



Haji and the Indeterministic Weightings Model of Libertarian Free Will

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Abstract

Research Article



In recent work, I defend an indeterministic weightings model of libertarian free will. (Lemos, 2018, Ch. 5; 2021; 2023, Ch. 6). On this view, basic free-willed actions are understood as the result of causally indeterminate deliberative processes in which the agent assigns evaluative weight to the reasons for the different choice options under consideration. In basic free-willed actions, the assignment of weights is causally undetermined, and the choices are typically the causal consequence of these assignments of weights in which the choice option that is more highly valued is the choice option selected. In a recent article, Ishtiyaque Haji (2022) criticizes my view, arguing that it: (a) does not resolve worries about luck and (b) does not make coherent sense of the freedom of the weightings involved in free choices. I argue that his criticisms are based on misunderstandings of my position.

Keywords

Free will, Libertarianism, Indeterministic weightings, Luck, John Lemos, Ishtiyaque Haji.

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Introduction

In recent publications, I have developed and defended an indeterministic weightings model of libertarian free will (2018, Ch.5; 2021; 2023, Ch.6). In recent years, such a view has been defended by Storrs McCall and E. J. Lowe (2005, 2008), and going farther back, a similar but significantly different version of the view has been defended by Robert Nozick (1981, Ch.4). In a recent issue of this journal, Ishtiyaque Haji (2022) argues that my view (a) does not resolve worries about luck and (b) does not make coherent sense of the freedom of the weightings involved in free choices. In what follows, I will give a brief account of my view and Haji's criticisms. I will go on to argue that Haji's criticisms are based on significant misunderstandings of the nature of my position.

My indeterministic weightings view of libertarian free will

To act with free will is to act in such a way that one could justly deserve praise or reward if one performs a good action, and one could justly deserve blame or punishment if one performs a bad action. Libertarians about free will believe that to act with free will some of our free-willed actions must be causally undetermined free-willed actions. As such, libertarians believe that if we have free will then there must be at least some moments in our lives in which we act with free will and our action is not necessitated by the joint influences of the laws of nature and prior states and events. Libertarians are not necessarily committed to the view that all our free-willed actions are causally undetermined. Many libertarians, including myself, distinguish between what are called basic free-willed acts and non-basic free-willed acts. Basic free-willed acts are causally undetermined free-willed acts. Non-basic free-willed acts are causally determined by our motivational states or character at the time of acting, but they are still free-willed insofar as they issue from motivational states or character traits that are the product of prior basic free-willed acts. Such views of free will operate on the plausible assumption that the free-willed choices we make at earlier moments in our lives can shape our character and motivational states in ways that determine us to act in certain ways in later moments in our lives.

According to the indeterministic weightings view that I defend, in basic free-willed actions the agent's choice is the result of a temporally extended indeterministic deliberative process in which the agent assigns in an undetermined way evaluative weights to the reasons she has for each of the options she is considering, and her choice is a result of this indeterministic

process. Much like the efforts of will which Robert Kane (1996, 2002, 2007a, 2007b, 2011, 2019) believes are essential to making sense of libertarian free will, the assigning of weights to reasons during deliberation is something the agent actively does during deliberation which causally influences the choice made. And, typically, the decision made will be a consequence of the way in which the reasons for the different options are weighted during deliberation. The assigning of weight to the reasons during deliberation may be a causally undetermined process, but since this is something the agent does and *not* something that merely happens to the agent and since the choice made will typically be a result of how the reasons are weighted, the agent will then typically be in control over the choice made, as it will be a result of how he or she weighted the reasons.

To better understand the indeterministic weightings model, let's consider the example of Jane, who is deliberating about whether to vacation in Hawaii or Colorado. The reasons that attract her to Hawaii are the snorkeling opportunities and the surfing opportunities. The reasons that attract her to Colorado are the mountain views and the whitewater rafting opportunities. As she deliberates, more reasons may come to her mind for and against each of her vacation options but let us suppose that they don't come to mind, and let us suppose that she is very interested in the opportunities provided by each of these different vacation options. She values snorkeling and surfing on the one hand and she values mountain views and rafting on the other, but she can only choose one vacation.

Now one way of looking at deliberation is that it involves a consideration of the options and the reasons for and against each of the options and then, depending on how much preset value each of the options or reasons for the options has for a person, this will then dictate how she chooses. For instance, imagine that while Jane values snorkeling and surfing and she values mountain views and rafting, she actually values snorkeling and surfing more and so she chooses the Hawaii vacation. Here the choice would just be the determined result of the reasons coming to mind and due to her pre-established values which favor snorkeling and surfing, she is led to choose the Hawaii vacation. But there doesn't seem to be any reason to think that the things we value always come with preset determinate values. It might be that while Jane values these various things, it may be that she does not value any of them more than the other. Indeed, it may often be that when we face options that offer multiple courses of action each of which we value, we must *assign* more precise values to things we already value so as to make up our minds as to what to do. Jane values the opportunities offered by both Hawaii and

Colorado; that's why it is hard to decide and that's why she is led to deliberate. But there's no reason to think that prior to deliberation one set of her values had any greater weight for her than the other. As noted, it may well be that in deliberating she must assign some greater value to the reasons for one option and some lesser value to the reasons for another option. Indeed, it may also be the case that these assignments of weights may be causally undetermined. Suppose that as Jane deliberates, she assigns in an undetermined way a greater evaluative weight to snorkeling and surfing and lesser weight to mountain views and whitewater rafting and suppose as well that her choice of the Hawaii vacation is dictated by this assignment of weights. Here we have a vision of her choice as the product of an indeterministic deliberative process which she controls by her assignment of weights to the reasons in favor of each of the options. She ends up choosing the Hawaii vacation because she gave greater weight to the reasons which support that option, but she could have chosen otherwise had she weighted her reasons differently.

Notice that on this conception of basic free-willed choices Jane's choice doesn't happen to her, as would be the case if she just found herself with certain reasons that had pre-established weights and the choice was then settled by the greater weight of one set of reasons. Rather, according to the indeterministic weightings model, during deliberation the agent *does* something in an undetermined way that gives her control over the path the deliberative process goes – she *assigns* different evaluative weights to the reasons for each of her options, giving greater weight to one of them. This will typically dictate which choice she makes, leading her to choose the option the reasons for which she has assigned the greater evaluative weight. Notice I say the assignment of evaluative weights “will typically dictate” which choice the agent makes. I think we should allow that due to weakness of will, there will be occasions in which at the last moment a different choice will be made that is inconsistent with one's valuations. And, again, the assigning of weights is something the agent intentionally does. It is not something that merely happens to her, as does the coming to mind of reasons for making one choice or another.

On my view, the weighting of reasons during deliberation plays much the same role that efforts of will do on Robert Kane's theory. On Kane's view in making a causally undetermined choice between two options, A and B, during deliberation the agent makes an effort of will to choose A and a separate effort of will to choose B. He says it is undetermined which of these efforts of will wins out and dictates the choice, but either way, the choice is the product of one of these efforts. Efforts of will, like the assigning of evaluative weights to

reasons, are things we do in deliberations. If a causally undetermined choice is the result of something we actively and intentionally do, whether a Kanean effort of will or the assigning of greater evaluative weight to the reasons for one option, then the choice does not *just happen to us*. Rather, it's the result of something we actively and intentionally do during deliberation, meaning we have control over such undetermined choices.

Randolph Clarke (2002, pp. 372-372), Alfred Mele (2006, pp. 51-53), and Derk Pereboom (2007, p. 109) have all rightly noted that according to Kane we have control over our undetermined choices only insofar as we have control over the efforts of will we make in the moments leading up to our choices. They argue that Kane cannot provide a reasonable solution to the problem of what grounds our control over the making of these efforts. A similar point may be raised about my own view. It may be said that on my view, what gives us control over our undetermined choices is our having control over the assigning of weights to the reasons in the moments leading up to the choice. So, here too, it may be felt that I need a reasonable account of what establishes our control over the weighting of these reasons.

Kane says that we have control over the efforts of will by meeting plausible compatibilist standards of control in the making of those efforts, and so too I maintain that we have control over our weighting of the reasons for each of the choice options considered insofar as we meet plausible compatibilist standards of control in the assigning of those weights. Suppose I am choosing between two options A and B, and in an undetermined way I give a greater weight to the reasons for A and lesser weight to the reasons for B. Assuming weakness of will does not creep in, and I make the choice of A, then I will be in control over this choice. What gives me control over this choice is my having control over the assigning of weights to the reasons, and I will have control over this if in making the assignment of weights to the reasons I am not subject to force or coercion, or covert neural controllers or overwhelming desires that I would rather not act on, etc. In other words, if I meet a plausible set of compatibilist control conditions in the process of assigning weights to the reasons, then I will be in control over this process and consequently, I will be in control of the choice I make.

Mele is aware of this sort of move. In response to this Kanean strategy of appealing to such compatibilist standards of control, Mele has argued that if Kane grounds control over efforts of will on the meeting of compatibilist standards and if this is what gives us control over undetermined choices, then we no longer have reason to think libertarian free will is necessary to make sense of agent control over and responsibility for any of our choices (Mele,

2006, p. 53). Mele's point is that if having compatibilist control over the efforts of will is what gives us control over and makes us responsible for causally undetermined choices, then we might as well just embrace compatibilism about free will as there's really no need for causal indeterminism to make sense of agent control and responsibility.

This response could be made to my own appeal to compatibilist standards in making sense of agent control over the assigning of weights to reasons. However, it is my view that Mele's complaint is misguided, as it fails to acknowledge the role that meeting such compatibilist standards plays in libertarian views like Kane's and mine. To act while meeting such compatibilist standards of control does not suffice for having *ultimate* responsibility for what one does. To act while meeting compatibilist standards, merely establishes that one's act issues from one's own character. When our actions are not coerced or the product of neural manipulation from external controllers and when they are made while acting on desires that we want to move us to act, as opposed to alien desires that we'd rather not act on, then our actions issue from ourselves and reflect our character. However, if we lived in a deterministic universe such that all of our choices were necessitated, then we would not be able to shape the character from which most of our actions issue. For in a deterministic universe, the shaping of our character would just be the result of our genetics and environmental conditions. To shape our characters in a manner that allows us to be ultimately responsible for who we are and what we do some of our actions must be causally undetermined actions over which we exert plural voluntary control (PVC). To act with PVC is to do something, like making the choice of A instead of B, when in the moments leading up to the choice you had the ability to do otherwise such that you could have chosen A or B and been in control of either choice. But we can only exert PVC over an undetermined choice by having compatibilist control over events that transpire in the deliberation process which leads to the choice – whether the efforts of will (Kane's view) or the assigning of weights to reasons (my view). For only then will the path of the deliberation be a reflection of our own character.

To see this better, imagine that I am making an undetermined choice between two options A and B. Imagine that during deliberation in giving greater weight to the reasons for B I don't meet plausible compatibilist standards of control. Perhaps, I am led to do so through obsessive-compulsive desires for B that I'd rather not act on and suppose and I am not reasons-responsive in my giving of the greater weight to the reasons for B. In this scenario, if I choose B, I would not have PVC over my decision as the choice

of B would not be a reflection of my character, but it would be a result of an alien desire that is not responsive to my reasoning nor a reflection of my deep self, the choice would not be a result of desires I identify with. Thus, in this scenario, I lack PVC over my choice, because I lack control over the choice of B.

While it may be that meeting such compatibilist standards in the making of efforts of will or the weighting of reasons does help establish agent control over the indeterministic processes involved in undetermined basic free choices, it still could be argued that this won't help establish ultimate responsibility for our character and the efforts or weightings which flow from our character. A critic may have us consider the earliest basic free choices of childhood. Those undetermined choices will issue in an undetermined way from a character that the child has not formed of her own free will; rather, the young child's character is merely the product of genetic and environmental factors. Thus, it may be wondered how one could ever become responsible for the character which shapes our basic free actions. My answer to this concern is the same as Kane's. In the first basic free choices of childhood, there is *very little* responsibility because the character from which the efforts of will or the weightings of reasons flow is not a product of one's own choosing. But, even in these earliest undetermined choices, the choices still issue from the child's character in an undetermined way. As such, the child makes these choices through her own effort or weighting when she could have done otherwise, and this is done not by accident, rather it is done intentionally and with reason. So, even in the earliest basic free choices, the child has an ever so slight responsibility for what is chosen. Further, since what we do shapes our character, in time as we commit more and more basic free choices, we incrementally become more and more responsible for those actions as they increasingly become the result of characters we have formed by prior undetermined basic free actions over which we have increasing levels of control.

Like Kane, I believe that "... incompatibilist freedom and control presuppose compatibilist freedom and control. We cannot get to incompatibilist freedom and control in one fell swoop in the real world. That is one leap too far (Kane, 2011, fn14, p. 404)." (See also Kane, 2019, p. 157). To make sense of PVC and ultimate responsibility, we have to grant that there is a kind of control over action that compatibilist standards can establish. But meeting such compatibilist standards alone would not by themselves suffice for establishing ultimate control over the shaping of our characters and destinies in such a way as to make us fitting recipients of praise/blame and

reward/punishment. To have such ultimate control over the shaping of our characters would require the repeated performance of basic undetermined free actions over many years, making us more and more responsible for our characters over time.

Now, as noted, Ishtiyaque Haji (2022) argues that (a) my view does not resolve worries about luck and (b) my view cannot make sense of the freedom of the weightings involved in undetermined free choices. I will explain each of these criticisms and respond to them.

The luck problem

Imagine two persons, Jane and Jane*, living in two different possible worlds, and they are facing the same choice between (A) vacationing in Hawaii or (B) vacationing in Colorado. Suppose they have exactly similar life histories, and their mental and brain states are exactly the same as they begin to deliberate about which choice they will make. On my view, Jane may choose A and Jane* may choose B and they may both do so freely even if their different choices are the product of causally indeterministic processes leading up to their choices. But one might think, as Haji does, that if these agents have exactly similar life histories and their mental and brain states are exactly similar at the beginning of deliberation, then their different choices can only be the result of control robbing luck.

Haji rightly notes that on my view the fact that agents have actively assigned weights to the different options under consideration is supposed to help resolve worries about luck. On my view, if the agent has control over the weightings and the weightings dictate what is chosen, then the agent will have control over what is chosen. But Haji says:

If [the weighting action] is an intentional action, it appears that these acts themselves will be subject to luck in a fashion that simply resurrects the luck problem. To explain, imagine that in the actual world, w , Jane assigns greater weight to her reasons to holiday in Hawaii, and thereby makes these reasons prevail; they “trump” her Colorado-favoring reasons. Suppose, with the same past and the laws up to the time of assigning weights, Jane* in some contrast world, w^* , makes her Colorado-favoring reasons prevail by weighting them more heavily than her Hawaii-favoring reasons. One may reasonably wonder what explains Jane*s intentional act of weighting in w^* , and what explains the differential outcomes in the two worlds when both worlds have the same past until the moment of weighting and identical laws. (2022, p. 128)

Haji also notes that in response to this worry, I claim that deliberation and the weighting of reasons for the options occurs over time and during that time what ideas and reasons come to mind is undetermined as well as how much weight is given to those ideas and reasons. (Haji 2022, p. 128) Thus, on my view two agents in different possible worlds with exactly similar psychologies and life histories right up to the moment deliberation *begins* may end up making different choices. Due to the indeterminacy of their deliberative processes, Jane and Jane* may indeed make different choices even though they may be exactly similar up to the moment that deliberation begins. But on my view, this does not mean that their different weightings of the reasons and their different choices involve control-robbing luck. This is because their choices will be the intelligible result of the different ideas and reasons which come to their minds as they deliberate and the way these ideas and reasons are weighted by them during deliberation.

But Haji says these points fail to:

Alleviate the problem of luck concerning the agent's intentional acts of weighting and the choices that result from these acts. Suppose Jane begins to deliberate at t_1 about where to vacation. Imagine that her first assignment of weights to reasons occurs at t_2 , and she indeterministically weights the reasons that favor holidaying in Colorado more heavily than those that favor going to Hawaii. In a contrast world with the same past up to t_2 , and the same laws, Jane* reverses this assignment of weights. It appears that nothing that Lemos . as on offer so far precludes the charge that Jane's first act of weighting that she performs at t_2 is luck-infected to the extent that its freedom is undermined. If so, there is no reason to suppose that the subsequent (or concurrent) choice Jane makes, whatever it is, is free. (2022, p. 129)

Haji's argument here is based on confusion. Again, my view is that the two agents in different possible worlds, Jane and Jane*, may be exactly the same up until the *beginning* of their indeterministic deliberation. Due to the indeterminacy of the deliberative process, they may make different choices, depending on what ideas and reasons come to mind and how they weight them during deliberation. *But*, as quoted above, Haji says, "In a contrast world with the same past up to t_2 , and the same laws, Jane* reverses this assignment of weights." Haji believes that on my view, Jane* in a different world can, like Jane, begin deliberation at time t_1 and be just like Jane *all the way through deliberation up to time t_2* and weight the options differently at time t_2 . However, this is a misreading of my view. For on my view, if the options are

weighted differently whether at the final stage of deliberation just prior to choice or at some intermediate stage of deliberation, then there must have been some differences in the paths that the indeterministic deliberative processes of Jane and Jane* went during deliberation – different ideas or reasons for the options must have come to mind and/or how they get weighted must have been different, etc. Jane and Jane* may be exactly the same up to and at the start of their indeterministic deliberations, but deliberation occurs over time and what happens during their deliberations will differ if they weight the options differently and make different choices. Thus, their different weightings and choices will not be a matter of control-robbing luck; rather, it will be a result of a process they controlled by having compatibilist control over the weightings. Further, their weightings and choices will be rendered intelligible in relation to the ideas and reasons considered and how much weight was given to them during their deliberations.

To see this better consider how deliberation seems to actually work. Think about Jane. She knows she is interested in vacationing in either Colorado or Hawaii. She begins deliberating at time t_1 , and she looks at information about Colorado vacation spots in the mountains. The beautiful images and the thoughts of hiking lead her to begin giving greater weight to Colorado but how much weight she gives is undetermined, as she is conflicted knowing that Hawaii has much to offer as well. It comes to her mind, perhaps in an undetermined way, how much she enjoys the beach and surfing, and she begins to reduce the weight in favor of Colorado now giving some weight to Hawaii. How much she reduces the weight favoring Colorado, may well be indeterminate. She looks at the information she has on Hawaii and she increases the weight in favor of Hawaii. And just how much she increases the weight in favor of Hawaii may be undetermined. Perhaps Hawaii is being given more weight than Colorado at this point. But then she thinks of the possibility of encounters with sharks. And she begins to reduce the weight she gives to the Hawaii vacation. She remembers that shark encounters are quite rare, and she begins to start giving more weight to Hawaii again.

On my view, the assigning of weights is a fluid process that continues throughout deliberation, and there is no good reason to think that this process is deterministic. Given the conflicting options, at any moment in deliberation it may be undetermined how much weight is being given to any option or the reasons for the options, and the ideas which come to mind as one deliberates may be causally undetermined and these can affect the way in which one assigns value to – the way one weights – the options. On my view, the weighting of the options is not complete until a decision is made. And the

decisions will be the intelligible result of the path this weighting has followed. Once the decision is made the agent will be able to give an account of the things she did, the information she considered, and her valuations/weightings of those reasons, which explain how she came to make the decision she made. Thus, while causally undetermined, her choice will not be some random happening that is inexplicable. We will be able to make sense of the choice made in terms of the reasons considered and the values assigned to those reasons and their connection to the options under consideration. [I make similar points about the nature of deliberation in my (2021, pp. 144-146), which is the article Haji considers in developing his response to my view].

In criticizing my view, Haji suggests that there would be intermediate weightings prior to a final weighting at the moment of decision and if it is undetermined what the first intermediate weighting is at t_2 , then Jane and Jane* may weight things differently at t_2 even though everything about them is the same between the start of the weighting at time t_1 and the intermediate weighting at time t_2 . But, again, this is not my view. If there is a difference in the way Jane and Jane* weight the reasons at some intermediate point in their deliberations, then there must be some difference in the mental events leading up to that weighting, for instance different reasons must be coming to mind or, even without different reasons coming to mind one of them must be adding more and more weight, mentally valuing one of them more and more, up to time t_2 to give it the greater weight at t_2 .

It might help to think of giving more and more value to an option or to the reasons in favor of an option as involving a mental moving or leaning towards one option. This is something the agent consciously and intentionally does during the deliberation as the mind moves towards one option, A, over a time interval; the giving of more weight occurs over time and how much weight is given, how far one leans to one option in a certain time period may be indeterminate. In addition, as one keeps in mind the attractions of the other choice option, B, one might start giving more weight to that option, leading her to pull back from A and start leaning away from A and towards another option, B, as one gives more weight to that other option. Where the weights are set at any given moment in deliberation, whether at some intermediate stage t_2 or at the end of deliberation when the choice is made, will be the result of these mental movements of the agent that correspond with the weight she is giving in an indeterminate way to the options or the reasons for the options. And where the weights are set at any given moment in deliberation is correspondent to these mental movements in different directions. Thus, if Jane and Jane* were exactly the same at the start of deliberation, then at any later moment during

deliberation if the weights are set differently then they must have moved in some different directions in their weightings. Thus, on the view I hold, any time two agents, even agents who are exactly the same at the start of deliberation, get to a point in deliberation where the weights are set differently, then there must be something different about what has transpired in deliberation.

I would note as well that Haji's criticism suggests he thinks that there would be discrete weightings that occur at different times in deliberation and different weightings can pop up out of nowhere among agents that are exactly the same just prior to the weighting. But I don't see there being discrete distinct weightings made at different moments during deliberation. The weighting that occurs throughout the deliberation leading up to a choice is a continuous fluid process, and when a decision occurs it is typically made in conformity with where the weights are set at the time of decision. Absent weakness of will, the evaluative weighting of the options and the reasons for and against the options explain the choice made, and those weightings are the result of an indeterministic process the agent was actively involved in by considering the reasons and assigning values to those reasons and the options. Thus, when different decisions are made by Jane and Jane*, it will typically be the case that this is due to differences in the paths that their deliberations went, and the path deliberations go will largely be a result of the information considered and the weight given to that information.

On the freedom of weightings

In developing a distinct but related criticism of my view, Haji writes:

[Intentional acts of weighting reasons], if free, appear to be directly free. But what accounts for their freedom? On pain of an ugly regress, *not* prior weightings. (2022, p. 129)

He goes on to say that I regard the weightings as freely made when they meet plausible compatibilist standards of freedom (2022, pp. 129-130). That is, he believes my view is that weightings are freely made when not subject to external force or coercion, or manipulated and when the weightings reflect the will that I want to have and/or my weightings are reasons-responsive. He also notes that I do not believe meeting such compatibilist standards suffices for a person's having ultimate responsibility for their actions. For ultimate responsibility, one must make some causally undetermined choices in situations where one could have control regardless of which choice one makes – what Kane calls “plural voluntary control” (Haji, 2022, p. 130).

However, Haji argues:

This line of reasoning should be resisted. If weightings are actions that can be intentional and free, then, presumably, we can be morally responsible—morally praiseworthy or blameworthy—for them. Suppose John weights his reasons to steal far more heavily than he weights his reasons to refrain from stealing, and he weights on the basis of the non-culpable belief that he is doing moral wrong in performing this intentional act of weighting. In addition, assume that all other conditions of blameworthiness are in place regarding his weighting. Then John may well be blameworthy for his act of weighting... However, if responsibility for an intentional action, such as a decision, requires that one be ultimately responsible for that decision and, furthermore, as libertarians such as Lemos insist, one cannot be ultimately responsible for an intentional action unless this action is aptly indeterministically produced, then one cannot be responsible for an intentional and free weighting if the freedom of weightings is not to be accounted for by any appeal to indeterminism but solely on the basis of some compatibilist expedient. (2022, pp. 130-131)

Here I take Haji to be suggesting that my position is incoherent. His point seems to be that if compatibilist standards are met in the performance of the weightings made during deliberation, then I should be morally responsible for those weightings. And if morally responsible for those weightings, then I should be rightly blamed for such weightings if they support an immoral course of action. But, says Haji, as a libertarian I must think moral responsibility and deserved blame require that my actions be causally undetermined free acts or, at least, the result of prior causally undetermined free acts. Thus, my alleged appeal to compatibilist standards to ground the freedom of intentional acts of weighting conflicts with my libertarian beliefs about the grounds of responsibility and deserved blame for immoral actions.

Haji's argument is based on confusion about the role compatibilist standards play in views like mine and Robert Kane's. On Kane's view, meeting compatibilist standards in the making of efforts of will during deliberation and, on my view, meeting such standards in the weighting of reasons does *not* establish that such efforts or weightings are freely made or that we are responsible for them. Rather, the meeting of such standards is just meant to establish that the weightings or efforts are under our control by establishing that they are an expression of our authentic will as opposed to something produced through external force, coercion, manipulation, or

produced by unruly desires that we'd rather not act on, as in addictive behavior or obsessive-compulsive disorders. Kane and I *don't* see meeting compatibilist standards as sufficing for freedom and responsibility, but we *do* see meeting such standards as sufficient for an important kind of control that is essential to understanding how agents can have control over undetermined choices.

A close examination of my article (2021) and, indeed, the two passages which Haji (2022) cites in which I discuss the importance of meeting compatibilist standards in making sense of our control over undetermined free choices, reveals that I never suggest meeting such compatibilist standards *suffices* for our being free in doing the weightings or responsible for the weightings.¹ Rather the point is that meeting such compatibilist standards establishes that we have control over those weightings – that we are the ones doing the weighting, as opposed to having the weightings caused by alien

1. In his discussion of the issues regarding the freedom of the weightings, Haji cites the following two passages from my article in which I discuss agent control over the weighting of reasons:

So, for instance, when I am assigning weights to the reasons for each of my choice options, as long as I am not acting under coercion or subject to hidden neural controllers and as long as I am responsive to reasons and weighting them in a manner consistent with my second order desires, then I may rightly be said to have *control* over the assigning of weights to the reasons. Thus, if I assign the weights in such a manner that establishes my *control* over the assignment of those weights, then I will have *control* over the decision that results from that assignment of weights. [My emphasis on “control” is added here.]

And

To act while meeting such compatibilist standards of *control* does not suffice for having *ultimate* responsibility for what one does. To act while meeting compatibilist standards, merely establishes that one's act issues from one's own character... However, if we lived in a deterministic universe such that all of our choices were necessitated, then we would not be able to shape the character from which most of our actions issue. For in a deterministic universe, the shaping of our character would just be the result of our genetics and environmental conditions. To shape our characters in a manner that allows us to be ultimately responsible for who we are and what we do, then some of our actions must be causally undetermined actions over which we exert PVC [plural voluntary control]. But we can only exert PVC over undetermined actions by having compatibilist *control* over events that transpire in the deliberation process which leads to choice - whether the efforts of will (Kane's view) or the assigning of weights to reasons (my view). For only then will the path of the deliberation be a reflection of our own character. [My emphasis on “control” is added here.]

Notice in these passages I nowhere suggest that meeting compatibilist standards suffices for acting with free will or being responsible in some desert-bearing sense of responsibility. Rather, I am merely invoking compatibilist conditions as the ground of having control over the weighting of reasons and how this contributes to our having control over causally undetermined choices.

external causes, such as when manipulated or coerced, or caused by alien internal desires with which we don't identify, as when the victim of addiction or an obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc. On my view, to have freedom of will and to be morally responsible for what we do we must engage in some causally undetermined free actions. But to have control over these causally undetermined actions we must have control over the assigning of the weights to reasons involved in deliberation. If we lack control over the weightings, then the resulting undetermined decision will not be free-willed because it won't be a reflection of our agency – it won't be reflective of the fact that we did it as opposed to something that just happens to us due to external force or manipulation or due to internal psychological causes which undermine agency, such as obsessive compulsive-desires we'd rather not act on. But, again, this is *not* to say that meeting such compatibilist standards in the performance of the weightings suffices to make the weightings free-willed or that we are responsible for them. What is free-willed in the basic sense of free will is a causally undetermined decision that is the result of an indeterministic process we control by having compatibilist control over the weightings leading up to that decision.

It is reasonable to think compatibilist standards can establish an important kind of agent control over action which does not amount to the kind of free-willed control that makes a person morally responsible in the desert-bearing sense. Notice that even if determinism were true, we would still want to distinguish between persons whose acts meet compatibilist standards and those whose acts don't meet such standards. For instance, imagine (a) Fred who desires to knock Mary into the swimming pool and wants to act on this desire and intentionally knocks her into the pool, while wanting to act on this desire. Also, imagine (b) Tim who has no such desire to knock Mary into the pool, but a strong wind pushes him into her, and he knocks her into the pool and (c) John who has an obsessive compulsion to knock Mary into the pool that he does not identify with nor wants to act on, but who nonetheless knocks Mary into the pool because of this desire. Now, assuming a deterministic universe, neither Kane nor I would view either Fred or Tim or John as responsible for what they have done; but knowing that Fred meets compatibilist standards of control, we would respond to him differently, pointing out to him the problematic nature of his desires and intentions and requesting that he rethink his actions and change his behavior in the future. No such response to Tim or John would be called for. In Tim's case, there is nothing in his psychology that led him to knock Mary into the pool. Assuming he is a good person who is utterly blameless, our reaction should be something

like, “Oh, dear, that’s unfortunate. Hopefully, the wind will stop soon and no one else will get knocked about by the wind or knocked into the pool.” In John’s case, if we know of his problems with such obsessive-compulsive desires, we might say “John, that’s too bad. You should seek out treatment for these problems and maybe avoid pool parties until this problem is solved.” Only Fred here in case (a) meets compatibilist conditions of control in knocking Mary into the pool. Because he meets such conditions, he has a kind of control over what he does that Tim and John lack in cases (b) and (c). And because of the difference in Fred’s control, a different response is called for. But, even so, on the assumption of a deterministic universe to blame or punish Fred would be inappropriate because ultimately the character he has which leads him to act as he does is not up to him. Rather, without the capacity to engage in causally undetermined character-shaping actions, the way he thinks and reasons and acts are all ultimately determined by causal forces beyond his control. In a deterministic universe, though, Fred’s knocking Mary into the pool would still be much more of an expression of who he is, of what kind of person he is, than Tim’s or John’s knocking of Mary into the pool, and in this sense he would have more control over what he does, but this still does not suffice for his acting with free will or being morally responsible for what he does. In this way compatibilist control without freedom or responsibility makes sense, and it is a key element in making sense of undetermined free choices on both my view and Kane’s view.

Conclusion

For all of the above-stated reasons, Haji’s two criticisms of my view miss the mark. He argues that my view fails to resolve the usual worries about luck which libertarian views face, and he argues that my view does not make coherent sense of the freedom of the weightings. But both of his arguments are based on misunderstandings of my views. Admittedly, I may have been unclear in some ways in expressing my views and this may have led Haji to understand my view in a manner different from what I intended. Regardless, I am grateful for his attention to my work, as it has pushed me to write this piece in the hope of better clarifying my view and, perhaps, strengthening the case for it.

Ethics declarations

Conflict of interests

The author has no competing interests.

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