

Deep Control

ESSAYS ON FREE WILL AND VALUE

John Martin Fischer

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii

1. Deep Control: The Middle Way 3

PART ONE An Actual-Sequence Approach to Moral Responsibility

2. The Frankfurt Cases: The Moral of the Stories 33

3. Freedom, Foreknowledge, and Frankfurt: A Reply to Vihvelin 53

4. The Importance of Frankfurt-Style Argument 67

5. Blame and Avoidability: A Reply to Otsuka 76

6. Indeterminism and Control: An Approach to the Problem of Luck 85

PART TWO The Middle Path: Guidance Control

7. The Direct Argument: You Say Goodbye, I Say Hello 109

**8. Conditional Freedom and the Normative Approach to Moral
Responsibility 122**

9. Judgment-Sensitivity and the Value of Freedom 144

10. Sourcehood: Playing the Cards That Are Dealt You 163

11. Guidance Control 186

12. The Triumph of Tracing 206

Index 235

Deep Control: The Middle Way

In work over the last three decades I have sought to present what I have called a “general framework for moral responsibility.”¹ In this introductory essay, I shall sketch some of the leading ideas in my overall framework and draw out a few implications. I hope that this will help to situate the essays in the current volume within a larger context. I shall also highlight some of the important themes I address in this book.²

I. A Framework for Moral Responsibility

I.1. MOTIVATION AND THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY

The framework I have presented for moral responsibility involves a portfolio of different ideas in a certain arrangement. I start by presenting some basic “motivating ideas”—some considerations that render my overall approach attractive. Perhaps the key idea here stems from the appeal of a certain sort of “resiliency.” I believe that our fundamental status as agents—our being deeply different from mere nonhuman animals insofar as we engage in practical reasoning and are morally responsible for

¹ See John Martin Fischer, *The Metaphysics of Free Will: An Essay on Control* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); *My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and *Our Stories: Essays on Life, Death, and Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Also see John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas, *Four Views on Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2007).

² The material in the first two sections of this essay is a lightly revised version of John Martin Fischer, “Precis of My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility” (part of a book symposium on *My Way*) *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 80 (2010): 229–241. I am deeply thankful to Patrick Todd, Neal Tognazzini, and Justin Coates for extremely helpful comments on previous versions of this essay.

our behavior—should not depend on certain subtle ruminations of theoretical physicists. That is, I do not think that our status as genuine *agents* should hang on a thread—that it should depend on whether natural laws have associated with them (say) probabilities of 0.99 or 1.0. In my view, *that sort* of empirical difference should not *make a difference* as to our moral responsibility.

So, for example, if in the future I am convinced that the fundamental laws of nature are—or can be regimented as—(among other things) universally generalized conditionals with probabilities of 1.0 rather than similar conditionals with probabilities of 0.99, this would not issue in any inclination on my part to give up my view of myself and others as genuine agents and legitimate participants in the practices constitutive of moral responsibility. Now this is simply one consideration, and it specifies a *desideratum* of an adequate theory of moral responsibility. In my view, it counts in favor of a theory of moral responsibility—it is a reason to accept such a theory—if the theory does not conceptualize moral responsibility as hanging on a thread (in the indicated way). Of course, the proponent of such a theory must still address the difficult skeptical worries about the relationship between causal determinism, free will, and moral responsibility, as well as do some sort of philosophical cost-benefit analysis that considers all relevant factors.

Note that, insofar as I take it that it would be desirable to have an account of moral responsibility according to which our fundamental status as morally responsible agents does not “hang on a thread,” it would follow that we should not give up our views of ourselves as morally responsible and deeply different from nonhuman animals (in the relevant ways) if we are convinced (in the future) that the fundamental laws of nature have irreducible *indeterminacies* associated with them. Suppose, for example, that we discover that these laws are or can be conceptualized as (among other things) universally quantified conditionals with 0.99 probabilities. In my view, this in itself should not issue in any inclination to discard or revise our views of ourselves and others as genuine agents and subject to moral responsibility. Again, I am simply articulating what I take to be a *desideratum* of an adequate theory of moral responsibility—that it be suitably resilient to certain sorts of empirical discoveries.³ A proponent of such a theory still needs to address the difficult skeptical worries about the relationship between causal indeterminism and *control* (and moral responsibility).

A second element in the overall framework for moral responsibility consists in an articulation of the “concept” of moral responsibility. I accept some sort of distinction between the concept and its conditions of application; I, of course, recognize that the legitimacy of this sort of distinction has been called into question. And yet

³ In sketching the “resiliency desideratum” in this introductory essay, I have simply tried to lay out my view. This is perhaps not the appropriate venue to address difficulties and objections—of which there are (lamentably) many. Indeed, I am grateful to Helen Steward, Kevin Timpe, Randolph Clarke, Dan Speak, Chris Franklin, Michael Nelson, and Patrick Todd for discussions of these issues in their written work and also in many probing conversations. I hope further to explore these issues in future work.

I continue to think that there is *some* reasonable way (or ways) of making the relevant kind of distinction, even if it is not straightforwardly a matter of distinguishing “analytic” from “synthetic” truths, or matters of meaning from empirical matters. I simply presuppose that there is some tolerably clear way of distinguishing (roughly speaking) the concept of moral responsibility from the conditions in which moral responsibility actually obtains (or, in a slightly different vocabulary, the *concept* of moral responsibility from various *conceptions* of moral responsibility).

As I said before, my overall framework for moral responsibility is a suite of ideas in a certain arrangement. Part of this structured portfolio is a set of options in regard to the concept of moral responsibility; but I do not take a firm stand on these options. That is, I chart out different ways of articulating our inchoate concept of moral responsibility, but I do not argue that one (rather than the others) is the correct specification. I am not even sure that there is one unique specification. Rather, I focus most of my attention on specifying the conditions of application of the concept of moral responsibility, and I contend that accepting these conditions is completely *compatible* with accepting any of the specific options with respect to the *concept* of moral responsibility.

To be a bit more specific about the concept of moral responsibility, perhaps the most salient view might be called the “Strawsonian” view, following the classic presentation by Peter Strawson in “Freedom and Resentment.”⁴ In this view, being morally responsible is a matter of being an appropriate target of a set of distinctive attitudes Strawson dubbed the “reactive attitudes,” such as gratitude, love, respect, hatred, and resentment. In the Strawsonian approach, moral responsibility also involves being appropriate participants in activities, such as moral praise and blame and punishment, which presuppose the application of the relevant attitudes. It was important to Strawson that the “appropriateness” of the attitudes does not depend on the target agent’s meeting some “theoretical condition,” such as possessing the freedom to do otherwise (or, as I interpret him, *any* sort of freedom); additionally, it does not depend (for Strawson) on the world’s meeting certain specific conditions, such as that causal determinism is false (or, for that matter, true).

Another account of the concept of moral responsibility is associated with the metaphor of a “moral ledger.” On the moral ledger view, we are morally responsible insofar as we are apt targets of specifically *moral* judgments. In this view, we are deeply different from nonhuman animals in that we can have *moral* properties—we can act rightly or wrongly, we can be good or bad, courageous or cowardly, and so forth. In yet another view, we are morally responsible insofar as we can legitimately be asked to provide *explanations* or *accounts* of our behavior. As I said, I do not know whether there is a *single* correct specification of our shared concept of moral responsibility. It is plausible to me that “moral responsibility” is what Wittgenstein called a “family-resemblance” term or what we might call a “syndrome.” In any case,

⁴ *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 1–25.

I contend that my account of the conditions in which moral responsibility obtains is compatible with *any* of the plausible attempts to specify the concept.

1.2. CONTROL AND THE CONDITIONS FOR MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

I accept the traditional view (stemming perhaps from Aristotle's discussion of voluntariness) that moral responsibility involves a *freedom* or *control* component and an *epistemic* component. But whereas I agree that moral responsibility requires control, I distinguish two kinds of control: guidance and regulative control. The two kinds of control can be pried apart analytically through the use of certain thought-experiments (the "Frankfurt-style examples," to which I return shortly). One kind of control involves access to alternative possibilities (freedom to choose and do otherwise); I call this "regulative control." The other kind of control does not require such access. It is a distinctive kind of control that does not involve freedom to choose or do otherwise; I call this "guidance control." My claim is that guidance control is the freedom-relevant or control component of moral responsibility. Thus, an agent can legitimately be held morally responsible for his behavior, even though he lacks regulative control (or freedom to choose and do otherwise). The freedom-relevant condition is combined with an "epistemic" condition to get a full theory of moral responsibility.

To develop these notions of control (and their relationship), let us consider the following cases.⁵ Suppose that I am driving my car. It is functioning well, and I wish to make a right turn. (We assume that the gas pedal is working properly and that I am depressing it to give the car gas.) As a result of my intention to turn right, I signal, turn the steering wheel, and carefully guide the car to the right. Further, I here assume that I was able to form the intention not to turn the car to the right but to turn the car to the left instead. In this ordinary case, I guide the car to the right, but I could have guided it to the left. I control the car, and also I have a certain sort of control *over* the car's movements. Insofar as I actually guide the car in a certain way, I shall say that I have "guidance control." Further, insofar as I have the power to guide the car in a different way, I shall say that I have "regulative control." (Of course, here we are not making any "special assumptions," such as that causal determinism obtains or God exists and foreknows our future behavior.)⁶

Consider, now, a second case. Here I again guide my car in the normal way to the right. The car's steering apparatus *works properly* when I steer the car to the right (as does the gas pedal). But unknown to me, the car's steering apparatus is broken in such a way that, if I were to try to turn it in some other direction, the car would veer off to the right in precisely the way it actually goes to the right. Since

⁵ I take these cases from Fischer, *My Way*: 39.

⁶ For discussions of the relationship between God's omniscience and human freedom, see John Martin Fischer, ed., *God, Foreknowledge, and Freedom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); and Fischer, *The Metaphysics of Free Will*: 111–130.

I actually do not try to do anything but turn to the right, the apparatus functions normally, and the car's movements are precisely as they would have been if there had been no problem with the steering apparatus. Indeed, my guidance of the car to the right is precisely the same in this case and the first car case.

Here, as in the first car case, it appears that I control the movement of the car in the sense of guiding it in a certain way to the right. I do not simply cause it to go to the right (say, as a result of sneezing or having an epileptic seizure or involuntary spasm). Thus, I exhibit guidance control of the car. (I control the car and I have control of the car, but I do not have control *over* the car's movements; the different prepositions typically indicate the different kinds of control.) Generally, we assume that guidance control and regulative control go together. But this case (which has some of the salient structural features of a Frankfurt-type case) helps to show that they can at least in principle pull apart: one can have guidance control without regulative control.

The second car case should elicit the intuition that we do not need regulative control (genuine access to alternative possibilities) in order to have the kind of control involved in moral responsibility. The second car case is rather like John Locke's famous example of a man who is in a room that, unknown to him, is locked; the man thinks about whether to leave the room, but decides to stay in the room for his own reasons. The fact that the door is locked plays no role in the man's practical reasoning. Locke says that the man stays in the room voluntarily, although he could not have left the room. Similarly, it seems that I exhibit guidance control of the car, although I could not have caused the car to go to the left.

But in Locke's case the man *did* have various options available to him. After all, he could have decided to open the door, he could have tried to open it, and so forth; and similarly, in the second car example I could have decided to steer the car to the left, I could have tried to do so, and so forth. Some philosophers might then insist that it is *in virtue of the existence of these alternative possibilities* that the agent is morally responsible. And it must be conceded that we have not yet produced an example in which an agent is intuitively thought to be morally responsible and yet has *no* alternative possibilities (*no* regulative control).

This is precisely the point at which Harry Frankfurt offers a remedy for the gap in the original cases.⁷ In Frankfurt's examples, a "counterfactual intervener" stands by ready to intervene in the relevant agent's brain processes, if he shows even an inclination to choose to do otherwise. Although Frankfurt was rather vague about exactly how the counterfactual intervener can succeed in expunging all access to alternative possibilities, Frankfurt's followers have filled in the template in various ways. Here is my favorite version of a Frankfurt case:⁸

⁷ Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 829–839.

⁸ For such an example, see John Martin Fischer, "Responsibility and Control," *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982): 24–40.

Because Black dares to hope that the Democrats finally have a good chance of winning the White House, the benevolent but elderly neurosurgeon, Black, has come out of retirement to participate in yet another philosophical example. (After all, what would these thought-experiments be without the venerable *eminence grise*—or should it be *noir*?) He has secretly inserted a chip in Jones's brain which enables Black to monitor and control Jones's activities. Black can exercise this control through a sophisticated computer that he has programmed so that, among other things, it monitors Jones's voting behavior. If Jones were to show any inclination to vote for McCain (or, let us say, anyone other than Obama), then the computer, through the chip in Jones's brain, would intervene to assure that he actually decides to vote for Obama and does so vote. But if Jones decides on his own to vote for Obama (as Black, the old progressive, would prefer), the computer does nothing but continue to monitor—without affecting—the goings-on in Jones's head.

Now suppose that Jones decides to vote for Obama on his own, just as he would have if Black had not inserted the chip in his head. It seems, upon first thinking about this case, that Jones can be held morally responsible for this choice and act of voting for Obama, although he could not have chosen otherwise and he could not have done otherwise.⁹

Over the years I have offered a sustained argument that the Frankfurt examples provide a strong plausibility argument for the conclusion that moral responsibility does not require genuine metaphysical access to alternative possibilities (regulative control). The leading idea in my argument is that any proponent of the regulative control requirement should say that the alternative possibilities in question must be *robust* and not *mere flickers of freedom*. That is, if the basis of moral responsibility is access to at least one alternative possibility, the alternative possibility in question cannot be *any old sort of possibility* of something different happening; such an alternative possibility might be a mere flicker of freedom and thus too thin a reed to support the superstructure of moral responsibility.

The situation here is precisely like the problem faced by proponents of indeterministic accounts of moral responsibility; how can the mere addition of a certain sort of alternative possibility—say an event the happening or not-happening of which is entirely arbitrary or accidental, from the agent's point of view—render it true that the agent has the control associated with moral responsibility, given that the agent lacks such control in the absence of *any* alternative possibilities? (I return to this question below.) In previous work, I have asked the proponent of regulative control a similar question: "Given (for the sake of discussion) that an agent without *any* alternative possibilities cannot be deemed morally

⁹ Whew! Black was right. I began writing this paper before the elections of 2008; obviously, the specifics of the case are now out of date, but what matters is the structure of the example.

responsible, how can the mere addition of an *exiguous* alternative possibility in the Frankfurt cases—say an event the happening or not-happening of which is entirely arbitrary or accidental from the agent’s point of view—render it true that the agent has the control associated with moral responsibility?” Note that the worry behind this question is exactly why the prominent libertarian philosopher Robert Kane has essentially agreed with me on this point, positing the “dual voluntariness” requirement for moral responsibility.

My claim, then, is that versions of the Frankfurt cases can be given in which it is very plausible to say that the agent in question is morally responsible for his behavior, and yet he has no access to the *relevant sort* of alternative possibility—a sufficiently robust alternative possibility. In addition to presenting a systematic defense of the contention that the Frankfurt cases show moral responsibility not to require regulative control, I have pointed out that the rejection of the requirement of regulative control does not depend on the Frankfurt cases. There are various other routes to the same conclusion, including the Strawsonian contention that our ordinary responsibility practices do not presuppose the requirement of regulative control.¹⁰ Also, Daniel Dennett has presented various arguments against the requirement of regulative control.¹¹ I believe that the fact that there are various different routes to the same conclusion helps to establish the plausibility of the conclusion; if one finds thought-experiments such as the Frankfurt cases unattractive, or if one finds the Frankfurt cases unconvincing, there are still good reasons to accept that moral responsibility does not require regulative control.

So my preliminary conclusion is that *if* causal determinism rules out moral responsibility, this is *not* in virtue of its eliminating regulative control (if it does indeed eliminate regulative control). This is an important point; I believe it is the “moral of the Frankfurt stories,” no matter how they are told and retold. Further, if this point is correct, it allows us to sidestep the traditional debates about the relationship between such doctrines as God’s omniscience and causal determinism, on the one hand, and “freedom to do otherwise” or regulative control, on the other. That is, we can sidestep these debates if we are simply interested in moral responsibility. Insofar as these traditional debates have issued in what I have called Dialectical Stalemates—black holes in Dialectical Spacetime—avoiding them may open the possibility of real philosophical progress.

This having been said, I have never suggested that the *mere fact* that regulative control is not required for moral responsibility would allow us to conclude *straightaway* that causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility. Indeed, in my 1982 paper, “Responsibility and Control,” I emphasized that causal determinism

¹⁰ For a version of this sort of strategy, see R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

¹¹ Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984); and *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Viking, 2003). For a discussion, see John Martin Fischer, “Dennett on the Basic Argument,” (part of a book symposium on Daniel Dennett, *Freedom Evolves*) *Metaphilosophy* 36 (2005): 427–435.

might rule out moral responsibility *directly* (and not in virtue of ruling out alternative possibilities). I thus identified what has come to be called “Source Incompatibilism,” and I pointed out that it must be taken seriously. I concluded that theorists of moral responsibility should adopt a laserlike focus on the *actual sequence* that issues in any particular choice or behavior and should, in particular, consider whether causal determination in the actual sequence crowds out moral responsibility.

In subsequent work, I identified and evaluated a number of different factors that might be invoked to explain why causal determination rules out moral responsibility directly (i.e., in virtue of their presence in the actual sequence, and *not* in virtue of ruling out alternative possibilities). I concluded that none of these factors provides a good reason to suppose that causal determination *in itself and apart from ruling out alternative possibilities* is incompatible with moral responsibility. I believe that when one shifts from consideration of the relationship between causal determination and regulative control to a focus on actual-sequence features of causally deterministic processes, the philosophical terrain becomes significantly more hospitable to compatibilism.

Given that I do not think that causal determinism rules out moral responsibility by threatening regulative control, and I also do not think that there are other good reasons to suppose that causal determinism rules out moral responsibility, I present an account of moral responsibility that is compatible with causal determinism. More precisely, I present an account of “guidance control,” the freedom-relevant condition necessary and sufficient for moral responsibility (in my view).

An insight from the Frankfurt cases helps to shape the account of guidance control: moral responsibility is a matter of the history of an action (or behavior)—of how the actual sequence unfolds—rather than the genuine availability of alternative possibilities.¹² In this view, alternative scenarios or non-actual possible worlds might be relevant to moral responsibility in virtue of helping to specify or analyze modal or dispositional properties of the actual sequence, but not in virtue of indicating or providing an analysis of *access* to alternative possibilities.

Note that, in a Frankfurt-type case, the actual sequence proceeds “in the normal way” or via the “normal” process of practical reasoning. In contrast, in the alternative scenario (which never actually gets triggered and thus never becomes part of the actual sequence of events in our world), there is (say) direct electronic stimulation of the brain—intuitively, a different way or a different kind of mechanism. (By “mechanism” I simply mean, roughly speaking, “process”—I do not

¹²Of course, it might be that the availability of alternative possibilities is in some sense “part of the actual sequence”; I am indebted to both Carl Ginet and Patrick Todd for this point. My contention in the text relies on the intuitive notion that we can separate “actual-sequence” from “alternative-sequence” facts, but this might be too quick. In any case, my view is that moral responsibility attributions should not depend on the actual-sequence facts leaving it open that the agent in question has alternative possibilities. For a very interesting recent discussion of the contention that moral responsibility supervenes on the actual sequence, see: Carolina Sartorio, “Actuality and Responsibility,” *Mind*, (forthcoming).

mean to reify anything.) I assume that we have intuitions at least about clear cases of “same mechanism,” and “different mechanism.” The actually operating mechanism (in a Frankfurt-type case)—ordinary human practical reasoning, unimpaired by direct stimulation by neurosurgeons, and so forth—is in a salient and natural sense “responsive to reasons.” That is, holding fixed that mechanism (the kind of process that actually unfolds), the agent would presumably choose and act differently in a range of scenarios in which he or she is presented with sufficient reasons to do so.

This suggests the rudiments of an account of guidance control of action.¹³ In this account, we hold fixed the kind of mechanism that actually issues in the choice and action, and we see whether the agent responds suitably to reasons (some of which are moral reasons). My account presupposes that the agent can recognize reasons, and, in particular, recognize certain reasons as moral reasons. The account distinguishes between reasons-recognition (the ability to recognize the reasons that exist) and reasons-reactivity (choice in accordance with reasons that are recognized as good and sufficient), and it makes different demands on reasons-recognition and reasons-reactivity. The sort of reasons-responsiveness linked to moral responsibility, in my view, is “moderate reasons-responsiveness.”

But one could exhibit the right sort of reasons-responsiveness as a result (say) of clandestine, unconsented-to electronic stimulation of the brain (or hypnosis, brainwashing, etc.). So moderate reasons-responsiveness of the actual-sequence mechanism is necessary but insufficient for the control linked to moral responsibility. I contend that there are two elements of guidance control: reasons-sensitivity of the appropriate sort and mechanism-ownership. That is, the mechanism that issues in the behavior must (in an appropriate sense) be the *agent's own* mechanism. (When one is secretly manipulated through clandestine mind control as in *The Manchurian Candidate*, one's practical reasoning is not *one's own*.)

I have argued for a “subjective” approach to mechanism-ownership. In this approach, a mechanism becomes one's own in virtue of one having certain beliefs about one's own agency and its effects in the world, that is, in virtue of *seeing oneself in a certain way*. (Of course, it is *not* simply a matter of saying certain things—one actually has to have the relevant constellation of beliefs.) In my view, an individual becomes morally responsible in part at least by taking responsibility; he makes his mechanism his own by taking responsibility for acting from that kind of mechanism. In a sense, then, one acquires control by *taking control*. When I act on *my own* suitably reasons-responsive mechanism, I do it *my way*.¹⁴

¹³ Again, I borrow from the introduction to *My Way*: 17–19.

¹⁴ In the Philippines, there is a lamentably high incidence of what has come to be called “*My Way* killings.” This is the phenomenon described in the following excerpt from an article in *The New York Times*:

After a day of barbering, Rodolfo Gregorio went to his neighborhood karaoke bar still smelling of talcum powder. Putting aside his glass of Red Horse Extra Strong beer, he grasped a microphone with a habitué's self-assuredness and briefly stilled the room with the Platters' “My Prayer.”

I ended my 1982 paper, “Responsibility and Control,” by saying that we must “decode the information in the actual sequence” leading to behavior for which the agent can legitimately be held morally responsible and ascertain whether it is compatible with causal determination. The account of guidance control—with the two chief ingredients, moderate reasons-responsiveness and mechanism ownership—are the “secrets” revealed by close scrutiny of the actual sequence, and I have argued that they are entirely compatible with causal determination. (As I point out below, they are also entirely compatible with causal indeterminism; thus, in my approach, moral responsibility does *not* hang on a thread.)

Further, I have shown how we can build a *comprehensive* account of guidance control from an account of guidance control of *actions*. That is, we can develop an account of guidance control of omissions, consequence-particulars, consequence-universals, and perhaps even emotions and character traits by invoking certain basic ingredients contained in the account of guidance control of actions. I argue that it is a point in favor of my account of moral responsibility that it can give a comprehensive account that builds on simple, basic ingredients. Additionally, I contend that this comprehensive account systematizes our intuitive judgments

Next, he belted out crowd-pleasers by Tom Jones and Engelbert Humperdinck. But Mr. Gregorio, 63, a witness to countless fistfights and occasional stabbings erupting from disputes over karaoke singing, did not dare choose one beloved classic: Frank Sinatra’s version of “My Way.”

“I used to like ‘My Way,’ but after all the trouble, I stopped singing it,” he said. “You can get killed.”

The authorities do not know exactly how many people have been killed warbling “My Way” in karaoke bars over the years in the Philippines, or how many fatal fights it has fueled. But the news media have recorded at least half a dozen victims in the past decade and includes them in a subcategory of crime dubbed the “My Way Killings.”

The killings have produced urban legends about the song and left Filipinos groping for answers. Are the killings the natural by-product of the country’s culture of violence, drinking, and machismo? Or is there something inherently sinister in the song?

Whatever the reason, many karaoke bars have removed the song from their playbooks. And the country’s many Sinatra lovers, like Mr. Gregorio here in this city in the southernmost Philippines, are practicing self-censorship out of perceived self-preservation.

“The trouble with ‘My Way,’” said Mr. Gregorio, “is that everyone knows it and everyone has an opinion.”

Others, noting that other equally popular tunes have not provoked killings, point to the song itself. The lyrics, written by Paul Anka for Mr. Sinatra as an unapologetic summing up of his career, are about a tough guy who “when there was doubt,” simply “ate it up and spit it out.” Butch Albarracin, the owner of Center for Pop, a Manila-based singing school that has propelled the careers of many famous singers, was partial to what he called the “existential explanation.”

“I did it my way”—it’s so arrogant,” Mr. Albarracin said. “The lyrics evoke feelings of pride and arrogance in the singer, as if you’re somebody when you’re really nobody. It covers up your failures. That’s why it leads to fights.” (“Sinatra Song Often Strikes Deadly Chord,” *The New York Times* [New York Edition], February 6, 2010: A6.)

There are additional curmudgeonly animadversions on *My Way* in Sarah Vowell’s amusing essay, “Ixnay on the *My Way*,” in Sarah Vowell, *Take the Cannoli* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000): 159–166. And the author of an entry on the “EGR Weblog,” (http://www.rageboy.com/2003_05_25_bloggerarchive.html), accessed April 17, 2006, compares the lyrics of “My Way” to the definition of “narcissistic personality disorder.” Here is a brief quotation from the (lengthy) diatribe:

about a wide range of examples involving moral responsibility. It thus helps us to achieve a philosophical homeostasis, or, in John Rawls's famous term, a reflective equilibrium.¹⁵

1.3. THE VALUE OF ACTING FREELY

In addition to presenting the motivation for the account of guidance control and the specifics of the account, I have sought to articulate the nature of the *value* we place on exhibiting guidance control (and thus acting so that we can legitimately be held morally responsible). In my essay, "Responsibility and Self-Expression," I claimed that the value of acting so as to be morally responsible is the value of a certain sort of

I did it my way, the guy says. Your sleek self-confident blue-eyed boy, and underneath, an arrogant urbane brutality. Swingin. Cool. As cold as they come. Where's the love in Sinatra's love songs, I'm wondering... I wonder how he treated his women in Vegas. Like a gentleman, no doubt. Like one-a the guys. Like Luciano and Giancana. Smooth operators all. Made in the shade.

Regrets? Not me. F— you, Frank. ("Have It Your Way: DSM IV Meets Sid Vicious," May 27, 2003)

For a thoughtful and rather gentler development of the worry that a "My Way"-inspired approach to moral responsibility might be too atomistic or even narcissistic, see Angela Smith, "Making a Difference, Making a Statement, and Making a Conversation," (part of a book symposium on John Martin Fischer, *My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility*) *Philosophical Books* 47 (2006): 213–221; I reply in John Martin Fischer, "A Reply to Pereboom, Zimmerman, and Smith," *Philosophical Books* 47 (2006): 235–244.

It is indisputable that moral responsibility is importantly a "social" notion. But it is perhaps a delicate issue how exactly to capture this point in one's conceptualization of moral responsibility. It should suffice to note that I have adopted as a working hypothesis a "Strawsonian" interpretation of the concept of moral responsibility, i.e., being morally responsible is understood as being an apt target for the reactive attitudes. And, as Gary Watson and others have pointed out, this way of understanding moral responsibility is essentially *communicative*: Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme," in Ferdinand David Schoeman, ed., *Responsibility, Character and the Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 256–286. Insofar as moral responsibility is modeled on a conversation, and assuming that one will not always simply talk to oneself, moral responsibility is construed as a social phenomenon.

¹⁵ For further reflections on various features of my account of guidance control (and thus the freedom-relevant component of moral responsibility), see John Martin Fischer, "The Free Will Revolution," (part of a book symposium on John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*) *Philosophical Explorations* 8 (2005): 145–156; and "The Free Will Revolution (Continued)," (part of a special issue on the work [pertaining to moral responsibility] of John Martin Fischer) *Journal of Ethics* 10 (2006): 315–345; and "My Way and Life's Highway: Replies to Steward, Smilansky, and Perry," *Journal of Ethics* 12 (2008): 167–189.

There are certain features of my account of guidance control that a disconcerting cohort of (otherwise!) thoughtful philosophers have found rather less than irresistible, especially the subjective element and the contention that "reactivity is all of a piece." In the trio of articles above, I argue (among other things) that (if need be) I could adjust my account so as to do without these contentious features while maintaining all of my major claims: that moral responsibility does not require regulative control, that causal determination is compatible with moral responsibility, that moral responsibility is an essentially historical notion, and so forth. Although I, of course, think that much can be said for the various particularly contentious elements of the account of guidance control, it is perhaps helpful to note that

artistic self-expression.¹⁶ I have gone on to argue that in acting freely, we transform our lives in such a way that the chronicles of our lives become genuine *stories* or *narratives*. That is, I argue that acting freely is the ingredient which, when added to others, makes it the case that our lives admit of distinctively *narrative* explanation and have irreducibly narrative dimensions of evaluation. Thus acting freely—exhibiting the signature freedom-relevant control, guidance control—makes us the authors of our narratives. As such, we are artists, and I contend that the value of acting freely is thus the value of artistic self-expression. When we act freely, we do not necessarily make a difference—but we do make a statement. That is, in acting freely, we are writing a sentence in the books of our lives, or a bit less metaphorically, we are doing something that corresponds to a sentence in the stories of our lives.¹⁷

We are thus artists in fashioning our lives. But it does not follow that we ought to treat aesthetic reasons as hegemonic in our practical reasoning. Nor does it follow from the fact that our free activity is a species of artistic self-expression that the *value* we place on such activity is primarily or exclusively aesthetic. To infer in this way from the essence of the activity to the nature of the value would be to commit what I have called “the aesthetic fallacy.”¹⁸

There is then an important discordance between the essential nature of our free activity (aesthetic) and the typical or primary sort of value we place on it (prudential or ethical, broadly speaking). I suggest that we can better understand the ways in which our lives are meaningful by conceptualizing free activity as at the “intersection” of the aesthetic and practical realms. I contend that we care especially about this particular *route* to moral and prudential evaluation—a route that is aesthetic in nature. And we care especially about aesthetic activities whose products are centrally evaluated along prudential and ethical dimensions.¹⁹

they are not essential to an adequate account of guidance control that achieves the main results at which I aim; thus, it will not be sufficient for many critics to attach what they might perceive to be easier targets (the low-hanging fruit, as it were).

¹⁶ “Responsibility and Self-Expression,” *The Journal of Ethics* 3 (1999): 277–297; reprinted in Fischer, *My Way*: 106–123.

¹⁷ John Martin Fischer, “Free Will, Death, and Immortality: The Role of Narrative,” *Philosophical Papers* (Special Issue: Meaning in Life) 34 (2005): 379–404; reprinted in Fischer, *Our Stories*: 145–164.

¹⁸ John Martin Fischer, “Stories and the Meaning of Life,” *Philosophical Exchange* 39 (2008–09): 2–16; reprinted in Fischer, *Our Stories*: 165–177.

¹⁹ Susan Wolf has argued that meaningfulness in life occurs at the intersection between the subjective and objective realms; that is, for Wolf meaningfulness arises from the intersection between the subjectively attractive and the objectively worthwhile: Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.)

Something—such as counting blades of grass—might be compelling to someone, but it is not objectively worthwhile, and thus it cannot give rise to meaningfulness. Similarly, no matter how objectively worthwhile a certain goal is, it cannot give meaningfulness to one’s life if one is indifferent to it.

If one combines Wolf’s point with mine, one gets to the idea that meaningfulness in life arises from a certain intersection of intersections. That is, meaningfulness occurs in contexts in which there is a linkage between subjective engagement and objective worth, as well as a linkage between the aesthetic and the moral/prudential realms. It is plausible that meaningfulness emerges from a certain kind of complexity, and thus it is not too far-fetched to suppose that meaningfulness distinctively emerges from this specific intersection of intersections, what I might dub *the nexus of meaningfulness*.

II. Some Features and Implications of My Overall Approach to Moral Responsibility

As I stated earlier, I believe that our status as morally responsible agents should not “hang on a thread”; specifically, neither the discovery that the laws of nature have associated with them probabilities of 1.0 nor the discovery that they have associated with them probabilities of 0.99 should incline us to give up our views of ourselves as deeply different from other creatures insofar as we can engage in practical reasoning and be morally responsible. Much of my work has focused on the deterministic side of the equation, so to speak. But note that my account of guidance control is entirely compatible with the *falsity* (as well as the truth) of causal determinism. Indeed, Carl Ginet has kindly suggested that an indeterminist should accept the core of my account of the responsibility-conferring kind of control (in my view, guidance control) and simply add a condition specifying that causal determinism must be false.²⁰ My account then is compatible with causal indeterminism.

It is, as I have emphasized, a considerable advantage of my approach that it renders agency and moral responsibility *resilient* to certain (although not all) empirical discoveries. Indeed, I consider it an important desideratum of an adequate account of moral responsibility that it does not *depend* on any contentious doctrine. So, for example, if one’s account of moral responsibility *depended* on (say) the existence of irreducible agent-causation or the falsity of “reductionism” (of a certain sort) in metaphysics or the falsity of materialism about the mind, this would be a strike against the account. Similarly, if one’s theory of moral responsibility depended on a particular view about *reasons*—their ontological status or their “logic” or even their specific content—this would count against the theory.

Although I cannot argue for these claims here, I contend that my accounts of guidance control (and moral responsibility) are compatible with a wide range of plausible views about these contentious empirical and philosophical matters. For example, my account of guidance control certainly does not presuppose that there

But perhaps the deepest, most compelling sort of meaning involves a kind of unity in diversity. Nozick called this sort of meaning, “the value of organic unity”: Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981): 415–422. This kind of meaning requires not just the presence of disparate elements, but their unification in a distinctive way. Perhaps one can think of our narratives—our stories—as precisely this unifying element (or, at least, as *providing* this element). After all, as Velleman and others have emphasized, narrative understanding involves some sort of unification—an “aha” moment that brings everything together in a certain characteristic way. Perhaps we can think of our stories as what unifies the diverse elements in the nexus of meaning. More specifically, perhaps our lives can have a distinctive kind of meaning—corresponding to Nozick’s notion of the value of organic unity—in virtue of the unification provided by our stories—a unification of diverse elements. Put metaphorically, our stories are (or provide) elements that mold and structure the “space” in the nexus of meaningfulness: the place where subjective and objective value intersects, and where we arrive at a product that is typically evaluated morally and prudentially via a distinctively aesthetic path.

²⁰ Carl Ginet, “Working with Fischer and Ravizza’s Account of Moral Responsibility,” *Journal of Ethics* 10 (2006): 229–253.

is irreducible, indeterministic agent-causation; it thus does not depend, for its acceptance, on some sort of defense of this highly contentious doctrine. On the other hand, I believe that the core of the account is compatible with the existence of irreducible, indeterministic agent-causation. As with Ginet's suggestion, there would perhaps need to be certain adjustments or clarifications; but there is nothing in the core ideas of the account that requires either the truth or falsity of claims about agent-causation. I would contend that the situation is similar with respect to the other contentious doctrines mentioned above. It is then a big advantage of my account that it is *significantly resilient*; it can be "nested" within total packages with a wide range of particular views about the nature of the mind, normativity, and the world. In contrast, a libertarian's philosophical views—and perhaps his life—would be turned upside down if in the future scientists were to discover that causal determinism is true. At least I can sleep well at night. (Or, perhaps better: my recurrent insomnia is at least not caused by the fact that crucial and central features of my philosophical views hang by a thread!)

I have always attempted to take incompatibilism seriously.²¹ In particular, I believe that the strongest argument for a compatibilist conclusion stems from granting the incompatibilist as much as possible. Approaches that simply reject out of hand the most plausible parts of incompatibilism—such as the Consequence Argument or worries about manipulation—are not appealing to me.²² After all, the Consequence Argument employs ingredients—such as the fixity of the past and natural laws—that are deeply ingrained in our commonsense ways of understanding the world and our agency, and it has been around—in one form or another, including versions that pertain to the prior truth values of propositions or God's omniscience—for millennia.

My approach is to credit—and, indeed, to seek to accommodate—the extremely plausible kernel of incompatibilism: that causal determinism rules out regulative control (freedom to do otherwise). Additionally, I take seriously the possibility that our mental states can be manipulatively induced; thus, I seek to provide an *explanation* of the difference between such manipulation and *mere* causal determination. Whereas many compatibilists either ignore or simply don't take seriously the Consequence Argument or the possibility of manipulative induction of mental states, I seek to capture what is true and important about these worries.

My "Semicompatibilism" is thus an attempt to capture what is most appealing in various leading approaches to free will and moral responsibility. Semicompatibilism is the view that causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility, quite apart from whether causal determinism rules out regulative control. (Semicompatibilism is officially agnostic about whether causal determinism does

²¹ Although, as Patrick Todd has reminded me, not seriously enough for many of my libertarian friends!

²² The term, "Consequence Argument," is due to Peter Van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

indeed rule out regulative control.) Thus, a Semicompatibilist might accept the conclusion of the Consequence Argument, but still hold that causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility. A Semicompatibilist can thus accommodate a kernel insight of the incompatibilist but also embrace the attractive features of compatibilism, most notably, the *resiliency* of our fundamental views of ourselves (with respect to certain abstract scientific theories). Of course, a Semicompatibilist *need not* accept the conclusion of the Consequence Argument. It is no part of the essence of Semicompatibilism that causal determinism is incompatible with regulative control; rather, the fundamental idea is that moral responsibility depends on how the actual sequence unfolds, not on whether the agent has access to alternative possibilities. Semicompatibilism is, as I have emphasized, an “actual-sequence” model of moral responsibility.

III. The Plan of the Book

III.1. PART ONE: FRANKFURT CASES AND THE PRINCIPLE OF ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES

Although there are various plausible ways of attempting to defend an actual-sequence model of moral responsibility, I focus considerable attention on the Frankfurt cases. In the first set of essays in the book, I seek to defend Frankfurt’s conclusion that the examples give a strong argument against the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP), according to which moral responsibility requires regulative control or access to alternative possibilities. (“The Frankfurt Cases: The Moral of the Stories,” “Freedom, Foreknowledge, and Frankfurt,” “The Importance of Frankfurt-Style Argument,” and “Blame and Avoidability.”) In the various essays I attempt to address a range of interesting objections to the notion that the Frankfurt cases do indeed call PAP into question.

Perhaps the most salient and influential objection to the “anti-PAP-ist” analysis of the Frankfurt cases is the “Dilemma Defense.”²³ Here is the argument: Return to the version of the Frankfurt examples I presented earlier, and note, first, that I was not explicit about whether causal determinism holds in the scenario. So let us first assume that causal determinism does not obtain; specifically, assume that indeterminism obtains (at the relevant point, whatever that is taken to be) in the sequence that leads to the choice and action. Now how can Black’s device help

²³ See, especially, Robert Kane, *Free Will and Values* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), and *The Significance of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 142–145; David Widerker, “Libertarianism and Frankfurt’s Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities,” *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995): 247–261; Carl Ginet, “In Defense of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: Why I Don’t Find Frankfurt’s Argument Convincing,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 10 (1996): 403–417; Keith Wyma, “Moral Responsibility and Leeway for Action,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1997): 57–70; and Stewart Goetz, “Frankfurt-Style Counterexamples and Begging the Question,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29 (2005): 83–105.

Black to know that Jones will choose to vote on his own for Obama (and indeed vote for Obama on his own)? It would seem that, given indeterminism in the right place, all the evidence Black could muster about Jones prior to his decision would leave it open that Jones at least begin to decide to vote for McCain. Of course, at that point Jones's brain would be zapped, but it would be *too late* to prevent Jones's having had access to an alternative possibility, exiguous as it might be. After all, whether a flicker of freedom is robust is not a matter of size, but of voluntariness or "oomph."

Suppose, specifically that Jones decides "on his own" at t_2 to vote for Obama; and imagine that Jones involuntarily exhibits some sign, such as (appropriately enough) a furrowed left brow, at an earlier time t_1 . When Jones furrows his left brow at t_1 in this sort of way, he typically chooses at t_2 to vote for the Democrat. The problem for Black is that, although this may in general be a reliable "prior sign," given indeterminism, it is possible that Jones began to decide to vote for McCain, even though he exhibited the relevant sign—the furrowed left brow—at t_1 . Under the assumption of causal indeterminism (of the right sort), it seems that there is no way for Black to expunge all (relevant) alternative possibilities; thus we do not yet have a counterexample to PAP. That is, we do not yet have a case in which an individual is morally responsible for something, although he has no alternative possibilities. According to certain philosophers—and, of course, this is one of the very questions at issue in this dialectical context—it is the very existence of the possibility of beginning to choose to vote for McCain that renders Jones morally responsible for his actual choice and action.

Now assume that causal determinism obtains in the example. On this horn of the dilemma, the skeptic about the anti-PAP-ist conclusion will insist that we cannot now baldly state that Jones is morally responsible for his choice to vote for Obama and his act of voting for Obama. After all, it is precisely the issue under debate whether causal determinism would rule out such moral responsibility; it would be question-begging to assume that causal determinism is true in the example (quite independently of the presence of Black's device) and also to hold that it is uncontroversial that Jones is morally responsible for his choice and action. Thus, again, we do not yet have a case in which we are entitled to say that an individual is morally responsible for something and yet he has no alternative possibilities.

The Dilemma Defense is a deep and challenging objection to the contention that Frankfurt cases provide a dialectical route (although perhaps not the only one) to an actual-sequence model of moral responsibility. In "The Frankfurt Cases: The Moral of the Stories," I provide a template for a strategy of response to the Dilemma Defense. This strategy depends heavily on two crucial insights. First, as I emphasized previously, it is important to note that the mere presence of *any old alternative possibility* is not sufficient to ground moral responsibility attributions. That is, a proponent of alternative possibilities for moral responsibility must concede that *mere* flickers of freedom are too exiguous to support the superstructure

of moral responsibility practices; moral responsibility requires at least *robust* alternative possibilities.

The second crucial insight is nicely articulated by Frankfurt:

The fact that a person could not have avoided doing something is a sufficient condition of his having done it. But, as some of my examples show, this fact may play no role whatever in the explanation of why he did it. It may not figure at all among the circumstances that actually brought it about that he did what he did, so that his action is to be accounted for on another basis entirely... Now if someone had no alternative to performing a certain action but did not perform it because he was unable to do otherwise, then he would have performed exactly the same action even if he *could* have done otherwise. The circumstances that made it impossible for him to do otherwise could have been subtracted from the situation without affecting what happened or why it happened in any way. Whatever it was that actually led the person to do what he did, or that made him do it, would have led him to do it or made him do it even if it had been possible for him to do something else instead... When a fact is in this way irrelevant to the problem of accounting for a person's action it seems quite gratuitous to assign it any weight in the assessment of his moral responsibility.²⁴

Frankfurt's "Quite Gratuitous Point" implies that Black's presence and device are irrelevant to Jones's moral responsibility.

Not only do these two insights—the irrelevance of mere flickers of freedom and the irrelevance of the mere presence of Black—provide the basis for a promising reply to the Dilemma Defense, but I argue in "Indeterminism and Control" that these very ingredients can also be invoked to provide a reply to the notorious "Luck Problem" for indeterministic approaches to moral responsibility. Thus, I argue that a plausible strategy of response to one of the central worries about the relationship between causal determinism and moral responsibility is importantly similar to such a strategy of response to one of the central worries about the relationship between causal indeterminism and moral responsibility. Indeed, I contend that the challenges from causal determinism and indeterminism are structurally parallel at a deep level; thus, it should not be surprising that the responses to these worries should exhibit a striking structural similarity.

Once one sees that moral responsibility is fundamentally a matter of how the actual sequence unfolds, one can reply to both the challenges from causal determinism and indeterminism in a similar way: both replies rely heavily on scenarios that posit *counterfactual interveners*. In the reply to the challenge from determinism, *untriggered ensurers* such as Black play a crucial role; in the reply to the

²⁴ Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," 836–837.

challenge from indeterminism, *untriggered preemptors* (such as the “Random Machine” I introduce in “Indeterminism and Control”) play the parallel role. In both cases the replies depend importantly on untriggered or counterfactual interventions. That is, the parallel replies depend on the key insight that it would indeed be “quite gratuitous” to assign any weight (in attributions of moral responsibility) to merely counterfactual interventions.

III.2. PART TWO: DEEP CONTROL: A MIDDLE PATH

In the second part of the book I develop and defend an account of guidance control, which in various ways represents a moderate position along a spectrum of views about moral responsibility. (“The Direct Argument: You Say Goodbye, I Say Hello,” “Conditional Freedom and the Normative Approach to Moral Responsibility,” “Judgment-Sensitivity and the Value of Freedom,” “Sourcehood: Playing the Cards That Are Dealt You,” “Guidance Control,” and “The Triumph of Tracing.”) At the risk of oversimplification, it might be useful to invoke the famous Buddhist notion of a “Middle Way” or “Middle Path.” After receiving enlightenment under the bodhi tree, the Buddha delivered his first sermon in the Deer Park at Benares. In this sermon he renounced two untenable extremes—of excessive sensual indulgence, on the one hand, and self-abnegation, on the other. Famously, in this sermon he endorsed a Middle Way—a path of moderation. The Buddha purportedly understood the meaning of the Middle Way when he sat by a river and heard a lute player in a passing boat. The Buddha noted that the lute string must be tuned neither too tight nor too loose in order to produce a beautiful sound.²⁵

Deep control is a middle path between two untenable extreme positions: “superficial control” and “total control.” It is plausible that our freedom is the power to add to the given past, holding fixed the laws of nature; that is, we must be able to conceptualize our actions as extensions of a line that represents the actual past. (This is, in my view, the essential insight of the Consequence Argument.) In “connecting the dots,” we engage in a distinctive sort of self-expression. In the first group of essays in this volume, I argue that we do not need genuine access to alternative possibilities in order to be morally responsible. Thus, the line need not branch off at crucial points (where the branches represent metaphysical possibilities available to us). In the rest of the collection I argue that deep control—a kind of “middle way” between what I take to be two extreme and implausible positions—is the freedom condition on moral responsibility. In so arguing, I contend that *total control* is too much to ask—it is a form of “metaphysical megalomania.” (“Sourcehood: Playing the Cards that Are Dealt You.”) So we do not “trace back” all the way to the beginning of the line (or even further) in seeking the relevant kind of freedom or control.

²⁵ There are various interpretations in Buddhism of the central notion of the “Middle Way.” For our purposes, I simply picked one.

Additionally, I contend that various kinds of “superficial control”—such as several versions of “conditional freedom” and “judgment-sensitivity”—are too shallow; they don’t trace back *far enough* along the line. (“Conditional Freedom and the Normative Approach to Moral Responsibility,” and “Judgment-Sensitivity and the Value of Freedom.”) Further, standard hierarchical identification theories (such as that of Harry Frankfurt) and nonhierarchical “mesh theories” (such as the approach suggested by Gary Watson in his classic early work) are similarly problematic. The envisaged mesh or harmony of designated mental elements could be produced by responsibility-undermining manipulative induction, and thus these approaches are not sufficiently historical. Finally, I argue that “guidance control,” understood as including both a historicist “taking responsibility” component and a “tracing requirement,” is precisely the deep control necessary and sufficient for moral responsibility. Guidance control, as Goldilocks would have it, is *just right*. (“Guidance Control” and “The Triumph of Tracing.”) It is perhaps worth noting that the Buddha described the Middle Way not only as the path of “wisdom,” but also of “liberation” or *freedom*.

I have emphasized the importance of a *historical* approach to moral responsibility, contending that it matters to moral responsibility attributions how we got to be the way we are. Such attributions do not supervene on current time-slice properties. But it is also important to see that certain approaches to moral responsibility require us to trace back excessively far into the past; this is, as I have argued, a form of overreaching or “metaphysical megalomania.” (“Sourcehood: Playing the Cards that Are Dealt You.”) Galen Strawson and Robert Kane both—in different ways—put forward exceedingly stringent sourcehood requirements. Although I am inclined to agree that an agent must be the source of his behavior, in order to be morally responsible for it, I do not conclude from this intuitive point that such an agent must be the “ultimate source,” in a sense that requires causal indeterminism (or certainly a sense that requires a kind of impossible self-creation). I believe that our moral responsibility requires that we play the cards that are dealt us (in a certain way—a way that crucially involves guidance control); but surely this does not require that we deal ourselves the cards, or that we own the factory that made the cards (as well as all of the inputs into the manufacturing process), and so forth.

Of course, if causal determinism is true, then how we play the cards we are dealt is “settled” in advance, and, if the incompatibilist is correct, it is not “up to us” how we play the hand we are dealt. But it is no part of my invocation of the analogy of card games and the associated metaphor of playing the cards that are dealt us that it is up to us how we play the cards or that we have the freedom to play the cards differently from how we actually play them.²⁶ Rather, the point is that, even

²⁶It is perhaps a natural thought that, although moral responsibility does not require that we deal ourselves the cards, it does require that it be open to us how we play them. I am indebted to Patrick Todd for pressing me on this point.

in a causally deterministic world, we can play the cards in our hand freely—we can exhibit the signature sort of control in virtue of which we can legitimately be held morally responsible. So the picture is *not* that even though nature and nurture deal us certain cards that must be treated as fixed inputs into our practical reasoning, from there on out we have leeway, or freedom to play the hand however we want. It may or may not be true that such leeway is compatible with causal determinism, but my invocation of the metaphor does *not* require or presuppose the possibility of such freedom in a causally deterministic world. All that's presupposed is that its being determined that I play the cards as I do need not get in the way of my doing so freely. Causal determination need not crowd out guidance control, and thus I can still play my hand *my way*, even in a deterministic world.

It is perhaps interesting that the two leading metaphors here, “the buck stops here” and “playing the cards that are dealt you” derive from card games. A buck is a marker and is often used in poker to indicate who is in charge of dealing the hand. Indeed, President Harry S. Truman was an avid poker player, and perhaps the famous sign on his desk “The Buck Stops Here” appealed to him for this reason. Robert Kane invokes the notion that the buck stops here to defend an indeterministic interpretation of ultimate sourcehood. But, taking seriously the roots of the metaphor, I would insist that the indeterministic interpretation is a gratuitous add-on. After all, if the marker points to you, it shows that you are “responsible” for dealing the cards in the sense that you are in charge of it. Again, this does not in any way suggest that you have made up the rules of the game, that you own the plant that manufactured the cards, or any such thing. The metaphor, “The buck stops here,” does not suggest an indeterministic requirement on sourcehood; it is more a matter of who is in charge of a certain task than a matter of the etiology of the distribution of tasks. When the marker points to a player, that player must deal the cards—he must ensure that everyone gets the right number of cards, and so forth. This is a matter of *authority*, not history.

Alternatively, perhaps it is a matter of *explanation*.²⁷ When the buck stops here, the proper explanation of the phenomenon in question *ineliminably* involves me. So, if we are seeking to explain why everyone got the correct number of cards, the explanation involves the dealer. Insofar as the buck stops at the dealer, it is the dealer who is invoked in the explanation of the distribution of cards. This in itself does not entail anything about the (entire) causal history of the events in question; an intermediate event in a deterministic causal sequence can play the appropriate explanatory role, given certain explanatory contexts. As with the point about authority before, it seems to me to be a gratuitously strong interpretation of the buck-stopping metaphor to import anything about etiology, and, in particular, an indeterministic requirement.

²⁷ I am indebted here to Justin Coates. Also, for an excellent recent discussion of the context-relativity of explanation, and its relationship to issues about moral responsibility, see Gunnar Björnsson and Karl Persson, “The Explanatory Component of Moral Responsibility,” *Nous* (forthcoming).

As I wrote above, the Buddha recognized, in the Deer Park at Benares, that a lute string must be tuned just right—not too loose, and not too tight. A virtue of my middle way approach to tracing back along the agency line is that it can help to illuminate the scenarios posited by “Initial Design Arguments.” For example, consider the Initial Design hypothesis presented by Alfred Mele:

Diana [a goddess with special powers] creates a zygote Z in Mary. She combines Z 's atoms as she does because she wants a certain event E to occur thirty years later. From her knowledge of the state of the universe just prior to her creating Z and the laws of nature of her deterministic universe, she deduces that a zygote with precisely Z 's constitution located in Mary will develop into an ideally self-controlled agent who, in thirty years, will judge, on the basis of rational deliberation, that it is best to A and will A on the basis of that judgment, thereby bringing about E . If this agent, Ernie, has any unsheddable values at the time, they play no role in motivating his A -ing. Thirty years later, Ernie is a mentally healthy, ideally self-controlled person who regularly exercises his powers of self-control and has no relevant compelled or coercively produced attitudes. Furthermore, his beliefs are conducive to informed deliberation about all matters that concern him, and he is a reliable deliberator. So he satisfies a version of my proposed compatibilist sufficient conditions for having freely A -d.²⁸

Mele proposes this thought-experiment as a challenge for compatibilists, because all plausible compatibilist-friendly conditions (including guidance control) are met by Ernie, and yet some might judge that he is not morally responsible insofar as he is merely living out the detailed plans of Diana.

I concede that this captures a legitimate worry of many thoughtful people, but upon reflection, I simply do not see how it can matter for Ernie's moral responsibility what Diana's intentions and plans were some thirty years prior to the time of the relevant behavior—and, indeed, before Ernie was even born! Insofar as Ernie exhibits guidance control, what difference does it make whether the sequence was set in motion by Diana thirty years ago, or by a single parent through artificial insemination, or by a couple having voluntary intercourse? To trace back to a time prior to Ernie's birth is to go back too far. Whereas we need a genuinely historical approach to moral responsibility, to trace back along the sequence to a point prior to Ernie's birth is surely too extreme. The path of wisdom here is the Middle Way.²⁹

²⁸ Alfred Mele, *Free Will and Luck* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 188.

²⁹ I discuss Initial Design Arguments, such as the Zygote Argument, in greater detail in John Martin Fischer, “The Zygote Argument Remixed,” *Analysis* 71 (2011): 267–272. My discussion in the text (and even in the forthcoming article) leaves various interesting nuances untouched; I am indebted to Patrick Todd for many illuminating conversations on these topics. He has developed his critique of my approach to the Zygote Argument in Patrick Todd, “Defending (A Modified Version Of) the Zygote Argument: Reply to Fischer,” (unpublished manuscript, University of California, Riverside, Department of Philosophy).

In defending my account of moral responsibility, I also offer a discussion of so-called normative approaches to moral responsibility. Much has been made of a putative distinction between “metaphysical” and “normative” approaches to specifying the conditions for moral responsibility. I make a preliminary attempt to identify the core features of “normative” approaches, discuss the various different versions of such approaches, and subject them to critical scrutiny. I contend that the distinction between “metaphysical” and “normative” approaches to the conditions for moral responsibility is not so easy to characterize as some might have supposed, and the implications of certain plausible characterizations of the distinction might be surprising.³⁰ (“Conditional Freedom and the Normative Approach to Moral Responsibility.”)

IV. A New Paradigm: The Pilgrimage

The traditional and perhaps still “standard” view of our agency is that we *make a difference* by selecting from a suite of genuinely open possibilities. A metaphor that corresponds to this idea is the “garden of forking paths.” According to the standard view, the future is a garden of forking paths, and we make a difference in the world by selecting one of the paths. In his story, “The Garden of Forking Paths,” the Argentine fabulist, Borges, describes a fictional labyrinth or garden in soaring terms:

Under the trees of England I meditated on this lost and perhaps mythical labyrinth. I imagined it untouched and perfect on the secret summit of some mountain; I imagined it drowned under rice paddies or beneath the sea; I imagined it infinite, made not only of eight-sided pavilions and of twisting paths but also of rivers, provinces and kingdom. I thought of a maze of mazes, of a sinuous, ever growing maze which could take in both past and future and would somehow involve the stars.³¹

But I have argued that, even if the future is not a garden of forking paths (in the sense involving open possibilities), we can still exercise the control that grounds attributions of moral responsibility. We can display guidance control, even in the absence of regulative control, and guidance control is all the freedom required for moral responsibility. In controlling our behavior in this way, we transform our lives into stories, strictly speaking, with an irreducible narrative dimension of value. Our agency then essentially involves *making a statement* insofar as our free

³⁰ For additional thoughts on how best to characterize the distinction between so-called metaphysical and normative approaches to moral responsibility, see John Martin Fischer, “Reply to Pamela Hieronymi, Making a Difference,” in “Replies,” *Social Theory and Practice* (special issue: Fischer’s Way and Our Stories) 37 (2011): 143–181.

³¹ Jorge Luis Borges, “The Garden of Forking Paths,” in his *Fictions* (London: Calder and Boyars): 81–92.

activity corresponds to a sentence in the book of our lives. What matters at the most basic level—what we care about in acting freely—is making a statement, not making a difference.

I thus invite a change in our guiding metaphor from the garden of forking paths to the *pilgrimage*. A pilgrimage is typically a preset path from one point to another; it does not—nor need not—involve alternative pathways. Even if there are such alternative paths, the *point* of a pilgrimage is to travel from a preset starting point to a preset terminus, and thus the existence of such byways is irrelevant. Despite the fact that the pilgrimage route is laid out in advance, the pilgrims can achieve great personal growth and transformation; indeed, such a pilgrimage can be one of the most meaningful experiences in one's life.

Consider, for example, the pilgrimage route (a part of which is depicted on the cover of this book) from Lu Puy, in south-central France, to Santiago de Compostela, in northwestern Spain. This pilgrimage was laid out in the medieval *Pilgrim's Guide*.³² Although the route is, as it were, “preset,” the pilgrim may well experience remarkable spiritual growth and transformation. I claim that the beauty and meaningfulness of the experience does not in any way derive from selection from available paths; rather, it is a matter of how one walks along a predetermined route. Indeed, in the twelfth-century *Pilgrim's Guide*, the author employs rhetoric reminiscent of Borges in describing a part of the pilgrimage route as it reaches the peak of the Pyrenees:

Its height is so great that it seems to reach all the way to the heavens—to the person ascending it, it seems that he himself is able to touch the heavens with his own hand.³³

I grant that even though the “route” of a pilgrimage is typically set out in advance, there will nevertheless remain many “options” as to how one takes the route—whether one starts a day early or late, hikes more or less each day, stops here or there for the night, and so forth. There will also presumably be various options as to one's “mind-set.” For example, does one focus on one's sore feet or on higher things? And so forth. If all of these alternatives are ruled out, then it is unclear just how far we can get with the metaphor of a pilgrimage. After all, it might be the case that our intuition that one can have a meaningful experience on a preset path might depend implicitly on the existence of such alternative possibilities.³⁴

Of course, the metaphor of a pilgrimage is—like all metaphors—merely suggestive, and I do not have a knockdown argument that alternative possibilities need

³² In *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela: A Gazetteer*, ed. and trans. Annie Shaver-Crandell and Paula Gerson, with the assistance of Alison Stones (London: Harvey Miller, 1995). I am deeply indebted in this section to the excellent work by my colleague at the University of California, Riverside, in Art History, Conrad Rudolph, *Pilgrimage to the End of the World: The Road to Santiago de Compostela* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³³ As quoted in Rudolph, *Pilgrimage to the End of the World*: 65.

³⁴ I am grateful to Patrick Todd for bringing up these points.

not matter to the experience of a pilgrimage. I would contend, however, that the dialectical situation here is analogous to the situation with respect to the “mere flickers of freedom” that emerge in even the most sophisticated Frankfurt-style cases. Recall that, although I concede that it is extremely difficult to deracinate such alternatives, they do not play the required role in the argument of the proponent of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities insofar as they are *mere* flickers of freedom (and not sufficiently robust to ground ascriptions of moral responsibility).³⁵ I contend that the same point is reinscribed with respect to the relationship between alternative possibilities and the potential meaningfulness of a pilgrimage.

To explain. Consider the joy pilgrims typically experience when they reach their destination—say the great cathedral at Santiago de Compostela. I do not find it plausible that the joy is in any way linked to the existence of alternative possibilities along the pilgrimage route. It would be most implausible to attribute the joy to a judgment that one chose not to take a shortcut along the way (where such a path was genuinely available), or that one made a wise or prudent choice in footwear (where other choices were available), or that one started out at a suitable time each day (where alternatives were available). The joy in reaching the destination is not a matter of wise or prudent selection from among genuine possibilities.³⁶ The joy and sense of accomplishment (and even extraordinary transformation) would

³⁵ Michael McKenna pursues a similar strategy for defending the anti-Pap-ist interpretation of the Frankfurt cases. He presents a case in which Betty is deliberating about cheating on her taxes, and the sole alternative possibility open to her is just heading home and roasting a chicken. McKenna points out that the mere existence of such a possibility cannot plausibly ground Betty’s moral responsibility; the alternative possibility in question, although not a mere flicker of freedom (because it would be fully voluntary), is entirely irrelevant to Betty’s moral responsibility. How could simply adding the possibility that Betty roast a chicken transform her from not being morally responsible to being morally responsible? The existence of certain alternative possibilities—mere flickers of freedom and also normatively irrelevant alternatives—cannot ground moral responsibility attributions. See Michael McKenna, “Robustness, Control, and the Demand for Morally Significant Alternatives,” in David Widerker and Michael McKenna, eds., *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities: Essays on the Importance of Alternative Possibilities* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003): 201–217.

³⁶ The following is an excerpt from a news item from the International Islamic News Agency (accessed online on November 17, 2010):

MINA (Saudi Arabia), Dhul Qadah 2/Oct.10 (IINA)-Hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims will ride a new railway metro transport system for the first time when they converge on the Saudi holy city of Makkah next month, according to the local media. The Gulf Kingdom, where millions of Muslims from around the world gather every year for their annual hajj (pilgrimage) season, has just completed the first stage of a train that will eventually transport nearly two million people. Officials said around 170,000 pilgrims would be able to use the Chinese-built metro during this hajj season, which is expected to start in mid November. (<http://www.iina.me/english/news.php?go=fullnews&newsid=840>)

Given the choice between taking the last stage of the hajj by foot or train, a given Islamic pilgrim might choose to take the train (and thereby avoid congestion and its attendant distractions and even dangers). But surely the joy and intense feelings of completion on reaching the holy destination stem from reaching the destination itself, and not even in part from pride in making a prudent choice about alternative routes at the end.

in no way be diminished if the pilgrim were told at Santiago de Compostela, “By the way, although you believed that a shortcut was available, it was actually blocked off, and you would have had to return to the main route, if you had started along the alternative path.”

Think also of mountain treks—say treks in the Cordilleras Blanca in Peru or to the top of Mount Everest or K2.³⁷ These great mountain treks may have no shortcuts, no alternative paths, and only certain specified places to stay for the night.³⁸ But the fact that the treks are “laid out in advance” in these ways surely is irrelevant to the meaningfulness that many hikers experience on the treks. Although it is difficult to prove this point, I would contend that an analogous point applies even to alternative possibilities with respect to one’s “mind-set” and attentiveness. As I stated above, what matters is *how* one takes the path, not on whether one *selects* from among genuinely available options. Although talk of “how” one walks down a path might suggest a reemergence of alternative possibilities, I would maintain that the significance of the pilgrimage should be conceptualized more “directly” in terms of how the actual sequence unfolds. After all, a pilgrim might take a certain route rather than another, not knowing that the other route is blocked off and unavailable; and he or she might naturally adopt a set of attitudes toward the pilgrimage without any thought of adopting another mind-set.

It might be objected that at least the pilgrim has *chosen* to take the pilgrimage; perhaps the meaningfulness of the pilgrimage stems from its being up to the pilgrim whether to take the pilgrimage in the first place. Plausibly, the meaningfulness of various religious and spiritual practices does indeed stem from the free choices of the individuals in question. But note first that it is contentious here whether the pilgrim’s freely choosing to take the pilgrimage indeed requires that

We could drive the point home as follows. Suppose, to begin, there is just one preset hajj route, with no alternative possibilities, including the new Chinese-built train at the end. If the pilgrims cannot gain in the meaningfulness of their lives by taking such a preset route with no alternative possibilities, how could merely adding the possibility of taking a train at the end confer any incremental meaningfulness? One might as well imagine that, instead of the option of a railway at the end, the pilgrim could instead stop the journey and roast a (halaal) chicken! But the possibility of stopping and roasting a halaal chicken surely does not add meaningfulness; a choice to continue to the destination, in light of such alternatives, is no more meaningful than taking the ancient pilgrimage in the traditional manner.

³⁷ For a guidebook to the Cordillera Blancas in Peru, see Jim Bartle. *Trails of the Cordillera Blancas and Huayhuash of Peru*. The book is self-published (Jim Bartle, June 1982: ISBN-10: 0933982100; ISBN-13: 978-09339982109). Jim, an old friend of mine, is one of the leading experts on the mountain routes of Peru.

³⁸ Consider also the “Nose” at El Capitan in Yosemite, arguably the most famous rock-climbing venue in the world. There is only one route up to the very top of El Capitan, although there are multiple routes up to the final ascent. The topological map of the route spells out exactly what you are supposed to do at each stage (e.g., climb X feet, stop, climb X feet, stop, move left into a different crack, stop, etc.). And yet this is the most famous route in the world, over 3,000 ft. People who accomplish this climb are proud simply of doing the climb—there are no alternative ways of doing it, and the pride is in having made the climb, not having done it in a certain way rather than another. I am indebted to Alan Moore for this example.

he or she could have done otherwise. Further, it seems to me that even someone forced against his will to begin a pilgrimage may well find it meaningful and transformative. As before, there is a danger of tracing back too far along the sequence in search of freedom; there are many contexts in life in which one simply finds oneself thrown into a situation, and one makes the best of it: we play the cards that are dealt us. Even someone kidnapped and forced to undertake a pilgrimage might find it deeply meaningful. Many of us have found ourselves in similar situations over the course of our lives—required to undertake a project by our parents, friends, spouse, or children. The lack of alternative possibilities, or even coercive initial circumstances, need not etiolate the potential for meaningfulness, transformation, and deep value.

The extraordinary possibilities for growth and transformation along the preset route of the pilgrimage are described beautifully by Conrad Rudolph:

You are told the route, but it's all the same: it's all new, it's all strange, it's all foreign, it's all a sea of strangeness and foreignness... [The pilgrimage] forces the susceptible person to enter into one of the most fundamental elements of human existence... the simple recognition that history is part of existence, whether cultural or individual, that there is a past as well as a present, that the past has very much to do with the present, and that the past belongs to those who belong to the present... From the medieval point of view, the pilgrimage was not just the physical arrival at a holy place but the experience of progressing toward that destination, an experience that was as much a part of the phenomenon as was the holy place itself. From the modern point of view of the "curious" pilgrim, the pilgrimage is an intensely internal experience in an intensely physical context in which the journey, more than the destination, is the goal.

But it's also something more than that. People instinctively want something to believe in, whether they believe in anything much or not. From the medieval perspective, the pilgrimage was undertaken for the very specific reason that the great physical hardships of pain, hunger, thirst, exposure to the elements, and general loss of comfort and of all that's familiar are conducive to inducing a mental state eminently suited for the spiritual exercise that the pilgrimage fundamentally was and can still be—to a certain extent, the adoption of monastic spiritual practices in the non-monastic medium of the visitation of a holy site: this was the purpose of such a long and grueling journey. For the modern pilgrim, the "curious" pilgrim, the vast epic quality of the pilgrimage still instills at the very least much of the sensation of a journey with a deeper purpose, but with this difference: that the undertaking is spiritual not in the sense of being religious but in the sense of having to do with the spirit.³⁹

³⁹Rudolph, *Pilgrimage to the End of the World*: 36–39.

My point is not just the somewhat well-worn insight that what matters is the journey, rather than the destination; I contend further that the journey can be deeply meaningful, even in the absence of alternative possibilities and forking paths. After all, the path from Le Puy to Santiago de Compostela is laid out in advance. And even if we do indeed sometimes have alternative possibilities, it is not *in virtue of* the presence of forking paths that our pilgrimage down the road of life can be full of meaning—of beauty, friendship, love, frustration, tragedy, and even great triumph. As I said at the very end of *The Metaphysics of Free Will*:

The future may—or may not—contain more than one genuinely open path: I do not know. It is quite natural to think of the future as open, but it may turn out that the various paths I picture in my mind are mere tantalizing chimeras. Employing a slightly different metaphor, there is just one line extending from the present into the past, and the future may indeed be symmetric—there may be just one line extending into the future. But even so—even if there is just one available path into the future—I may be held accountable for *how I walk down this path*. I can be blamed for taking the path of cruelty, negligence, or cowardice. And I can be praised for walking with sensitivity, attentiveness, and courage. Even if I somehow discovered there is but one path into the future, I would still care deeply how I walk down this path. I would aspire to walk with grace and dignity. I would want to have a sense of humor. Most of all, I would want to do it my way.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Fischer, *The Metaphysics of Free Will*: 216.