Making a Difference

Pamela Hieronymi
hieronymi@ucla.edu

John Martin Fischer has done more than anyone (including, I think, Harry Frankfurt himself) to promote reflection on what he calls "Frankfurt-type cases;" it is obvious how fruitful reflection on these cases has been in Fischer's own work (familiarity with which I here take for granted).

Fischer draws from the Frankfurt-type cases two central, crucial, insights about what is important for freedom of the sort required for moral responsibility. The first is that what matters is what actually happened, not what might have happened: we need to focus on what Fischer calls the "actual sequence." The second is related: responsibility requires a kind of freedom that includes control, and so, rather than focus on mere possibility, we must try to understand the relevant notion of control. These insights have led Fischer sensibly to dismiss appeals to what he calls mere "flickers of freedom" as a way of addressing the Frankfurt-type cases.

Throughout, Fischer has also been motivated by "the idea that our basic status as distinctively free and morally responsible agents should not depend on the arcane ruminations—and deliverances—of the theoretical physicists and cosmologists."[1] However, far from dismissing incompatibilism, Fischer (together, at times, with Mark Ravizza) instead advances a well-known alternative, semi-compatibilism.

With his semi-compatibilism, Fischer distinguishes between different sorts of control and identifies the sort he believes required for our responsibility: what he calls "guidance control." Guidance control is, roughly, the kind of control we exercise over our actions when they are the result of a "moderately reasons-responsive" mechanism that is appropriately our own. Guidance control, Fischer argues, is compatible with the truth of determinism, because determinism is compatible with both ownership and moderate reasons responsiveness.

---

[1] John Martin Fischer, *My Way : Essays on Moral Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

While guidance control is compatible with determinism, Fischer suspects that another form of control, what he calls "regulative control," is not.[2] This is "the sort of control that involves genuine metaphysical access to alternative possibilities," or "the freedom to choose and do otherwise."[3]   He explains, "In this sense of control, we have control 'over' our behavior, and we control which outcome occurs where there are various outcomes available to us. In this sense of control, we *select* from a menu of genuinely available options."[4] Fischer cedes regulative control to the incompatibilists, in light of what he calls the Consequence Argument. The consequence argument notes that, if determinism is true, then the past, together with the laws of nature, fixes the future. However, I am powerless to change either the past or the laws of nature. Thus, the argument concludes, I am powerless to change the future: I do not exercise regulative control or "make a difference" to the future (or, as Fischer sometimes says, I do not make a difference "(of a certain sort)."[5] As Fischer sometimes puts it, though I may play a certain role, in the unfolding of events, "the difference one can make is not between *meaningfully different* outcomes, where outcomes are understood in terms of end states."[6] This is because, thought I may confront different "epistemic alternatives" I lack "genuinely accessible metaphysical alternatives."[7] So I do not "*select* which path

---

[2] Fischer offers some clarification in the introduction to *My Way*: Semicompatibilism is officially neutral about the compatibility of regulative control and determinism. It holds that "causal determinism would be compatible with moral responsibility even if it were the case that causal determinism rules out regulative control." Thus, "the total package of Fischer views includes semicompatibilism plus the additional view—incompatibilism about causal determinism and regulative control" (8).

[3] ———, "Precis of My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 80, no. 1 (2010): 232.

[4] Fischer, *My Way : Essays on Moral Responsibility*, 6.

[5] ———, "Precis of My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility," 238.

[6] ———, *My Way : Essays on Moral Responsibility*, 22.

[7] Ibid., 25.

the world will take, among various paths genuinely available."[8] Thus, somewhat surprisingly, Fischer

is content to allow that whether I make a (meaningful) difference depends on the arcane

ruminations and deliverances of theoretical physicists.

In more recent work Fischer had done much to try to assuage our sense of loss at the sacrifice

of regulative control by showing how guidance control brings with it a distinctive and important

kind of value: the value of artistic self-expression.[9] As Fischer puts it, whereas regulative control

would gain us the value of making a difference, guidance control secures for us the value of making

a statement. The lives of those who enjoy guidance control thus posses what Fischer calls narrative

value: they tell their own stories in their our own way.   Hence the title of Fischer's collection, *My

Way*. He imagines the satisfied possessor of guidance control saying, with Sinatra or Vicious, "I did

it my way."

Here I would like to suggest that, despite all the important, above-noted agreement with Fischer,

he cedes too much to the consequence argument when he grants that we may not make a difference.

It seems to me that we plainly do—at least often enough—make a difference, and that the arcane

ruminations and deliverances of the theoretical physicists will not show otherwise, even if they show

that the past together with the laws of nature fix the future.[10]

_____

[8]Ibid., 121. Fischer elaborates on his denial more recently in a reply to Clarke, saying, "I have no doubt that we ordinarily think we can "make a difference" in various contexts; no doubt, the capacity to make a difference is indeed part of our ordinary conception of our agency. My point here is not to deny this, but to suggest that it does not survive careful philosophical scrutiny. More specifically, the idea that what we value in acting freely (and thus behaving so as to be morally responsible) is making *a certain sort of difference* does not survive critical scrutiny, especially in light of the Frankfurt cases." He goes on to explore an extended example, invoking the counter-factual intervener, standing in for the possible truth of determinism, to show that mere possibility does not secure the right kind of difference. See John Martin Fischer, "Replies," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 80, no. 1 (2010): 270. On this point about the flicker of freedom, I agree. I disagree that "genuine metaphysical access" is required before we can select and make a meaningful difference.

[9] See, especially, the essays collected in ———, *Our Stories: Essays on Life, Death, and Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[10] The general form of my response will be to suggest that nothing could count as exercising regulative control—I suspect it is a kind of illusion—and that, in any case, it is not required for making a meaningful difference.

I begin by rehearsing some dialectic. So, consider: Life confronts me with a fork in the road. I must decide whether to continue working for the goods or goals I have been trying, with considerable difficulty but some success, to secure for the last handful of years, or else, instead, to take up a new opportunity, an unknown devil, one with its own risks and dangers, but which may, perhaps, be better suited to my temperament. Should I stay or should I go? I survey. I peer down the two paths. I stand above the two options, weighing. These are metaphors, of course. They are metaphors for thought: they are meant to capture what it is like to think about how to proceed. I represent for myself first this future, then that, and I try to determine which representation to (do my best to) bring about. In the end, presumably, I will select one of them, and strike out. I certainly will not strike out (whatever else may happen to my body) unless I select one of them. So it seems that all this peering and surveying will, in the end, make a difference. And, absent certain familiar sorts of interventions, whether I stay or go will depend on how I decide the matter. Certain goods may no longer be tended, while others may gain a new custodian. The future will be different than it would have been, if I had settled the matter differently. So, it seems, my decisions and my efforts make a difference.

The typical incompatibilist here objects: this is only how it seems. If determinism is true, then when I strike down my chosen path, I will not have made a *genuine* difference, not a real one—indeed, I won't have really *selected* an outcome or *chosen,* at all—because, if determinism is true, then all this cogitation, all this deliberation and representation, together with its outcome, had itself been predetermined by the fixed past and the laws of nature. And so there is no real choice left to me, no way for me to make a meaningful difference, in the present. Importantly, the incompatibilist will grant that, *if* I had settled the matter differently, the future would be different, but he will rightly point out that, if determinism is true, I would have settled the matter differently only if the past had *also* been different. And, of course, as I stand there at the fork in the road, I am powerless change the past. So I make a difference, the garden-variety incompatibilist concludes, only in whatever

sense the fifth cog in my vacuum cleaner makes a difference: I am a piece of an interconnected causal mechanism, each part dependent on the others. Absent me, or absent that cog, the mechanism would not work; things would be different. But, if determinism is true, what happens is not, ultimately, *up to me*, any more than it is up to the cog (or, it is up to me only in whatever sense it is up to the cog), and so, in the end, I make no *real* difference—I don't make the kind of difference that matters. To make that kind of meaningful difference, I would need to be able to change the future, on purpose, without that change already being accounted for by the past and the laws of nature. But this is just what the truth of determinism rules out. And so, the typical incompatibilist concludes, if determinism is true, then in fact I have no more control—no more *real* control—over my own deliberations, decisions, and future actions than I have over the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. And this for just the same reasons.

This conclusion—that I have no more real control over my own actions than over the assassination of Ferdinand—is, right on its face, absurd. I know quite a bit about how to direct my own future, and I am often (though not always) successful in doing so; I have no idea how to affect the past.[11] Yet, the absurd conclusion grips many. It gains its grip, I think, from a certain idea of what it is to control a thing, an idea that determinism seems to challenge. We control many things— both our own voluntary actions and ordinary objects—by thinking about them and then bringing it about that they conform to our thoughts. Or, at least, that's how it seems in the paradigm cases: we think about what to do, and then do it; we decide how things should be, and then bring it about that they are as we decided. We are in control, it seems, to the extent that we are the cause of our own representations. Elsewhere I have called this form of control, exercised with respect to actions,

---

[11] I have a good idea of how to affect the *significance* of the past—by, say, an apology—but this is not what the incompatibilist has in mind.

voluntary control, and I have called this form of control, exercised with respect to objects, manipulative or managerial control.[12]

If we start with the thought that we control a thing to the extent that we can think about it and then conform it to our thoughts, we run into trouble when we reflect upon our lives and the (possible) truth of determinism. To exercise this form of control over our lives, we need to get ourselves and our lives into view, think about them, and then act so as to bring it about that they conform to our thoughts about them. But if we find, when we reflect and get ourselves and our lives into view, that the whole thing has already been determined, we will feel we have been foiled— we have no control, and we can't make a difference. This, I take it, is the basic threat felt by the typical incompatibilist.

It is worth noting that this basic threat can be generated by weaker and surer claims than the claim that the future is fixed by the past together with deterministic laws of nature. For example, the threat can be generated by what T. M. Scanlon calls "the Causal Thesis," the thesis that "all of our actions have antecedent causes to which they are linked by causal laws of the kind that govern other events in the universe, whether these laws are deterministic or merely probabilistic."[13] In fact, I believe that the basic threat can be generated by the simple claim that each event can be adequately explained by events that precede it. If each thing we do—each intervention we attempt—can be adequately explained by events that precede it, it can seem that each thing we do is also constrained

---

[12] See, e.g., Pamela Hieronymi, "Controlling Attitudes," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (2006); ———, "Two Kinds of Agency," in *Mental Actions*, ed. Lucy O'Brien and Matthew Sorteriou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Neither what I call voluntary control nor what I call managerial or manipulative control are the same as Fischer's guidance control. Guidance control is both broader than either, as it would include my control over my own intentions, and narrower than either, as it contains historical conditions of ownership.

[13] See T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 250.

by those events, and we do not intervene in our own lives in a way that would count as controlling them.[14]

But we must proceed with caution. After all, we certainly can and sometimes do think about our lives and make decisions about how they should be. We may even be successful in bringing it about that our lives are as we decided. I may make it my project to live a long life, or drink less coffee, or be more like my mother, and I may, through my activities, bring it about that it is so. I will mark this by saying that we can exercise managerial control over our lives.

The typical incompatibilist is not concerned with managerial control (though he will doubtless prefer not to grace it with the label "control"). He will grant that, even if determinism is true, we can cogitate, represent, and bring about those representations—just as he granted that, if I had made a different choice at the fork, I would have gone a different way. But he will again point out that, if determinism (or perhaps some weaker thesis) is true, then the cogitations, representations, and activities by which I effect these changes are themselves the product of past events together with the laws of nature (or, some general principles), working through the location called me. So cogitating and causing, he insists, is not the same as controlling.[15] Something more is needed: a kind of independence that may yet be lacking on the picture I provide. So, what I call managerial control, he sees as no control at all. He is concerned with something of more moment, something which, I take it, Fischer would label "regulative control."

Fischer glosses regulative control as "the sort of control that involves genuine metaphysical access to alternative possibilities." I take it that this is something like the ability to bring about changes, where those changes are intended by you but are not (also) determined by the past and the

_____

[14] Some will think that explanation is not, itself, threatening, and even that *causal* explanation is not threatening, but will still think that *deterministic*, physical explanation—explanation, at the level of physics, that rules out chance—is threatening to freedom and control. We intervene, they think, in the space left by indeterminism. I will not engage with view, separately. If the view requires our choices to be inexplicable (or, explicable merely probabilistically), I believe it runs into the trouble I hint at below. If it instead allows that our choices can be both wholly explicable and free, I find the threat from deterministic physics, in particular, difficult to motivate.

[15] He may even suspect that the cogitations and decisions are themselves rationalizations of other, underlying processes.

laws of nature. It is the ability to affect the future originally, we might say—where the effects

wrought are those one meant. Thus it requires both that the future be "open" in a certain (perhaps

probabilistic) way and that one have some control over which of the open possibilities comes to

obtain. Note that if the future is thus open, and one exercises control over it, then the control one

exercises must itself be "open"—not wholly accounted for by the past and laws of nature. If we do

not read too much into "decide," we could say that what is wanted is the ability to decide how things

shall be and bring it about that they are that way, where one's decision is not determined by the past

together with general laws. We might say it is the ability to be, oneself, the deliberate but

undetermined cause of future events.

When Fischer initially elaborates upon regulative control, he does so differently. He says, "In

this sense of control [viz., regulative control], we have control 'over' our behavior, and we control

which outcome occurs where there are various outcomes available to us... we *select* from a menu of

genuinely available options."[16] But many compatibilists, including myself, would object. These are

each ordinary, perfectly serviceable terms and phrases (at least, until they are italicized or placed in

commas, to make them do service for the incompatibilist picture). They could readily refer to

activities compatible with the truth of determinism. They should not be identified with the much

more specific thing the incompatibilist has in mind—the thing that would be incompatible with the

truth of determinism. Doing so obscures the point the compatibilist most wants to make: that what

is imagined, the thing of more moment that Fischer concedes to his opponent in light of the

consequence argument, is itself an illusion. It is a kind of philosophical chimera, an error of the

sort typically marked, in philosophy, by the repeated use of the adjectives "real," "genuine," or

"metaphysical" (alone or in combination, with or without italicization).[17]

---

[16] Fischer, *My Way : Essays on Moral Responsibility*, 6.

[17] Glance back at the paragraph that begins "The typical incompatibilist here objects..." You will find, I think, mostly
claims that compatibilists will likely grant as a consequence of the truth of determinism (e.g., "I could have made a
different choice only if the past had also been different") together with assertions that, if determinism is true, it rules
out something that requires italicization or some adjective like "real" or "genuine" to pick out.

This last is, of course, a very strong and wholly unsupported claim. To support it, I would first try to argue that nothing could satisfy the incompatibilist: nothing could be under the person's control, in the way imagined. Notice, though, that even if I were to secure this conclusion, I would not have shown that the incompatibilist's picture is in error or based on an illusion. I might only have shown that, although we might cogitate and cause, nothing is really in our control.

At this point an analogy might help. Thinking of ourselves as undetermined causes intervening originally upon the world is, I think, very natural. It is as natural as—in fact, more natural than—thinking of ourselves as immaterial souls who captain our bodies. Problems about personal identity (among others) very naturally lead us to think that we are immaterial souls, where a soul is understood crudely, as an immaterial object with quasi-spatial boundaries that is in some way associated with our bodies. We thus attempt to model personal identity or unity on the ordinary continuity of physical objects. This is a natural (perhaps *the* natural) picture to adopt, when first confronted with certain philosophical problems. But, upon noticing that it is also a hopeless picture, the proper response is not to think that we are therefore left without "real" or "genuine" personal identity or individual distinctness—as though our first, natural, philosophical model somehow sets the criteria for genuineness, in a domain. The proper response is, instead, to reexamine how the problem arose, and so to reexamine, more carefully, whether we can do better than appeal to the hasty model of an immaterial material object.

Likewise, when thinking about the control we exercise over our deliberations, decisions, and actions, it is entirely natural to think that we (perhaps as immaterial souls) must be the undetermined cause of the future. I believe this is because the ordinary, paradigmatic cases of control—control over ordinary objects and over our own voluntary actions—involve both a characteristic discretion and a characteristic awareness, each of which are replicated in this picture. If we are to a control an ordinary object, we paradigmatically get that object into view, think about, and then act upon it. If we are to act voluntarily, we paradigmatically represent to ourselves what we have in mind to do,

9

decide to do it, and then do it. It is extremely natural to think this is how we control anything, including ourselves and our lives as a whole. Thus it seems that, if we are to be free, or to have control over our lives, we need to be able to get ourselves and our lives into view, think about them, and then act so as to make a difference to them.

Again, I believe that this picture, by itself, will not make sense—it will not be able to avoid the basic threat. But I also believe that, to conclude that therefore we do not make a difference or that we do not have control over our lives would be as absurd as thinking that, because we are not immaterial souls, we are not genuinely, truly, or really persons. To so conclude would be to allow our first natural philosophical picture to set the criteria for that domain. The proper response, instead, is to carefully reexamine the domain, to arrive at a more adequate account.[18]

Of course, the incompatibilist (and, I suspect, Fischer in his semi-compatibilism) will rightly point out that it must be *shown* both that the natural picture is unworkable and that an alternative can be made to work. Moreover, they will take my protestations about ordinary phrases to be self-serving: they will insist that our ordinary notion of control, or of making a difference, includes the purportedly hopeless picture. They might concede that we could, perhaps, recover some more mundane sense of "making a difference" or something being "up to me," within the compatibilist picture, but they will insist that what we will recover will be some pale shadow of what we had originally thought we were able to do. We will be left "making a difference" only in something like the sense in which the cog in my vacuum cleaner makes a difference. But this was not the original sense. The original sense requires that we exercise discretion over our lives, once we have them in view. So, if the unfolding of our lives is (or, even, must be) entirely accounted for by facts that obtained before we were born, we do not have control over ourselves, in the original sense.

---

[18] The strategy I am pursuing would locate an alternative form of control that does not require awareness and does not even admit of discretion. I call it evaluative control, and believe it is the way we control ourselves, most fundamentally. (Alternatively, it is the way in which we are active as responsible creatures.)

At this point, the conversation might move in several different directions. The compatibilist might try to make good on her claim that nothing could be both under the person's control, in the way imagined, and avoid the basic threat, and she might try to elaborate her own alternative. Or she might try to show, with Fischer, that what is imagined is not required for *responsibility* and that what we have provides us with the important value of self-expression. Alternatively, the disputants might try to engage in some social science to discern how commonly what I have called the natural philosophical picture is in fact presupposed, in an attempt to gauge how revisionary the compatibilist account really is. Or, the compatibilist might try some sophisticated reasoning about the problematic role played by philosophical pictures in our ordinary practices.[19]

Rather than pursue any of these lines here, at this point I propose to approach these topics in an unusual way, hoping perhaps to cast some new light. In particular, I want to see if there is something between the kind of control or making a difference that the typical incompatibilist feels is lost, if determinism is true (the kind of difference-making I think illusory), on the one hand, and the way in which the cog in the vacuum cleaner makes a difference, on the other. Is there something more momentous than the contributions of the cog, but more tractable than the interventions of an uncaused cause? To pursue this, I will focus, as Fischer does, on the question of, as we might put it, the value of freedom, while setting aside concern about moral responsibility. Fischer highlights what he calls the value of aesthetic or creative self-expression. I want to focus on a different value, one which I will, with considerable trepidation, burden with the label "autonomy."

By autonomy I will mean *the ability or capacity to effectively bring about that which you authentically want*. Notice that autonomy, as I will here use it, is more a psychologists' notion than a philosophers'. It

---

[19] There are very interesting questions, here, about how to discern what was called above the "original" meaning of control and about its place in our philosophical reflections. At a similar point in a similar dialog, R. E. Hobart replied, "all we have to do is keep asking what this old meaning was," and went on to suggest that the philosophical picture was not to be found in our ordinary practices. See R. E. Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determinism and Inconceivable without It," *Mind* 43(1934): 6. I believe Strawson's much-cited article makes a very sophisticated move of a similar sort. See Peter F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* xlviii(1962). The place of philosophical pictures in ordinary practices is a rich topic in its own right.

has two pieces: one must want authentically and one must have a capacity to bring about those wants effectively. Neither of these pieces could be possessed by a plastic cog, and neither are possessed simply in virtue of being an interconnected part of a causal mechanism. In fact, and importantly, neither piece is possessed simply by being human, or by being rational, or by possessing a will. Rather, both are the product of successful human development. Each comes in degrees, may be interfered with, and may be enhanced. (Infants are not autonomous, in this sense. Many adults possess some degree of it, though only a few adults possess it in a very high degree.)

Let us focus, first, on the ability to effectively bring things about—an ability highly prized and rewarded in the current culture and economy. To have this ability is to possess certain ordinary skills, dispositions, and resources. Among these are the basic use of one's limbs (or of some substitute), some amount of knowledge or information about the world, the ability to engage in means-end reasoning, and a capacity for planning.[20] We can add to this more refined capacities for self-control, such as the ability to delay gratification, to tolerate certain forms of frustration, to avoid procrastination, and to learn from one's mistakes. Experience aids effectiveness, as does charm. To be maximally effective, one needs to find the right balance between tenacity of purpose and flexibility in the face of change. Finally, what might be thought of as external resources are often important. One cannot be effective without a tolerably predicable environment. Effectiveness is greatly enhanced by health, friends, wealth, and position. A great many of the constituents of and contributors to effectiveness can be learned, developed, and enhanced. All of them can be interfered with, hindered, or destroyed. Other things being equal, to develop or enhance these skills and abilities is to enlarge one's autonomy—it is to enhance one's ability to effect change upon the globe (or, beyond), by conforming it to one's own thoughts.

---

[20] On what it would take to create such a creature, see the work of Michael Bratman, e.g., Michael E. Bratman, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Note that this piece of autonomy, as I am understanding it, does not require the falsity of determinism. We could build a machine that has the ability to effectively bring about its representations, learn from its mistakes, devise new strategies, etc. In doing so, we would be capturing this aspect of what I am calling autonomy.

The second aspect, authentically wanting, is much harder to describe and locate. (It is also, in our culture and economy, much less prized, when not actively discouraged.) It is what adolescents are overshooting, in their attempts at self-definition or rebellion. It is what many adults are lacking, when they align themselves entirely with a single political platform. Sartre's waiter in the café, at least as Sartre imagines him, lacks it: he is fitting himself into his expected role in order to avoid responsibility for himself. The Betas in Huxley's *Brave New World* also lack it—but not because their formation has been entirely controlled by others, nor even because their formation has been entirely controlled by others for a purpose, but rather because their formation has been entirely controlled by others for the purpose of (among other things) keeping them from asking too many questions or having too many aspirations.[21] Conformists lack it in their conformity, but loners also lack it, to the extent that they become loners in an attempt to avoid the expectations of others or the press of social life. Authenticity is, approximately, the ability to be oneself among others, open to their influence, without defining oneself either by or against those others or their expectations, as such. I suspect its lack is the root of the us-and-them mentality that is (it seems to me) the source of all large-scale, non-natural evil. Gaining in authenticity requires both reflection and self-esteem. Others can prevent it—indeed, others are often actively hostile towards it, as it allows for an independence of mind and will that those who lack it find threatening. Authenticity cannot be had without asking questions and answering them for oneself, and then being willing both to stand by one's answers and to reopen the questions. It is the sort of thing that develops through a lifetime,

---

[21] Others in Brave New World also lack it. I focus on the Betas because I think the problem clearest in their case.

something that can be had in degrees, and something that can be hindered or enhanced.[22] Finally, the task of being authentic—of being oneself—is not the kind of task that has an end point—it is not something that could be completed.

My characterization of authenticity is here very rough, and it leaves much to be desired. Even so, I think it clear enough that authenticity—the kind of sensitivity to, openness to, care for, and yet independence from one's social environment that is both its substance and its goal—is not the kind of thing that we have simply in virtue of being a human being, or possessing rational nature, or a reflective self-consciousness, or any other progeny of the immaterial soul. Nor, I think, would it be secured by "genuine metaphysical access to alternative possibilities." To be sure, there is some resonance between authenticity and regulative control: the first is the ability to be oneself among others, open to their influence, without defining oneself either by or against those others or their expectations, as such; the second is the ability to bring about changes, where those changes are intended by you but are not (also) determined by the past and the laws of nature. So, the first involves being sensitive to but independent of one's social context, while, one might think, the second involves being sensitive to but independent of one's physical context.[23] To the extent that one's physical context is *also* (thought to be) personal—the construction of one's culture or the effects of a personal god—then one faces a similar challenge of living authentically within it, of finding a way to be oneself while open to the presence, influence, and importance of others, as expressed in the physical world. But insofar as one's physical context is simply brute, it is hard to see how it poses the same sort of challenge. And so, even if we were to *grant* that some form of freedom or control is ruled out by determinism, it is hard to see why *authenticity* should be threatened by the ruminations of the physicists (as opposed to the social theorists or the theologians).

_____

[22] I fear it can also be destroyed, though I would like to think that its destruction is difficult.

[23] In fact, I think there is an aspect of what might, with historical accuracy, be called authenticity that involves avoiding the sort of bad faith ones falls into by excusing oneself on the basis of one's physical tendencies or dispositions. This was, I take it, an important part of Sartre's account of authenticity.

Still, one might grant both that "genuine metaphysical access to alternative possibilities" will not secure authenticity and that the absence of such possibilities does not itself pose the kind of challenge that authenticity is to meet but still try to argue that authenticity requires, as a kind of precondition, the falsity of determinism. I find this hard to see, but I believe that engaging this question would return us to the main line of the debate.

Let's return, instead, to Frankfurt and moral responsibility—at least for a moment. I believe that the lesson Frankfurt took from his original cases (Jones$_{1-4}$) is that whether one is responsible depends not on what might have happened but rather on whether one did what one really wanted to do—where all the important work is done by the modifier, "really."[24] Frankfurt's later work, first on hierarchy and then on identification and wholeheartedness, is an extended attempt to understand what it is to really want something, in the relevant sense.[25] Fischer's work on guidance control can be seen as another attempt at the same. These seem to me important projects pursuing the right question. I would here like to suggest that we would be helped in these projects by distinguishing the sort of "really wanting" required for responsibility from what I have called authenticity and autonomy.

It is easy to confuse the two, because we would readily say, of someone who is authentic in her desires and has the skills and resources to effectively act upon them, that she is able to do what she really wants to do. And so she enjoys freedom of a very important sort; she is her own person, self-possessed and effective. And yet, crucially, the freedom and identity gained by growing in

_____

[24] Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66(1969). The central insight, I take it, is that, if one wouldn't have done otherwise even if one could have, then the fact that one couldn't have done otherwise does not undermine responsibility. So we are left to understand what it means to say that one wouldn't have done otherwise, even if one could have, in a sense that is relevant to responsibility. And that, I think, is the sense of "really" that Frankfurt is after in later work.

[25] See the work collected in ———, *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Especially "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," "Identity and Wholeheartedness, "The Importance of What We Care about" and "Identity and Wholeheartedness." Frankfurt returns to this line of thought, with important changes, in Harry G. Frankfurt, "The Faintest Passion" (paper presented at the Presidential Address, 1991 APA Eastern Division Meeting, New York City, December 29, 1991 1991).

authenticity and effectiveness is *not* the freedom required for moral responsibility. Frankfurt claims (roughly) that one is responsible in virtue of being a person; Fischer would say (roughly) that one is responsible in virtue of being the kind of creature that acts on reasons. There are many such creatures—many responsible persons—who are also creatures of their environment, products of the forces at work around them, lacking in authenticity, just as there are many who, often through no fault of their own, are particularly unskilled and ineffective in bringing about what they want. Both sorts of lack require us to adjust our expectations, if we are to be reasonable and to avoid frustration. But neither sort of lack excuses bad behavior or exempts from basic moral demands.[26] Thus I share with Fischer and Frankfurt the conviction that not every kind of freedom or control is required for moral responsibility—indeed, not even every important kind is required.

So, autonomy of the sort here considered is not required for moral responsibility, and it seems to be compatible with the truth of determinism (or other, weaker, claims). Yet it seems to me that those who are autonomous make a difference in a sense more significant than that in which a misplaced rock or the cog in my vacuum cleaner makes a difference—it is not just the "making a difference" that comes in being an actual part of the unfolding of events, with causal or explanatory connections to other parts. Nor is it just the making a difference that comes from taking one's expected place in the social order and working predictably within it—they make more of a difference, or a different sort of difference, than the Betas. However, neither is it the same as being a deliberate but undetermined cause. They make a difference, instead, by occupying their place within their physical and social world while both questioning (from their admittedly constrained perspective) whether things are as they would have them be and standing ready and able to change what is not. Given their effectiveness, their future will be, reliably, as they will it to be; given their

_____

[26] This claim depends on a certain understanding of moral demands. I offer some defense of it in Pamela Hieronymi, "Rational Capacity as a Condition on Blame," *Philosophical Books* 48, no. 2 (2007). and some elaboration in ———, "Of Metaethics and Motivation: The Appeal of Contractualism," in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, ed. Rahul Kumar, Samuel Scheffler, and R. Jay Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

authenticity, their will is, in an important sense, their own. And, given this possibility of autonomy, we should not allow, I think, allow that whether or not we make a meaningful difference depends on the arcane ruminations of the physicists.

Return to the fork in the road, where I am deciding whether to stay or to go. We can now say, in more detail, how my future is up to me, while the assassination of the Archduke is not. My future is up to me because, or insofar as, my decision both effectively leads to the outcome it represents and is authentically my own. I have the capacity to ask what is to be brought about, and to bring about that which I decide to bring out, along with the further capacity to question both my own inclinations and the assumptions I find made by those around me. We can grant that my deciding and questioning start from, are, in some sense, a product of, and are constrained by the conditions that gave them and me birth. And yet we can, I think, say that I control my destiny to the extent that I am effective in bringing about my authentic desires. With some skills, some luck, and some maturity, I will make a meaningful difference.[27]

Bibliography

Bratman, Michael E. *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Fischer, John Martin. *My Way : Essays on Moral Responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

———. *Our Stories: Essays on Life, Death, and Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

———. "Precis of My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 80, no. 1 (2010): 229-41.

———. "Replies." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 80, no. 1 (2010): 267-78.

Frankfurt, Harry. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 828-39.

———. *The Importance of What We Care About*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Frankfurt, Harry G. "The Faintest Passion." Paper presented at the Presidential Address, 1991 APA Eastern Division Meeting, New York City, December 29, 1991 1991.

Hieronymi, Pamela. "Controlling Attitudes." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (2006): 45–74.

———. "Of Metaethics and Motivation: The Appeal of Contractualism." In *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, edited by Rahul Kumar, Samuel Scheffler and R. Jay Wallace. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

———. "Rational Capacity as a Condition on Blame." *Philosophical Books* 48, no. 2 (2007): 109–23.

———. "Two Kinds of Agency." In *Mental Actions*, edited by Lucy O'Brien and Matthew Sorteriou, 138–62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Hobart, R. E. "Free Will as Involving Determinism and Inconceivable without It." *Mind* 43 (1934): 1–27.

Scanlon, T. M. *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Strawson, Peter F. "Freedom and Resentment." *Proceedings of the British Academy* xlviii (1962): 1-25.