo-classical meaning largely intact. However, anyone who rejects anti-classical incompatibilism qualifies as an anti-classical compatibilist, which means that some *impossibilists* qualify as compatibilists on this anti-classical taxonomy. Anti-classical theorists consider this a feature rather than a bug, for it highlights that some philosophers argue for the negative thesis of neo-classical incompatibilism but against its positive thesis—a position that is not supposed to be available according to popular CAP-based narratives. (Kadri Vihvelin aims to achieve a similar goal via alternative terminological revisions, roughly: keep compossibilism as a defining tenet of ‘compatibilism’, redefine ‘incompatibilism’ to pick out the conjunction of impossibilism and anthropocentric possibilism, and add ‘impossibilism’ to refer to anthropocentric impossibilism (e.g. Vihvelin 2008, 2013). A downside of this “tripartite taxonomy” is that anthropocentric impossibilists (e.g. hard incompatibilists) cannot be classified as incompatibilists even when they embrace both tenets of neo-classical incompatibilism (e.g. Vihvelin 2013: p.242, n. 5; Mickelson 2015a)). Other philosophers now use ‘compatibilism’ and ‘incompatibilism’ as their preferred labels for compossibilism and impossibilism (e.g. Mele [30] and 2017: p. 6, n. 4; Capes [20]); to track this usage, let these be *post-classical compatibilism* and *post-classical incompatibilism*, respectively. These post-classical revisions bring back a bipartite taxonomy of (in)compatibilism by rejecting—fruitfully, according to post-classical theorists—more complicated taxonomies which treat the traditional dispute between anti-classical compatibilists and anti-classical incompatibilists as a fundamental point of divide in the contemporary free-will debate. A purported upside of the post-classical tax-

onomy is that impossibilists cannot be compatibilists (since post-classical compatibilists are compossibilists); a downside is that anti-classical compatibilists and anti-classical incompatibilists are lumped into one motley “anti-compatibilist” category. Hybrid recharacterizations are also found in the literature, e.g. using ‘incompatibilism’ to denote neo-classical incompatibilism but ‘compatibilism’ to denote mere compossibilism (see Mickelson 2021 for discussion). Despite appearances, the latter hybrid does not yield a genuine bipartite taxonomy, for (assuming these hybrid definitions) it may be that compatibilism and incompatibilism are both false and some third view—unnamed by the hybrid theorist—is true (e.g. constitutive-luck impossibilism).

With the above distinctions in hand, readers are better prepared to spot the common practice of technically defining ‘incompatibilism’ in one way while using it in another (e.g. McKenna and Pereboom 2016: pp. 30 and 151; Sartorio 2016: pp. 147 and 157) and to track fundamental differences between famous “arguments for incompatibilism”. For example, Pereboom’s Four-Case Argument (Pereboom 2001, 2014) concludes to neo-classical incompatibilism (Pereboom [29, n.5]), relying upon a slippery-slope argument to support post-classical incompatibilism and a modest best-explanation argument to support anti-classical incompatibilism; Alfred Mele’s original Zygote Argument (Mele 2006) is invalid because its premises support mere post-classical incompatibilism but its conclusion is a statement of anti-classical incompatibilism (and/or neo-classical incompatibilism) (Mickelson 2015b); Mele’s revised Zygote Argument (e.g. Mele 2013, 2017, 2019) is an argument for post-classical incompatibilism (a.k.a. impossibilism) but it is not an argument for anti-classical incompatibilism (and hence is not an argument for neo-classical incompatibilism); Kristin Mickelson’s Master Manipulation Argument—like Galen Strawson’s Basic Argument (Strawson 1994)—concludes to impossibilism via reasoning which implies that post-classical incompatibilism (a.k.a. impossibilism) is a true but metaphysically trivial position and that anti-classical incompatibilism (hence neo-classical incompatibilism) is false (e.g. Mickelson 2015b, 2019a, 2019b, “Hard Times for Hard Incompatibilism,” ms.). Again, the novel qualifiers we have applied to the term ‘incompatibilism’ here are merely a rhetorical device for tracking the different views currently called by name ‘incompatibilism’; whether philosophers should continue to use a single term in such disparate ways is another matter. Indeed, Mickelson argues that non-CAP theorists should sidestep the project of rehabilitating jargon from a research paradigm they reject and instead embrace new ways of talking about the fundamental divides in the contemporary debate (e.g. Mickelson [4]). Readers are advised to keep such differences and debates in mind as they read the chapters in this volume, and are invited to consider their own preferred solution to these jargon/taxonomy problems.

- 11 Since all the strands are critical of libertarianism, a CAP theorist may interpret these arguments as lending support to classical compatibilism.
- 12 Notably, other interesting problems arise when we untether the Consequence Argument from CAP, e.g. it is unclear that the argument still pinpoints determinism as a threat to free will (e.g. Campbell 2007).
- 13 Van Inwagen finds some logical space in the possibility of imminent or agent causation but this just raises further puzzles (van Inwagen 1983: 151–52).
- 14 Notably, this means that if the conclusion of Mickelson’s Master Manipulation Argument is true, Pereboom’s hard incompatibilism is also false. Readers should note that interesting dialectical points like this one are often obscured by the common classically-driven practice of lumping all manipulation arguments together under the label “arguments for incompatibilism.” We advise the reader to look carefully at the stated conclusion of any given manipulation argument in order to decide whether the argument aims to support mere impossibilism, a type of classical or neo-classical incompatibilism, or a type of impossibilism which entails that impossibilism is true but classical and neo-classical forms of incompatibilism are false.
- 15 If, as we claim, the background assumptions of much X-Phi inquiry is within the tradition of CAP, then many issues, such as the role that non-causal types of luck (e.g. constitutive luck) may play in deterministic or indeterministic scenarios, are completely left out of the picture, and this may well skew the subjects’ responses in errant ways. Perhaps X-Phi studies might better reflect non-CAP concerns in the future? (For positive signs of movement in that direction, see Cova 2022.)

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Part I

Preliminaries

2

Logical and Theological Fatalism

ALICIA FINCH

1 Introduction

Fatalism is the thesis that no one acts freely, where:

(FA) Agent *S* freely performs act *A* at time $t =_{\text{df.}}$ (i) *S* performs *A* at t and (ii) for some time t^- such that $t^- \neq t$, it is up to *S* at t^- whether *S* performs *A* at t

and:

(UP) It is up to *S* at t^- whether *S* performs *A* at $t =_{\text{df.}}$ *S* at t^- is both (a) able to perform *A* at t and (b) able to refrain from performing *A* at t ,

so that (FA) is equivalent to:

(FA*) Agent *S* freely performs act *A* at time $t =_{\text{df.}}$ (i) *S* performs *A* at t and (ii) for some time t^- such that $t^- \neq t$, *S* at t^- is both (a) able to perform *A* at t and (b) able to refrain from performing *A* at t .

This definition presupposes a *leeway* rather than a *source* theory of free action: according to leeway theorists, free action “requires alternative possibilities”; source theorists, by contrast, contend that if an agent is (in some relevant sense) the *source* of an action, the agent acts freely even if she lacks alternative possibilities.¹ As the ensuing discussion ought to make clear, the debate over fatalism arises only if a leeway theory of free action is presupposed.

Some leeway theorists will balk at a definition of free action according to which the time at which an agent is “able to do otherwise” is necessarily distinct from the time at which the agent acts freely.² In order to address their concern, it will be useful to consider the notion of a *time*. Following Finch and Rea (2008), I acknowledge that times might be thought of either as *abstract* states of affairs³ or as *concrete* events, and I offer that “Abstract times might

fruitfully be thought of as *present-tense maximal state of affairs*.” In defining this notion, they stipulate that:

[A] state of affairs [O] is *future-directed* just in case either [O]’s obtaining entails that some contingent thing will exist or [O]’s obtaining entails that no contingent thing will exist; [a] *past-directed* state of affairs [is defined] in the obviously parallel way. Then a state of affairs [O] is present-tense maximal if and only if, for every atomic state of affairs [O’] that is neither future-directed nor past-directed, either [O] includes [O’] or [O] precludes [O’].⁴(10)

And that:

One state of affairs includes another just in case the obtaining of the first state of affairs entails the obtaining of the second. One state of affairs precludes another just in case the obtaining of the first entails that the second does not obtain. (10, fn. 11)

Finch and Rea add that “A concrete time might then be thought of as the event of some particular abstract state of affairs obtaining” (10). In what follows, I will use the term *time* to refer to present-tense maximal concrete events. However, it should be clear that nothing of substance hinges on using this term in this way;⁵ for the purposes of this essay, what matters is that present-tense maximal concrete events do, in fact, occur.

Indeed, at the moment, what matters is that, given the definition of *S*’s freely performing *A* at *t*, *t* is a present-tense maximal concrete event that includes *S*’s performing *A*. In order to see *why* this should matter, let us consider, first, that it seems uncontroversial to assume that:

(Able) *S* at *t*- is able to perform *A* at *t*.

entails:

(Possible) It is possible⁶ that: (i) *t*- occurs and (ii) *S* performs *A* at *t*.

And, by extension, it seems uncontroversial that if *S* at *t*- is *able to* refrain from performing *A* at *t*, it is (broadly logically) *possible that* (i) *t*- occurs and (iii) *S* refrains from performing *A* at *t*. But given the preceding definition of a time, and given that (*ex hypothesi*) *t* includes *S*’s performing *A*, it follows that it is (broadly logically) *impossible that* (iv) *t* occurs and (iii) *S* refrains from performing *A* at *t*. It follows, in other words, that if *S* at *t*- is both able to perform *A* at *t* and able to refrain from performing *A* at *t*, *t* ≠ *t*.

Having specified the relevant definition of free action, I can move on to distinguishing between logical and theological fatalism. According to *logical fatalism*, the thesis that no one acts freely is entailed by the definition of free action and the logical principle of *bivalence*, which is the thesis that:

(Bivalence) For any proposition *p*, either *p* is true or *p* is false and *p* is not both true and false. (i.e., every proposition has exactly one truth value and there are no truth values other than *truth* and *falsity*.)

The pith of the argument for logical fatalism is this:

Every proposition is either true or false. Suppose that the proposition <Agent *S* performs act *A* at time *t*> is true. If this proposition is *ever* true, it is *always* true. And if this proposition is *always* true, there is never a time at which it is up to *S* whether it is true or false. (Indeed, if this proposition is *always* true, it is true long before *S* comes into existence and, hence, long before *S* is able to do anything at all.) But if there is never a time at which it is up to *S* whether <Agent *S* performs act *A* at time *t*> is true or false, *S* does not freely perform *A* at *t*. Since this point generalizes to any agent, any act, and any time, free action is impossible.

According to *theological fatalism*, the thesis that no one acts freely is entailed by the definition of free action and the existence of an essentially omniscient God, where the definition of *essential omniscience* entails the truth of bivalence:

(EDO) God is essentially omniscient =_{df.} For any proposition p , (i) either God knows that p is true or God knows that p is false, (ii) God knows that p is not both true and false, and (iii) it is impossible⁷ for God to be mistaken about the truth value of any proposition.⁸

Here is the pith of the argument for theological fatalism (which is sometimes called “the problem of freedom and foreknowledge”):

Every proposition is either true or false and God knows the truth value of each proposition. Suppose that the proposition <Agent S performs act A at time t > is true. If this proposition is true, God has *always known* that it is true. And if God has *always known* that it is true, there is no time at which it is up to S whether or not God knows that it is true. (Indeed, if God has *always known* that it is true, God knows its truth long before S comes into existence and, hence, long before S is able to do anything at all.) But if there is never a time at which it is up to S whether or not God knows that <Agent S performs act A at time t > is true, S does not freely perform A at t . Since this point generalizes to any agent, any act, and any time, free action is impossible.

In what follows, I will offer formal presentations of these arguments and consider what responses are available to opponents of fatalism. In particular, I will consider responses that involve rejecting (i) the arguments’ validity; (ii) the arguments’ assumptions about whether it could be up to an agent whether a proposition has always been true or whether it could be up to an agent whether God has always known that a true proposition is true; (iii) the arguments’ assumptions about the relationship between truth values and times, on the one hand, or God and times, on the other; and (iv) the arguments’ assumptions about whether propositions can change their truth values or whether an essentially omniscient God can acquire knowledge over time.

2 Formulating the Arguments⁹

In an attempt to present the arguments as clearly and precisely as possible, I will stipulate that:

“ p_A ” designates the proposition that S performs A at t .

Its being up to S at time t - whether p_A is (identical to) its being up to S at time t - whether S performs A at t .

“ $N_{s,t}p$ ” designates: p & it is not up to S at t whether p .

$N_{s,t}p$ is equivalent to (i) p & S at t is unable to render p false and (ii) p & there is nothing S at t can do such that, if S were to do it, p would be false.¹⁰

In addition, I note that I will rely on an inference principle similar to (but different from) van Inwagen’s famed “principle β ” (see, e.g., van Inwagen 1983, 2000):

(Transfer) $\{N_{s,t}p, \Box(p \rightarrow q)\} \vdash N_{s,t}q$

While one might be able to formulate the arguments for fatalism without explicitly appealing to a β -like principle, the strongest versions of the arguments will include such an appeal.

With this, I turn to the premises on which the arguments for logical and theological fatalism rely. I have already mentioned Bivalence and Essential Divine Omniscience. Both arguments also depend on some variation on either the Principle of the Fixity of the Past or the Principle of the Fixity of the Present. The former is the principle that:

(FP): Necessarily, for any agent S , any proposition p , and any time t , if (i) p describes a state of affairs that obtains prior to t , (ii) it is not up to S at or after t whether p

while the latter is the principle that:

(FPr): Necessarily, for any agent S , any proposition p , and any time t , if (i) p describes a state of affairs that obtains at t , (ii) it is not up to S at t whether p .

In what follows, I will present the arguments in terms of the Fixity of the Past. I will do so because this seems to be standard practice, probably because it seems more dialectically effective than the alternative. I note, though, that (i) given the definition of free action, the Fixity of the Present is trivially true and (ii) nothing of philosophical significance hinges on my presenting the arguments in terms of the Fixity of the Past rather than the Fixity of the Present.

Having stated what the two arguments for fatalism have in common, I turn my attention to the argument for logical fatalism. It depends on the truth of these principles:¹¹

(Truth-at- t): Necessarily, for any proposition p , if p is true, there is some time t such that p is true at t .

And:

(Immutability): Necessarily, for any proposition p , for any time t , and for any time t^* , p is true at t if and only if p is true at t^* .

The first says that each true proposition is true *at a time*; the second says that propositions do not change their truth values *across times*. I will consider these principles in more detail when I discuss attempts to reject them. For now, I will simply acknowledge that while it is possible to formulate the argument without explicitly invoking these principles, the argument succeeds only if these (or relevantly similar) principles are true.

With the stipulations that (i) " t_{-1B} " designates a time approximately one billion years before time t -, (ii) S exists at t -, and (iii) S did not come into existence until long after t_{-1B} ,¹² the argument for logical fatalism may be presented as:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. p_A | Assumption |
| 2. $\Box(p_A \leftrightarrow p_A \text{ is true at } t)$ | Truth-at- t |
| 3. $\Box(p_A \text{ is true at } t \leftrightarrow p_A \text{ is true at } t_{-1B})$ | Immutability |
| 4. $\Box(p_A \leftrightarrow p_A \text{ is true at } t_{-1B})$ | 2, 3 |
| 5. $N_{s,t-}(p_A \text{ is true at } t_{-1B})$ | Fixity of the Past |
| 6. $N_{s,t-}p_A$ | 4, 5 Transfer |

I note that while this argument depends on the assumption that p_A is true, the same argument could be made, *mutadis mutandis*, on the assumption that p_A is false. What matters is that, given Bivalence, p_A has one truth value or the other (and not both).

With this, I will offer a formal version of the argument for theological fatalism. In addition to depending on Essential Divine Omniscience and the Fixity of the Past (or Present), this version of the argument depends on the thesis that God is everlasting, where:

(Divine Everlastingness) God is everlasting =_{df.} Time t obtains if God exists at t ,

and the principle that the knowledge of God is immutable:

(Immutable Knowledge) Necessarily, for any time t , for any time t^* , and for any proposition p , God at t knows p if and only if God at t^* knows p .¹³

This principle of Immutable Knowledge follows from Immutability, Divine Everlastingness, and Essential Divine Omniscience. Here, then, is the argument for theological fatalism:

1' . p_A and God exists	Assumption
2' . $\Box(p_A \leftrightarrow \text{God at } t \text{ knows } p_A)$	1', EDO, Divine Everlastingness
3' . $\Box(\text{God at } t \text{ knows } p_A \leftrightarrow \text{God at } t_{-1B} \text{ knows } p_A)$	Immutable Knowledge
4' . $\Box(p_A \leftrightarrow \text{God at } t_{-1B} \text{ knows } p_A)$	2', 3'
5' . $N_{s,t-}(\text{God at } t_{-1B} \text{ knows } p_A)$	Fixity of the Past
6' . $N_{s,t} p_A$	4', 5' Transfer

In the next section, I will begin to consider different responses to the two arguments.

First, though, I will pause to note that although some philosophers (e.g., Zagzebski) find the argument for theological fatalism more compelling than the argument for logical fatalism, Ted A. Warfield (1997) has pointed out that if an essentially omniscient God exists necessarily, then for any proposition p , $\langle p \text{ is true at } t \rangle$ is logically equivalent to $\langle \text{God at } t \text{ knows } p \rangle$. Warfield further offers that:

If p and q are logically consistent, then p is consistent with any proposition that is logically equivalent to q .

Warfield's point is that if logical fatalism is false, some proposition p_A is such that (i) $\langle p_A \text{ is true at } t_{-1B} \rangle$ and (ii) $\langle p_A \text{ is true at } t_{-1B} \rangle$ is logically consistent with $\langle \text{It is up to some agent } S \text{ at some time } t \text{ - whether } p_A \rangle$. But given the aforementioned principle, and given that $\langle p_A \text{ is true at } t_{-1B} \rangle$ is logically equivalent to $\langle \text{God at } t_{-1B} \text{ knows } p_A \rangle$, it follows that if logical fatalism is false, some proposition p_A is such that (i) $\langle \text{God at } t_{-1B} \text{ knows } p_A \rangle$ and (ii) $\langle \text{God at } t_{-1B} \text{ knows } p_A \rangle$ is logically consistent with $\langle \text{It is up to some agent } S \text{ at some time } t \text{ - whether } p_A \rangle$. In other words, it follows that if logical fatalism is false, so is theological fatalism (and vice versa).

I will not dwell on assessing Warfield's argument. In what follows, though, I will emphasize that for every response to the argument for logical fatalism, there is an analogous response to the argument for theological fatalism (and vice versa).

3 Response 1: The Arguments are Invalid

The most elegant response to both arguments is to simply deny the validity of the Transfer Principle (and other β -like principles).¹⁴ On behalf of this response, one might note that the strongest case for β -like principles seems to consist of pointing to them and asking "How could they *not* be valid? Doesn't it seem obvious that they are?" Opponents of fatalism could suggest that, actually, the validity of β -like principles is not at all obvious and that unless someone presents them with an argument for the principles' validity, they will continue to reject the fatalists' conclusion.

This response confronts at least two problems. First, β -like principles *do* strike many participants in the debate as valid. Indeed, some defenders of these principles find the core insight so compelling that they simply will not abandon the principles, even if they concede that a *particular* β -like principle must be jettisoned in favor of a reformulation.¹⁵ Second, many participants in the free will debate take it for granted that (i) the Consequence Argument for the incompatibility of free action and determinism is valid only if some β -like principle is valid, and that (ii) without the Consequence Argument, the case for the incompatibility of free action and determinism is relatively weak. Opponents of fatalism who are *libertarians* (who, that is, are incompatibilists about free action and determinism while affirming the thesis that some agents do, in fact, act freely) might reasonably conclude that rejecting the validity of β -like principles is too high a price to pay for a response to fatalism. Fortunately for them, the other responses to fatalism that I consider are consistent with libertarianism.

4 Response 2: Ockhamism

In this section, I will consider Ockhamism, a response to fatalism that challenges the Principle of the Fixity of the Past (and Present). I will follow the standard practice of presenting Ockhamists as drawing a distinction between so-called *hard facts* and *soft facts*. While there is no consensus on how to draw the distinction in question, the basic idea is that “A hard fact about the past is entirely about the past whereas a soft fact is not: a hard fact about, say, t_{1B} is a fact whose obtaining is entirely independent of whatever might happen after t_{1B} , whereas a soft fact about t_{1B} somehow depends on, or involves, or includes events that take place at later times”¹⁶ (Finch and Rea p. 3). Given the definitions already introduced, we can say that a hard fact is included in a time (that is, a present-tense maximal concrete event) that has occurred and a soft fact is a future-directed state of affairs. Of course, whether a fact is hard or soft is relative to a time.

The Ockhamist response to both logical fatalism and theological fatalism may be construed as a rejection of the Principle of the Fixity of the Past (or Present). More precisely, it amounts to the position that the Principle of the Fixity of the Past is ambiguous between the Principle of the Fixity of the Hard Past:

(FHP) Necessarily, for any agent S , any proposition p , and any time t , (i) if p describes a state of affairs O that is a hard fact at t , (ii) it is not up to S at or after t whether p (is true),

and the Principle of the Fixity of the Soft Past:

(FSP) Necessarily, for any agent S , any proposition p , and any time t , (i) if p describes a state of affairs O that is a soft fact at t , (ii) it is not up to S at or after t whether p (is true).

While the former is true, Ockhamists say, the latter – the very principle on which the arguments for fatalism depend – is false.

In order to appreciate why the Ockhamists reject the Principle of the Fixity of the Soft Past, let us consider a specific example. In particular, let us suppose that p_M is true where:

“ p_M ” designates the proposition that Mary marries Harry at t_M .

and:

“ t_M ” designates noon on March 13, 3013;

Given that the current year is 2021, it is *now* a soft fact that p_M is true.

Ockhamists will insist that the soft fact that Mary marries Harry at t_M is consistent with the existence of a time t_{-M} such that (i) t_{-M} is earlier than t_M and (ii) Mary at t_{-M} is able to do something such that, if she were to do it, p_M would be false. Perhaps Mary at t_{-M} is able to cancel the wedding, convince Harry that they should elope before March 13, 3013, or shout, “No!” when asked whether she takes Harry as her lawfully wedded spouse. To be clear, Ockhamists do not suggest that Mary is able to do something that would *change* the past. Rather, they contend that the truth of p_M is consistent with Mary’s being able to do something such that, if she were to do it, p_M never would have been true in the first place. Given that Mary and Harry are, in fact, married at t_M , p_M has always been true and God has always known p_M .

Ockhamists emphasize that p_M has always been true *because of* what happens at t_M , and not the other way around. The order of dependence (or priority) is crucial: the soft facts depend on hard facts in a way that the hard facts do not depend on the soft. Unfortunately, Ockhamists do not typically explain how exactly to read “because of” or what sort of dependence or priority they have in mind. Finch and Rea (2008) have suggested, though, that if *eternalism* about the metaphysics of time is correct, Ockhamism succeeds even without such an explanation. They offer a standard construal of eternalism, according to which eternalism is “the thesis that past, present, and future objects (and, by extension, events) exist” (10).¹⁷ Given the assumption that an event exists if and only if it occurs, eternalism is true only if all past, present, and future events occur. Of course, this is not to say that all past, present, and future events occur *at the same time* (which would be absurd); rather, all the events that occur stand in relations of *earlier-than*, *simultaneous with*, and *later-than* to one another. Given this definition, eternalism implies that if agent S performs act A at time t , S ’s performance of A at t occurs; that is, S ’s performance of A at t exists in the concrete world. And, as Finch and Rea indicate:

[W]e are fully prepared, in the ordinary case, to think that the proposition that S performs A is ontologically dependent on S ’s performance of A and, moreover, that S ’s performance of A is ontologically prior to the truth of the proposition that S performs A . The eternalist Ockhamist’s point is that, however we ordinarily understand the relationship between true propositions about agents’ action and the agents’ actions themselves, this is how we should understand the relationship between true propositions like [It was true at t_{-1B} that S performs A at t] and S ’s performance of A at t . (11–12)

If they are right, then if eternalism is true, there is a straightforward sense in which its being true at t_{-1B} that S performs A at t is dependent on (the concrete event that is) S ’s performing A at t . Moreover, they might have added, there is also a straightforward sense in which God’s knowing at t_{-1B} that S performs A at t depends on (the concrete event that is) S ’s performing A at t . Eternalist Ockhamists need not provide a full account of knowledge in general or divine knowledge in particular; they need only point out that there is nothing especially exotic about the suggestion that God’s knowledge of what happens at t depends on what happens at t , but not vice versa.

Of course, Finch and Rea could have made the same point about Ockhamism and ontological dependence without invoking eternalism per se: any account of the metaphysics of time according to which all future objects and events determinately exist would do just as well. In the final section of this essay, I will consider which dialectical options are available to opponents of fatalism who reject the thesis that the future determinately exists. First, though, I will turn my attention to another strategy altogether.

5 Response 3: Propositions Are Not True *at Times*; God Does Not Have Knowledge *at Times*

In this section, I will consider responding to the argument for logical fatalism by rejecting Truth-at-*t* and, analogously, responding to the argument for theological fatalism by rejecting Divine Everlastingness. The former response challenges the very idea that propositions are true *at times*; the latter response challenges the claim that God exists *at times*. I note that while these responses are analogous to one another, they do not seem to stand or fall together: it seems that one could accept Truth-at-*t* while rejecting Divine Everlastingness, or vice versa.

While Truth-at-*t* might seem innocuous at first, Peter van Inwagen raises a significant challenge against it. In particular, he suggests that it is simply *nonsense* to assert that a proposition is true at a time. He makes this suggestion by considering similar expressions (e.g., “true at some particular moment,” “true at every moment,” “became true,” “remained true,” “is unchangeably true”) and contending that he cannot “see what these phrases mean if they are used as they are used in the above argument for fatalism” (35). He concedes that if someone were to say, “Municipal bonds are a good investment,” and if someone else were to reply, “That used to be true but it isn’t true anymore,” his respondent’s words “would be a model of lucidity” (35). But these words are lucid precisely because his respondent could express the same thoughts without resorting to talk of propositions true at times. For instance, he could reply, “While municipals bonds used to have a high rate of return, they do not have a high rate of return today.” How exactly could one capture the meaning of “ p_A was true 1 billion years ago” without using the notion of truth a time? Van Inwagen evaluates several proposals for rephrasing and argues that each is meaningless. As such, he concludes that the argument for logical fatalism rests on a faulty assumption about the relationship between truths and times.

The analogous response to the argument for theological fatalism can be traced back to Boethius, a sixth-century Christian philosopher. Boethius considered God the one concrete object who exists *atemporally* or *eternally* (that is, outside of the temporal order). According to the thesis of Divine Eternity:

(Divine Eternity) God exists and for any time t , God does not exist at t .

Of course, if God does not *exist* at any time, God does not *have knowledge* at any time. As such, it is simply false that God at t_{TB} knows the truth value of p_A . While the principle of the Fixity of the Past may be true, its truth has nothing to do with God’s knowledge.

But while Boethius thought that God neither exists nor has knowledge at times, he certainly did not think God was ignorant of what happens within the temporal order. As Linda Zagzebski explains:

The way Boethius describes God’s cognitive grasp of temporal reality, all temporal events are before the mind of God at once. To say “at once” or “simultaneously” is to use a temporal metaphor, but Boethius is clear that it does not make sense to think of the whole of temporal reality as being before God’s mind in a single *temporal* present. It is an *atemporal* present, a single complete grasp of all events in the entire span of time. (2016)

This explanation suggests that Boethius endorsed eternalism with respect to the metaphysics of time. Insofar as God is eternal, none of the events included in the temporal order is temporally closer to God than any other; insofar as God is omniscient, God knows exactly which

events occur, how these events are temporally ordered with respect to one another, and how objects and events that exist at different times are diachronically related.

Objections to Boethianism abound.¹⁸ For instance, philosophical objections challenge the very coherence of the position while theological objections question whether Boethius's picture of God is consistent with other theses about the nature of God and God's relationship to creation. In the present context, though, the most pressing objection is one that has been raised by Zagzebski: even if Boethius is correct about the relationship between God and the temporal order, the threat of theological fatalism remains. After all, as Zagzebski notes, "we have no more reason to think we can do anything about God's timeless knowing than about God's past knowing. The timeless realm is as much out of our reach as the past." Indeed, it seems that the theological fatalist may simply reformulate the argument, replacing the principle of the Fixity of the Past (or Present) with a principle of the Fixity of the Eternal:

(FE): Necessarily, for any agent S , any proposition p , and any time t , if (i) p describes a state of affairs that (a) obtains and (b) does not obtain at any time, then (ii) it is not up to S at t whether p .

Stipulating that:

" p_{GEKA} " designates the proposition that God eternally knows p_A ,

the Boethian analogue of the argument for theological fatalism may be formulated such that:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1" . p_A | Assumption |
| 2" . $\Box(p_A \leftrightarrow p_{GEKA})$ | EDO, Divine Eternity |
| 3" . $N_{s,t} p_{GEKA}$ | Fixity of the Eternal |
| 4" . $N_{s,t} p_A$ | 2", 3" Transfer |

So, merely asserting that God is eternal does not undermine the argument for theological fatalism.

But there seems to be more to the Boethian solution than this mere assertion. If we construe Boethianism as the conjunction of the theses that (i) God is eternal and (ii) standard eternalism is true, and if Boethians make the reasonable assumption that God's eternal knowledge of what happens at t depends on what happens at t , but not vice versa, the Boethian response to theological fatalism seems importantly similar to the Ockhamists' (though without the distinction between hard and soft facts). In order to see that this is so, let us return to p_M , the proposition that Mary marries Harry at t_M . Boethians can offer that although God eternally knows p_M , this eternal knowledge is consistent with the claim that there is a time t_{-M} such that (i) t_{-M} is earlier than t_M and (ii) Mary at t_{-M} is able to do something such that, if she were to do it, it would be false that God eternally knows p_M ; in this case, God would eternally know that p_M is false. The Principle of the Fixity of the Eternal is false, Boethian might say, because what God eternally knows depends on what happens in the temporal order, and not vice versa. Indeed, if Mary would have decided to postpone the wedding, God would have known from eternity that p_M was false. But given that Mary did, in fact, go through with the wedding, God eternally knows that she does so.

Of course, this response leaves one with many questions about the relationship between an atemporal God and a temporal concrete order. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this essay to explore these questions, just as it is beyond the scope of this essay to explore other objections to Boethianism.

Before moving on, though, it seems crucial to raise one further question about the Fixity of the Eternal: does this principle undermine van Inwagen's response to the argument for logical fatalism? After all, if propositions are not true *at times*, and if a proposition p is true, it seems that the state of affairs of p 's *being true* obtains eternally (or "outside the temporal order," or "in the timeless realm," to use Zagzebski's phrase).

Though I do not presume to know what van Inwagen himself would say about this objection, at least two responses seem available. First, one might object to the thesis that propositions are "eternally true" just as van Inwagen objects to the thesis that propositions are "true at times." In adopting the analogous strategy, one might ask what is meant by " p is eternally true." Taking a cue from van Inwagen, one might point out that this is a metaphysician's turn of phrase if ever there was one, and wonder why we should suppose that it is meaningful. One might add that propositions are either true *simpliciter* or not at all: they are neither true at times nor true eternally.

Then again, one might also adopt the strategy I have recommended to the Boethian: affirm standard eternalism about the metaphysics of time and insist that the Principle of the Fixity of the Eternal is false because what is eternally true depends on what happens in the temporal order, and not vice versa. As far as I know, van Inwagen has never committed himself to the truth of eternalism, let alone the Boethian-style response to the principle of the Fixity of the Eternal. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to note this dialectical option.

Further discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this essay and, as such, I turn to a final type of response to the arguments for fatalism.

6 Response 4: The Open Future View and Open Theism

In this section, I will consider both the response to logical fatalism offered by the *open future view* and the response to theological fatalism offered by *open theism*. If the open future view is correct and God is temporally located, open theism is true; however, the converse does not hold: van Inwagen, for instance, is an open theist who affirms that God is temporally located but denies the open future view. In what follows, I hope to make the dialectical options clear.

With respect to the open future view, Amy Seymour (manuscript) offers that:

According to [the open future view], if the future is to be open, the future must be metaphysically unsettled ... This unsettledness is not merely epistemic or linguistic. It is not that we merely do not know what the future holds or that our terms cannot precisely capture what will happen – something about the nature of reality itself is unsettled. (1)

Given this definition, the open future view is inconsistent with standard eternalism and any other account of the metaphysics of time that entails that the future determinately exists.

According to the open future view, if p_+ is a contingent proposition that purports to describe a state of affairs that obtains in the future and does not obtain *now*, p_+ is not true *now*, but it *might become true*. If, for instance, Mary does indeed marry Harry at noon on March 13, 3013, the proposition that Mary marries Harry at noon on March 13, 3013 will become true at the relevant future time. Since this proposition is not true now but will become true, its truth value will change. In short, Immutability is false and, hence, so is the relevant premise of the argument for logical fatalism:

3. $\Box(p_A \text{ is true at } t \leftrightarrow p_A \text{ is true at } t_{1B})$.

This response is at least *prima facie* plausible: after all, it amounts to the claim that if a state of affairs does not yet obtain, it is not yet true that it will obtain.

In terms of working out the details, proponents of the open future view have two dialectical options: (i) denying bivalence; (ii) insisting on the falsity of all future contingent propositions that are not entailed by propositions that are true now (hereafter, *future contingents*). I will consider each view in turn.

According to open futurists who deny bivalence, future contingents are neither true nor false: while some bivalence deniers contend that such propositions have no truth value at all, others insist that they have a truth value *other than* truth or falsity. Those in the latter group typically embrace *multivalent* logic systems, e.g., the three-valued logic systems offered by Jan Kukasiewicz and Stephen C. Kleene. As Theodore Sider explains, “The third truth value is (in most cases, anyway) supposed to represent sentences that ... have some other status. This other status could be taken in various ways, depending on the intended application, for example: ‘meaningless’, ‘undefined’, or ‘indeterminate’ ” (Sider 2010: 73).

At first blush, it may seem reasonable to suggest that propositions about the future are indeterminate in truth value: after all, since the future has not yet obtained, one might say, it is indeterminate what will (or will not) happen. One must consider, though, that classical logic is bivalent, so one cannot consistently deny bivalence without admitting that “classical logic is wrong – that it provides an inadequate model of (genuine) logical truth and logical consequence” (Sider 72). The rejection of classical logic may seem to be too high a price to pay. Then again, as I have said, various multivalent logics have been developed. Moreover, one might be inclined to accept a multivalent logic because it can help not only with future contingents but also with sentences that (i) involve vague terms, (ii) express propositions with false presuppositions (e.g., that the king of France is bald), or (iii) seem to include references to fictional entities. Given the resources afforded by multivalent logics, some proponents of the open future view conclude that the rejection of classical logic is a reasonable price to pay.

Other proponents of the open future view, by contrast, maintain their commitment to classical logic and endorse the position known as “all falsism” (so named by Amy Seymour, manuscript) and “Russellian open futurism” (so named by Patrick Todd 2016). They agree with bivalence deniers that future contingents are *not true*; indeed, they insist that a proposition *p* is true if and only if either the corresponding state of affairs obtains or *p* is entailed by propositions that correspond to states of affairs that obtain. Since future contingents correspond to states of affairs that do not yet obtain and are not entailed by propositions of the relevant sort, it obviously follows that these propositions are not true. Here is where their disagreement with bivalence deniers becomes salient: all-false theorists insist that, necessarily, a proposition *p* is not true if and only if *p* is false; a proposition’s not being true is both necessary and sufficient for its falsity. Since future contingents correspond to states of affairs that do not yet obtain, they are not yet true and, hence, they are *all false*.

With this, one might object that this position entails the falsity of the Law of Non-Contradiction (according to which it is necessarily the case that $\neg(p \ \& \ \neg p)$). All-false theorists will insist that this objection confuses propositions of the form <It is false that *O* will obtain> with propositions of the form <*O* will not obtain>: the former but not the latter is the negation of <*O* will obtain>; the former but not the latter is consistent with the truth of <It is false that *O* will not obtain>. To return to the case of Mary and Harry: according to the all-false theorist, <It is false that Mary will marry Harry at t_M > and <It is false that Mary will not marry Harry at t_M >; the former is the negation of <Mary will marry Harry at t_M >; and the negation of <Mary will marry Harry at t_M > is not equivalent to <Mary will not marry Harry at t_M >.

While one might balk at the all-false theorists' claim that false propositions become true, one should not confuse this claim with a violation of the Principle of Non-Contradiction.

Whether open futurists go the route of bivalence denial or all-falsism, they must admit that their view *seems* at odds with various practices of ordinary life. After all, we constantly form beliefs and make statements about the future and, in so doing, we *seem* to proceed on the assumption that these propositions are true. The open futurist must either concede that we are constantly mistaken about the nature of reality or explain our behavior in such a way that it does not, despite appearances, depend on false assumptions about the future. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this essay to offer an extensive discussion of either variation on the open future view.

Instead of dwelling on how well the open future view fares as a response to the argument for logical fatalism, I will shift my focus to *open theism*, the analogous response to the argument for theological fatalism. According to open theists, the thesis of Immutable Knowledge is false and, as such, so is the premise that:

3'. $\Box(\text{God at } t \text{ knows } p_A \leftrightarrow \text{God at } t_{.1B} \text{ knows } p_A)$

While God at t knows that S performs A at t , the open theist denies that God at $t_{.1B}$ knows that this is case: God's knowledge increases over time.

Open theists do not take themselves to be denying the essential omniscience of God and, in fact, there are three dialectical options for open theists who seek to maintain their commitment to this theological principle.¹⁹ First, open theists might embrace the open future view along with "all-falsism"; in this case, they might define essential divine omniscience such that:

(EDO') God is essentially omniscient =_{df} For any proposition p , (i) either God at t knows that p is true or God at t knows that p is false, (ii) God at t knows that p is not both true and false, and (iii) it is impossible for God to be mistaken about the truth value of any proposition

In this case, open theists would contend that since it is false at $t_{.1B}$ that S performs A at t , God at $t_{.1B}$ knows that it is false that S performs A at t . When, at t , it becomes true that S performs A at t , God at t will come to know what S does at t .

Second, open theists might adopt the open future view while rejecting bivalence. They would offer something like this as a definition of essential divine omniscience:

(EDO'') God is essentially omniscient =_{df} For any proposition p , (i) God at t knows the truth value of p at t and (ii) it is impossible for God to be mistaken about the truth value of any proposition.

In this case, they will insist that since it is neither true nor false at $t_{.1B}$ that S performs A at t , God at $t_{.1B}$ knows that it is neither true nor false that S performs A at t . When, at t , it becomes true that S performs A at t , God at t comes to know that S does so.

But there is a third dialectical option for the open theist, as discussed by Peter van Inwagen.²⁰ He presents his discussion of theological fatalism in the context of discussing the problem of evil (see his (2006)), initially offering that:

A being is omniscient if, for every proposition, that being believes either that proposition or its denial, and it is metaphysically impossible for that being to have false beliefs. (26)

But then he asks:

Why not say that even an omniscient being is unable to know certain things – those such that its knowing them would be an intrinsically impossible state of affairs? Or we might say this: an omnipotent being is also omniscient if it knows everything it is able to know. (82).

I take it that van Inwagen is suggesting that:

(EDO'') God is essentially omniscient =_{df.} For any proposition p such that it is possible for God at t to know p or its denial, God at t believes either p or its denial, and it is impossible for God to be mistaken about the truth value of any proposition.

And that he is further suggesting that:

For any proposition p_A such that p_A is a proposition about a free act that agent S performs at time t , and for any time t^- such that t^- is earlier than t , it is impossible for God at t^- to know whether p_A or its denial is true.

On van Inwagen's picture, the complete state of the world prior to t fails to determine whether S performs A at t . As such, God withholds belief, prior to t , about S 's performance of A at t : Until t is present, God simply cannot know whether S 's performance of A at t obtains.

In response, one might object that this definition seems strained, as if the only reason to endorse it is to escape the problem of theological fatalism. One might demand a reason to think that there is a difference between (i) true propositions and (ii) true propositions such that it is possible for an essentially omniscient and everlasting God to know that they are true. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that we will find such a reason without embarking on a thorough discussion of divine knowledge, which is beyond the scope of this essay.

With respect to the first two varieties of open theism (those corresponding to all-falsism and bivalence denial), theological objections seem more prevalent than logical ones. Indeed, much ink has been spilled in considering whether open theism is consistent with orthodox Christianity. Many of its defenders consider themselves orthodox Christians (van Inwagen and Hasker, e.g.), but some opponents suggest that open theists ought to be regarded as heretics. While open theism is clearly inconsistent with, for instance, Roman Catholicism, its compatibility with other Christian traditions is not so obvious. The theological disputes over open theism certainly cannot be settled here.

7 Conclusion

The arguments for logical and theological fatalism are structurally similar, with both depending on (i) the definition of free action, (ii) some variation on the Transfer Principle, and (iii) the principle of the Fixity of the Past (or Present). Moreover, while the argument for logical fatalism depends on (iv) Bivalence, (v) the thesis that propositions are true at times, and (vi) the thesis that propositions do not change their truth values, the argument for theological fatalism depends on the analogous theses that (iv') God is essentially omniscient, (v') God exists at every time, and (vi') God's knowledge is immutable.

As I suggested, the most elegant response to both arguments is the rejection of the Transfer Principle. However, some participants in the debate find the Principle so obvious that they will find this strategy prohibitively costly; moreover, as I explained, incompatibilists regarding free action and determinism should be loath to abandon this principle, given that it is crucial for the Consequence Argument for incompatibilism.

Ockhamism is available as a response to both logical and theological fatalism: Ockhamists distinguish between the Fixity of the Hard Past and the Fixity of the Soft Past, and insist that while the former is true, the latter is false; given that the arguments for fatalism depend upon the latter, Ockhamists contend that they have quelled the fatalists' threat to free action. Following Finch and Rea, I suggested that Ockhamists ought to embrace standard eternalism with respect to the metaphysics of time.

I made a similar suggestion with respect to the Boethian response to the argument for theological fatalism. According to this response, the argument fails because God does not have knowledge *at times*. Following Zagzebski, I suggested that the argument could be reformulated in terms of the Fixity of the Eternal rather than the Fixity of the Past (or Present). I then pointed out that if eternalism about the metaphysics of time is true, and if God's eternal knowledge depends on which concrete events actually occur, the Boethian can make a case against the Fixity of the Eternal analogous to the Ockhamist's case against the Fixity of the Soft Past. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this essay to delve more deeply into either Ockhamism or Boethianism.

Alongside the Boethian response to theological fatalism, I considered van Inwagen's response to the argument for logical fatalism: according to van Inwagen, the argument fails insofar as it includes the premise that propositions are true at times – a proposition that van Inwagen takes to be meaningless.

Finally, I considered the open future view and open theism. According to open future views, the future is unsettled and, as such, some propositions about the future change truth values. While some open theists also adhere to open future views, van Inwagen is an exception: though he thinks that all propositions have true values, he thinks that propositions about agents' future free acts are unknowable; he offers a definition of Essential Divine Omniscience that allows him to say that God is essentially omniscient even though God lacks knowledge of the relevant truth values. As one would expect, philosophers' theological commitments play a crucial role in their evaluations of open theism.

There is no obvious response to either fatalist argument. In formulating a response, one must consider not only whether one is a compatibilist about free will and determinism but also one's views on the metaphysics of time and the truth values of propositions (and, when considering the argument for theological fatalism, one's theological commitments). Indeed, debates over logical and theological fatalism are strongly connected to other philosophical debates, and acknowledging these connections seems crucial for moving the debates forward.

Notes

- 1 For discussion of the debate between leeway and source theorists, see Timpe 2017.
- 2 See, e.g., Campbell (2007, 2008, 2010).
- 3 In the present context, we need not be very careful about defining states of affairs: it is enough to say that (i) states of affairs are *ways things are*, (ii) for each state of affairs *O*, there is a corresponding proposition *p*, and (iii) a proposition *p* is true if and only if the corresponding state of affairs *O* obtains.
- 4 Anyone concerned about relativity theory can add the qualifier "from a frame of reference."
- 5 Moreover, in the present context, nothing of substance hinges on whether relationism or substantivalism with respect to time is true.
- 6 Throughout this essay, "possible" should be read as "broadly logically possible" and "necessary" should be read as "broadly logically necessary."