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Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics

**THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN FREE WILL AND MORAL  
RESPONSIBILITY**

Master's Thesis in Philosophy

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## Table of Content

Introduction.....	5
1. From Free Will to Moral Responsibility .....	7
1.1. Strawsonian (psychological) compatibililism.....	8
1.2. Libertarianism.....	11
2. Distinguishing Free Actions from Morally Responsible Actions.....	18
2.1. Free will and morally irrelevant actions .....	18
2.2. The discrepancy between free will and moral responsibility as a threat .....	22
Conclusion .....	25
Abstract.....	27
References.....	28

## **Introduction**

The discourse of free will tends to be pinned to the consideration of moral responsibility, with the notion that, where there is freedom of will, there is moral responsibility. Thus, in this paper, I aim to analyze the relationship between these two points. I start by defining the boundaries of my research. In this regard, it should be noted that examining the relationships between freedom and causal determinism or indeterminism are beyond the scope of this paper. This is explained by the next remark that this paper will not present any arguments for or against the existence of free will. Indeed, only the theories that acknowledge the existence of free will and that define it in terms of moral responsibility were taken into consideration when conducting this research. The reason for these limitations is due to the fact that freedom of will can be defined in a negative sense, but this definition also involves a rejection of the notion of ‘moral responsibility’ and all moral practices; thereby, it does not help shed light on the relationship between the two interesting notions of freedom of will and moral responsibility, which was the target of this research as stated above. I also do not insist on any single concrete positive definition of free will, because my purpose is to analyze the relationships between freedom and moral responsibility.

The key theories that accept the existence of free will and that define it in terms of moral responsibility are: compatibilism and libertarianism. Also worth noting are hard determinism and willusionism (the term ‘willusionism’ is made up of the words “will’ and ‘illusion’), in which the proponents of these theories built their definition of free will around moral responsibility (Caruso, 2016; Pereboom, 2001; Smilansky, 2011), but they reject freedom of will and any form of control over actions and decisions and, thereupon, prescribe treating certain people as not morally responsible agents, for example, those who suffer from mental diseases. Another aspect, indeed perhaps the most important feature, of the theories that will be discussed herein is that they define free will as something that is exercised when moral responsibility is exercised. Strawsonian or, how it is also called, psychological compatibilism and event-causal libertarianism are suitable to the purpose of this thesis. The interesting and advantageous coincidence about the choice of concepts is that the two of them actually depict two radical views on the positive definition of free will.

The first theory discussed in this thesis is P. F. Strawson’s concept of compatibilism, which argues that free will is compatible with causal determinism and that agents are determined to be free when they are the objects of reactive attitudes, i.e., natural reactions to the perception of others’ good or ill will (Strawson, 1962). The second theory that suits the criterion is event-causal libertarianism, which defines free will as a power that is the ultimate creator of one’s own purposes (Kane, 1996). According to Kane, the two conditions for free will are the principle of alternative possibilities and, most significant, the principle of ultimate responsibility.

The main claim of this thesis is that free will is the necessary but not sufficient condition<sup>1</sup> to maintain moral responsibility, as agents can exercise free will even by performing morally irrelevant actions. Therefore, it is wrong to say that freedom of will is exercised if an action, decision, intention, or choice is regarded as morally responsible, and thus the ‘moral responsibility aspect’ of all the highly mentioned theories should be revised.

This thesis is structured as follows: the first chapter provides a brief background of the free will theories (Strawsonian compatibilism and event-causal libertarianism) that discussed in this paper. In the second chapter, I provide an argument in defense of the main claim about the discrepancy between free will and moral responsibility. I offer the interpretation of the relationships between freedom of will and moral responsibility that seems to be correct, because it is supported by our intuitions and examples of morally irrelevant actions that are freely performed. An explanation why this argument undermines free will theories that understand moral responsibility as necessary for free will is also provided. I would discuss possible responses that followers of psychological compatibilism and event-causal indeterminism can give: the fact of making a distinction between free will and freedom of actions that is made by both compatibilists and libertarians<sup>2</sup>, indicating cases where I might interpret the idea of reactive attitudes incorrectly (compatibilist’s response), and proving that my example is not self-forming action (libertarian’s response).

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<sup>1</sup> I use the standard theory to define the necessary and sufficient conditions: if ‘ $p \rightarrow q$ ’ is true, the truth of the consequent ‘ $q$ ’ is necessary and the truth of the antecedent ‘ $p$ ’ is sufficient.

<sup>2</sup> By compatibilism in this thesis Strawsonian compatibilism is meant, and by libertarianism event-causal libertarianism is meant. Cases in the beginning of sections 1.1 and 1.2, where the general class of compatibilist and libertarian theories are discussed are exceptional.

## **1. From Free Will to Moral Responsibility**

I would like to start the first chapter by giving an explanation of why free will and moral responsibility are mutually important notions. Free will can be defined without any connections with moral responsibility. For example, C. Ginet and P. Van Inwagen define free will as the opportunity to act otherwise. (Ginet, 1990; Inwagen, 1975a). However, this does not mean that every time free will is replaced by freedom of action the question about the relationship between the two notions automatically disappears (this idea is further considered in section 2.1). Nevertheless, freedom of will is often discussed in relation with moral responsibility (Fischer & Ravizza, 1999; McKenna & Pereboom, 2015; Mele, 2006; O'Connor & Franklin, 2018; Strawson, 1962; Waller, 1990). But why so? One of the reasons is the widely shared idea that free will is one of the necessary conditions for holding people morally responsible. If free will is the ability to exercise control over one's own actions and decisions, which are necessary for moral responsibility, then moral condemnation or praise is inappropriate if the 'free will condition' is not present. However, we might consider the following situations: when agents are forced to do something concrete/ manipulated/ coerced/ compelled/ hypnotized, when agents are insane or newborn, or when actions are accidental/ random, then it becomes more or less obvious that in such cases the agents lack free will. In the first type of cases, such agents do not have control over their actions, which is a necessary prerequisite for moral responsibility, and because such agents cannot do other than what they are forced to do, they are subordinated to another's will. In the second case, the agents are not in control over their actions and consequences because they are not considered as moral agents. The third case represents a group of actions that happen accidentally; therefore, they are out of the agent's control, like dropping a glass due to experiencing an unexpected seizure, or events that occur through the indeterministic character of causal relationships. There is no need to appeal to philosophy in order to distinguish these situations as cases of exemptions from moral responsibility and a lack of free will, as common sense and intuition usually will provide pretty good guidelines. So, it seems that people are intuitively inclined to base their moral judgements on free will.

For the purpose of this thesis, hereinafter, I focus on free will theories that define it using the notion of moral responsibility. These theories share a similar core idea, while differ in their views on the relationships between free will and moral responsibility within the notions of causal determinism or indeterminism.

## 1.1. Strawsonian (psychological) compatibilism

The central claim of compatibilism is that free will and causal determinism are mutually compatible; moreover, free will could be exercised no matter true or false determinism is<sup>3</sup>. Causal determinism is the idea that every event is completely predetermined by its causes. The threat for freedom here is that from one past, plus, laws of nature that regulates everything in the world, only one future follows. What is the same important as lack of alternatives to choose is the fact that the only existing option is caused by events that out of agent's control. The problem that determinism created for free will is formulated as the Consequence Argument (Frankfurt, 1969; Ginet, 1983; Inwagen, 1975, 1983; McKenna, 2001; Nahmias, 2011). Here is one way to present the argument:

1. There is nothing we can do now to change the past and the laws of nature.
2. If determinism is true, then our present actions are the necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature.
3. From (1-2), If determinism is true, then there is nothing we can do now to change the fact that our present actions are the necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature.
4. From (3), if determinism is true, then no one has the power to do otherwise than is actually done.

5. Free will is the power to do otherwise than is actually done.

Therefore,

6. From (4-5), if determinism is true, free will does not exist.

Classic compatibilism, which defines freedom of will as the power to do otherwise than is actually done<sup>4</sup>, falls into the trap here, but alternative compatibilist theories more or less successfully solves this difficulty. And psychological or Strawsonian compatibilism is one of these alternative theories. The view on moral responsibility and free will that P.F. Strawson introduced in his landmark essay "Freedom and Resentment" (1962) yields the compatibilist conception of free will because he defended the idea that free will does not exclude determinism vice versa. In the beginning of the essay he divide all free will theorists into two groups - pessimists and optimists. Pessimists (libertarians and determinists<sup>56</sup>) believe that free will in incompatible with determinism. Others, optimists, are convinced that free will exists even if the thesis of determinism is also true. Strawson himself does not join any party because, as he writes, he does not know what

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<sup>3</sup> Most of compatibilists would agree that they do not need the truth of determinism to define and defend free will, but some of them, so-called, soft-determinists would assume that determinism is true. They make this claim because without determinism, without necessity of causal connections between causes and consequences, it is difficult to explain how an agent can be responsible for own actions, how an agent's character causes some actions.

<sup>4</sup> In literature this conception may also be called the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP).

<sup>5</sup> The term 'determinists' is how Strawson called those philosophers who are called 'hard determinists' in the contemporary debates.

<sup>6</sup> Willusionists may be also added to this group, but they appeared after the essay was published. This is the reason why they are not mentioned.

determinism means. And this is his motivation to develop compatibilism, because only compatibilists believe that the notion of free will should not be sensitive to truth or false of determinism.

The originality of Strawsonian compatibilism is its psychological character: he started his essay with observations of interpersonal relationships and emotions that occur during communication. Strawson intentionally refuses to discuss any over-intellectualized theoretical principles of moral responsibility, because the actual principles of holding people responsible are embedded in our behavior and in a way how people interact with each other (Strawson, 1962, pp. 23–25; Eshleman, 2016). He called these principles ‘panicky metaphysics of libertarianism’ and proves that free will can be defended without it (Strawson, 1962, p. 27). His further key observation was, when someone makes us feel bad, we feel resentment and anger, when someone does something good for us, we feel pleasure and gratitude. Attitudes like those that were just mentioned are non-detached from actions or agents who are the objects of these attitudes (Strawson, 1962, p. 5). However, Strawson also noted that there are attitudes (condemnation and approval) that can be detached from agents and actions. The beauty of these observations was that both pessimists and optimists about freedom of will could easily agree with these observations, and the fact that love, gratitude, thankfulness, or anger, resentment, and desire to punish occurs in interpersonal communication. And it would be also difficult to reject how effectively these emotions and expressions are when one wants to change something in the behavior of another one. In all of these cases, an agent is automatically hold morally responsible if he or she is an apt target of reactive attitudes — people’s natural reactions to the perception of other’s good or bad will, such as resentment, anger, indignation, hurt feelings, forgiveness, gratitude, love, etc. (Strawson, 1962, pp. 4–6). Reactive attitudes are expressed from the stance of one who is immersed in interpersonal relationships; so, to regard another agent as morally responsible, he or she should be a potential object of reactive attitudes, even in cases of a lack of knowledge, lack of alternatives, or when another’s consequences are kept in mind (Strawson, 1962, pp. 6–7), specifically they express:

...how much we actually mind, how much it matters to us, whether the actions of other people - and particularly some other people - reflect attitudes towards us of good will, affection, or esteem on the one hand or contempt, indifference, or malevolence on the other. (Strawson, 1962, p. 5)

Next Strawson considered cases when one can be exempted from moral responsibility. These cases can be divided into two groups: in the first group, there are actions that were made accidentally, committed unknowingly, or were forced/coerced. Usually people are ready to forgive the consequences of such actions, but this does not mean that we exempt these people from moral responsibility forever—we are merely willing to forgive them in that one concrete situation. So, the agent is still the potential object of reactive attitudes, and probably next time there will be no

forgiveness. In the cases of the second group, we are willing to completely exempt responsibility from the agent. This could be because an agent is not a suitable object of reactive attitudes, such as because he or she is too young, or has a mental disease. Instead of the natural reactive attitudes we would otherwise have, we exercise what Strawson calls 'the objective attitude':

We look with an objective eye on the compulsive behaviour of the neurotic or the tiresome behaviour of a very young child, thinking in terms of treatment or training. But we *can* sometimes look with something like the same eye on the behaviour of the normal and the mature (Strawson, 1962, p. 10).

Strawson's opponents could say that in situations involving the second group, where we are inclined to replace reactive attitudes by an objective attitude, are cases where determinism threatens free will because we have to refuse such agents from the responsibility for normal moral practices. But Strawson suggests that it is not determinism that makes us become objective, but rather our ordinary interpersonal attitudes that allow us to apply different reasoning in different cases. I find this passage about cases of exemption from moral responsibility catchall and useful for those who want to consider borderline cases of moral responsibility. Sometimes, and in this thesis there are examples of cases, where it is not clear whether an agent is a member of 'morally responsible agents club' or not, so, Strawson offered us a good guidelines for these confusing situations.

In his defense of freedom of will Strawson makes one more crucial step, but this step is blurred. He provides a distinction between freedom of will and freedom of action. When you are reading his description of the argue between optimist and pessimist, there is a feeling that Strawson's sympathies goes to optimist. And he claims that to defend free will optimist could interpret pessimist's definition of freedom as freedom of action, and in this sense, freedom is compatible with determinism.

The conventional, but conciliatory, optimist need not give up yet. He may say: Well, people often decide to do things, really intend to do what they do, know just what they're doing in doing it; the reasons they think they have for doing what they do, often really are their reasons and not their rationalizations. These facts, too, are included in the facts as we know them. If this is what you mean by freedom – by the identification of the will with the act – then freedom may again be conceded (Strawson, 1962, p. 4).

To my mind, it is presupposed that if optimists says that this is the probable definition that his opponent means, he himself does not support this idea. Moreover, Strawson writes that in this essay he is going to discuss non-detached attitudes, however, there are also detached attitudes. I believe that these two details in Strawson's manner of thinking about free will are signs, that he make the distinction.

Now it is time to discuss how Strawsonian interpretation of the relationships between free will and moral responsibility can be shortly formulated. For this purpose next citation could be useful:

...the only reason you have given for the practices of moral condemnation and punishment in cases where this freedom is present is the efficacy of these practices in regulating behaviour in socially desirable ways (Strawson, 1962, p. 4).

This means that the question of whether an action can be counted as free or not free depends on the efficacy of reactive attitudes. But this is just one phrase that, I believe, is a clear answer to the question that is interesting for us. Does this formulation match the general idea of psychological compatibilism? I assume that the answer is ‘yes’. Again in the core of Strawson’s theory, there is the concept of reactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes are non-detached from actions, therefore, we can drop the distinction between free will and freedom of action. Moreover, reactive attitudes are expressions of moral responsibility. People receive gratitude, praise, love, and excitement as feedback for actions that are morally good. On the other hand, they get anger, resentment, blame, desire to punish as signs that they committed moral crimes. What Strawson claims is that, when reactive attitudes are practiced towards agents and their actions, agents perform these actions freely. Therefore, we can say that for psychological compatibilism the next formulation is true: “Moral responsibility, which is expressed through reactive attitudes, is a necessary condition to count action as a free action” (1).

Here I would like to make an intermediate conclusion about Strawsonian compatibilism. It demonstrates that moral responsibility and free will can be discussed outside of metaphysical questions about determinism and without a precise metaphysical conception of free will. Our natural psychological attitude to people who we communicate with provides much stronger grounds to explore free will. Strawson’s view on the relationship between free will and moral responsibility can be described as believing that “moral responsibility is a necessary condition for free will” because Strawson’s claim is that reactive attitudes are a reliable identifier of freedom of will. And reactive attitudes, which are non-detached from actions or agents, are expressions of moral responsibility.

## **1.2. Libertarianism**

Before I start the description of libertarianism, I would like to make a small remark that libertarianism in the discussion of free will is not the same as political libertarianism, albeit they can be consistently compatible, but not necessarily so. While they both share an interest in freedom, the freedoms that they defend are different: metaphysical freedom in the case of free will libertarianism, and liberties of the individual in the case of political libertarians (Kane, 2005, p. 33).

While compatibilists try to make free will and determinism compatible, libertarians reject determinism. So, the libertarian brief slogan may be stated as ‘free will exists, determinism is false.’ The rejection of causal determinism leads to the necessary acceptance of indeterminism—the notion that everything happens with a probability larger than 0 and smaller than 1. The libertarian preference is for indeterminism over determinism because it opens up access to

alternative possibilities: if every event occurs with a certain probability, it may happen or its alternative may be realized. Alternative possibilities lie at the base of both compatibilism and libertarianism, where for compatibilists, open access to alternative possibilities is freedom, while for libertarians, it is one of the two key components of freedom. Alternative possibilities give an opportunity to choose between options, but by themselves, they do not guarantee that a free agent with the ability to choose exists. That is why different libertarian theories consider an agent with a specific power or ability to choose freely. Agent-causal theorists write about an agent who can start their own causal chains or, in other words, one who is the first unmoved mover, or the uncaused cause. The existence of such an agent can be explained by referring to mental causation (Chisholm, 1966; O'Connor, 1996), Kantian noumenon (Kane, 2005, pp. 42–44), or mind-body dualism (Popper & Eccles, 1977; Swinburne, 2013). Simple indeterminists explain what free action is by distinguishing between reasons and causes of action. Free action is uncaused, but it still has signs of the reasons and purposes of agents (Ginet, 1990). Event-causal libertarianism claims that what makes free agents, who are in control of their own actions and decisions, is the agent's ability to be ultimately responsible for some actions and decisions (Kane, 1996).

The urgent need to create a conception of an agent who would be uncaused and free to choose between alternatives emerged as a defensive strategy against the difficulties generated by indeterminism<sup>7</sup>. This group of actions was described as accidental, random, arbitrary. An agent experiencing an unexpected seizure or heart attack, the hand movement of a person who suffers from alien hand syndrome all fit the description of this group. It would not be reasonable, for instance, to judge a person harshly who had a heart attack, fell, touched a table with a vase, and as a result, broke the vase. Indeterminate actions are very similar to these examples: a probabilistic character of choice that is rooted in its nature can make some actions random. It is not an agent who might choose action A with a 65% probability or action B with a 35% probability because action A for some reasons is more preferable, it is the natural order of the Universe that forces an agent to realize action A in 65 cases out of 100, and action B in 35 out of 100. So, in a determinate Universe, all causes of an event are out of an agent's control, while in an indeterminate Universe, all causes again are out of an agent's control, but there exist alternative variants of the future. A lack of control, where such control is required for moral responsibility, leads to a rejection of being subject to all moral practices (I do not provide any definition of the required control because: 1) for the aim of this thesis, it is enough to claim that free will is a kind of necessary condition of moral responsibility/ is a kind of control necessary for moral responsibility; 2) the different authors discussed in this thesis understand this control in their own way). To formulate this worry

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<sup>7</sup> One of the main difficulties is hinted at in the third example of an agent with not free actions given in the beginning of the first chapter .

precisely, I would refer the reader to Al. Mele's counterfactual interpretation called the "Luck Argument" (1998, pp. 582–583). Mele suggests considering the next situation: someone named John is thinking about whether to wake up right now in order to ensure he will arrive at the meeting in time or whether to sleep for one more hour. John fails to overcome the temptation to sleep and stays in bed. But if John could have done otherwise given the same conditions, then his counterpart John\* in an alternative universe in the same situation chose to get up to ensure he would arrive at the meeting on time. John and John\* are completely identical to each other, and the universes they exist in are identical too. The only difference is the choice that they made. The difference cannot be explained by differences in their motives, character, desires, or past situations, because John and John\* are completely similar to each other. Thus, if the choice does not follow from the agent's character, desires, abilities or their past, then their difference in choice is just a matter of luck, which is beyond an agent's control. Luck is a synonym for chance or indeterminism, and the Luck Argument reveals why indeterminism itself is not freedom, and is indeed even a threat to freedom.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, libertarians have generated very different responses to the Luck objection. Among them, the most popular are event-causal libertarianism and agent-causal. Agent-causal theory claims that agents, in contrast with other objects, have a special power to start direct causal chains of events or, how the defender of agent-causation Roderick Chisholm called it, imminent causal chains that cannot be reduced to causal chains between events (Chisholm, 1964, pp. 24–29). However, it seems that, under the responsibility for actions that are imminently caused by free agents, they understand causal responsibility for imminently caused actions, not moral; therefore, I do not focus on this view in the latter.

Robert Kane, the most influential libertarian philosopher, offered the so-called event-causal theory of free will based on two principles: the principle of alternative possibilities (AP) and the principle of ultimate responsibility (UR). However, as the notion of ultimate responsibility is the most crucial for event-causal libertarianism, we start from another aspect of Kane's view. As mentioned previously, there is no universally accepted opinion of whether free will is the same as freedom of action. R. Kane rejected oversimplifying the free will problem by reducing it to a consideration of the freedom of action. His position was explained by analyzing of the expression 'of one's own will':

... to act of one's own free will is to 'act from a will that is to some significant degree a will of one's own free making'. My view is historical... (Kane, 2014, p. 38)

To act freely, an agent must already have a system of beliefs, character traits, desires, motives, etc., i.e., the agent must have a will. To act freely, one must act in accordance with one's own will, but to will freely, according to Kane, one must be ultimately responsible for one's own character, beliefs, motives.... Free will is a more fundamental issue than freedom of action because

freedom of will includes intentions, beliefs, decisions, desires, motives, and actions, while freedom of action is only about actions. In my mind, Kane's stance is reasonable from a practical and commonsensical perspective in making this distinction as behavioral patterns that can provide evidence to support his view can be easily found in daily life. If a newborn breaks a vase, no one would blame the newborn, if a 5-year-old child intentionally did the same for the first time, the child would not be blamed, but if the same child who had already been told that this was bad or if an adult intentionally breaks a vase, this child or adult would be blamed. The difference between all the characters in this example is their different life experiences, which should be enough or not enough (in the case of the newborn) for them to form will. Further, if the will is limited, the ability to act in accordance with this will is also limited.

Let's stop the discussion about distinguishing free will from freedom of action, at least for some time (we will return to this question again in the second chapter), and now turn to freedom of will.

Free will, according to Kane, can be defined as the power of agents to be the ultimate creator and sustainer of their own ends and purposes (Kane, 1996, p. 4). Here is how Kane himself defines the ultimate responsibility principle:

I called it the condition of 'ultimate responsibility' or UR. The basic idea is this: to be ultimately responsible for an action, an agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient reason (condition, cause or motive) for the action's occurring. If for example, a choice issues from and can be sufficiently explained by, an agent's character, motives and intentions, that is, the agent's pre-existing will (together with background conditions), then to be ultimately responsible for the choice, the agent must be at least in part responsible by virtue of choices or actions voluntarily performed in the past for having the character, motives and purposes he or she now has. (Kane, 2014, p. 39)

In other words, the principle of ultimate responsibility assumes that an agent is responsible for his or her own action if the agent is responsible for everything that is counted as sufficient reason, cause, or motive of the action. Kane also wrote that the ultimate responsibility is the necessary condition for free will:

Nonetheless, I am firmly convinced (and have been arguing for more than two decades) that UR *is* a necessary condition for free will, so that any attempt to make sense of free will must eventually come to grips with UR and show how it can be satisfied, if it can be satisfied at all. (Kane, 1996, p. 37)

According to the definition of ultimate responsibility, it might seem that the ultimate responsibility is causal responsibility, but in this case, all of the critique comments that are addressed to agent-causal libertarianism could also be directed against event-causal libertarianism. Event-causal libertarianism thus faces the problem of mental causation and the question of the existence of such an agent who can be the first mover unmoved because, if we think about ultimate responsibility as just causal responsibility, the central claims of the two libertarian theories would be the same, and this is not the case. When causal responsibility is excluded, we think about other

types of responsibility, for example, moral and legal. Moral responsibility in most cases includes legal responsibility, because it is common for legal systems to be based on moral judgments. So, let's discuss whether ultimate responsibility is moral responsibility. But what does ultimate responsibility mean? To be ultimately responsible means to be the most significant reason or cause of your behavior, and according to the definition of the principle of ultimate responsibility, an agent's character, motives, and intentions are examples of such causes. And these causes are very different from the causes of causal responsibility, such as lightning that starts a fire in a tree, because the first one shapes individuals as moral agents, while the second can only shape objects into a handful of ashes. Moral responsibility is demonstrated as forms of blameworthiness and praiseworthiness. In most of cases, when we talk about one's character or motives, or intentions, we discuss the moral side of an agent's behavior because agents are either to blame for their bad character and the sad consequences of this character or are praised for demonstrating good traits of character. Therefore, ultimate responsibility can be understood as moral responsibility because the sources of ultimate responsibility (character, motives, intentions) are the same as the sources of moral responsibility. Kane himself does not clearly state this, and event-causal libertarians could reject this reading of the principle of ultimate responsibility.

Kane's theory has one more crucial point: it explains how agents can form their will and when they exercise their free will<sup>8</sup>. I divide free action according to Kane into two groups: self-forming actions (SFAs) and other free actions. The notion of a self-forming action is the key for event-causal libertarianism because during the execution of SFAs, the will is generated. Kane describes SFAs in five steps (I decided to save the author's structure and order of description to reduce the chance of misreading):

1. SFAs are indetermined. Other actions can be determined by factors external to agents or an agent's will, but SFAs must be indetermined because to make a choice an agent must have alternatives.
2. SFAs are performed in difficult life situations when agents seriously reflect on their values and future perspectives, and when agents are torn between alternatives. There are two components of decisions made in such life situations: competing motivations and efforts that are made to execute each of the alternatives.
3. Efforts are required to choose one alternative over another. Here Kane makes a remark that there are neural processes in the brain that are similar to his schematic representation of the competition between motivations during SFAs (Kane, 2014,

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<sup>8</sup> Although providing an explanation of ultimate responsibility is enough for the purpose of my thesis, discussion of event-causal libertarianism would not be complete without one of two most significant components of this theory.

p. 42). The similarity with scientific studies is a crucial benefit of Kane's theory among libertarians' theories of free will that may at times seem mysterious and incoherent. Actually there are neuroscientific studies that confirm that during decision-making processes, different brain regions accumulate different competing decisions, and usually these brain regions are responsible for different motivations; for example, emotions and rational thinking (Greene, 2011; Shadlen & Newsome, 2001)

4. Indeterminism does not have a value in itself for libertarians: it is just a component of bigger teleological reasons.
5. Indeterminism does not exclude responsibility. Steps 1, 2, and 3 say that an agent has reasons and motivation to perform an alternative; moreover, an agent makes efforts to choose one over another; therefore, no matter which action will be executed, it will be the agent's own free decision. Even if luck or randomness interrupt the decision-making process, it's influence on the final choice is flattened.<sup>9</sup>

SFAs include important moral choices that agents make throughout life; for instance, a decision to continue education or to start a job career, to marry, to go war, or to support your family at home, to blackmail your friend for money.... SFAs are difficult decisions, but our will, personal traits, and values are formed during actions like these. Kane describes six categories of SFAs: moral choices, prudential choices, efforts of will sustaining purposes, attentional efforts directed at self-control and self-modification, practical judgments and choices, and changes of intentions in actions (Kane, 1996, p. 125).

Another category of free actions includes actions that are performed of an agent's will. Here, Kane takes a step in the compatibilism direction because these actions can be predetermined by already existing will, and he breaks the libertarian commitment to reject determinism. But even if he would agree with the libertarian idea that predetermined actions are not free actions, and consequently deletes this category from the list of free actions, his general views will be safe and sound as his theory claims that SFAs are indetermined.

To highlight the most important points about event-causal libertarianism: it assumes that free will is exercised when an agent is ultimately responsible for their own decisions and actions, and that ultimate responsibility is a necessary condition of free will. The ultimate causes of an agent's behavior are character, motives, desires, and intentions, which contribute to forming persons as moral agents. Because the sources of ultimate responsibility and moral responsibility

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<sup>9</sup> Kane's method to describe self-forming actions in five steps is saved here.

are the same, it could be supposed that under ultimate responsibility, moral responsibility is understood. An agent's freedom is produced and exercised during self-forming actions, which are indetermined choices that are very difficult to make because of competing motivations and efforts that must be done to choose one alternative over another. Situations like these, by their definition, include a reflection on one's own values as they produce our personal traits, and therefore, they shape us as moral agents or are moral choices. That is why I think that event-causal libertarianism interprets relationships between free will and moral responsibility as "moral responsibility is a necessary but not sufficient condition of free will" (or "free will is sufficient but not a necessary condition for free will") (2).

## **2. Distinguishing Free Actions from Morally Responsible Actions**

In this section, I propose and develop an argument that supports the claim that free will is necessary but not sufficient for moral responsibility. We start from a brief review of the views that agree with this claim. Moreover, it is offered to consider examples of actions that we are perform in daily life and our intuitions about these examples. In the second part of the chapter, it is explained in more details why this argument can be a threat of all the views on the free will problem that describes the relationships between free will and moral responsibility in different ways.

### **2.1. Free will and morally irrelevant actions**

The idea that free will does not exercised every time when moral responsibility is exercised is not new to the free will debate. For example, B. Waller (1990) denies the connection between free will and moral responsibility. He argues that the naturalistic explanation of the world that is dominant nowadays excludes responsibility but does not exclude free will. The account of free will that he supports is the compatibilists freedom, which goes together well with naturalism, but not moral responsibility because, according to Waller, the ascriptions of moral responsibility require us to trace the causes of action to their sources. So, responsibility should be traced back to more ultimate and impersonal causes than naturalism allows. Nevertheless, here and in Waller's text, the same core idea is shared but it is developed in different ways. Waller concludes that there is a difference between free will and moral responsibility because these two terms have different relationships with determinism, while here the main claim is that the set of free actions is larger than the set of morally responsible actions.

Moreover, M. McKenna and D. Pereboom also propose such an explanation of free will that emphasizes the interpretation of free will as a necessary condition for moral responsibility:

Free will is the unique ability of persons to exercise the strongest sense of control over their actions necessary for moral responsibility. (2015, p. 6).

They write that they prefer to define free will pinned to moral responsibility because moral responsibility brings practical value to the free will debate and moral responsibility requires the kind of control over actions that is the strongest because an agent should be able to act in accordance with their own reasons (McKenna & Pereboom, 2015, pp. 6–9).

Another way how moral responsibility is discussed by free will theorists is in relation with the principle of alternative possibilities, which means that agent can be free if and only if he or she can act otherwise (Frankfurt, 1969; Widerker, 2016; Widerker & McKenna, 2006). For instance H. Frankfurt (1969) assumes that the principle is wrong, and an agent can be morally responsible for own actions even if he or she did not have another option to choose.

Most of time philosophers who write about the relationships between free will and moral responsibility use vague terms, like 'mismatch', 'is pinned to', 'connected', etc. Or they present

the idea that free will is necessary for moral responsibility as *a priori*, however, as I wrote in previous chapter, Strawsonian compatibilism and event-causal libertarianism assume oppositely different interpretation. This vagueness and lack of clear descriptions of the relationships between two terms encouraged me to devote the thesis to this question.

Before I state my general argument, I would like to clarify several controversial points. First, moral responsibility presupposes any form of blame or praise for actions that are executed in a moral context. This brings us to the next claim that only morally relevant actions can be morally responsible because outside the scope of morally relevant actions, the required moral responsibility context disappears. It is easy to count killing a person, cheating on a spouse, or blackmailing someone as moral actions (albeit immoral in nature). But what about more obscure cases, for example, cleaning your teeth in the morning? Someone could say that this is a morally responsible action as it include the choice of companies that produce the toothpaste and brush, and some producers can harm the local ecology or violate safety conditions of their own employees. The problem with such examples is that, using their line of argumentation, we would find out that for all action that happened or will happen in the world, ultimately the Big Bang is morally responsible. I propose using simple rational reasoning about whether something or someone as morally responsible; whereby, an action should be regarded as morally responsible, if this action is significant in terms of moral responsibility. This means that moral responsibility should be transferred from one action to another if it is rational to do so. I do not agree that cleaning one's teeth is a morally responsible action because the whole moral responsibility for toothpaste choice should be awarded for buying this concrete toothpaste in a shop.

Second point that I would like to discuss is the distinction between free will and freedom of action. I have already paid attention to the fact that different philosophers either agree or disagree with this distinction. As mentioned earlier, Strawson and Kane make the distinction. My argument is based on the examples of free but morally irrelevant actions, that is why there is a worry that my argument is not related to the free will problem. Firstly, I think that this distinction can be blurred because there is still no one widely accepted opinion. Moreover, disagreement with an opponent about distinction between freedom of will and freedom of action can give you a ground to criticize opposing view. Secondly, the root of the distinction is covered in the different natures of the words 'will' and 'action'. When people talk about 'will', they keep in mind a special power or ability to control one's actions in accordance with one's intentions, choices, and decisions. While 'action' in the context of the free will debate means being unhindered in moving body parts as one prefers to. I think that the border between freedom of will and freedom of action is so thin that it is elusive. What is a decision or choice or intention? In general, it is nothing more than a mental action. Then, free will is the ability to do a mental action as one prefers to, and

consequently, the gap between freedom of will and freedom of action narrows. I hope that this reasoning is strong enough to convince that the distinction is not useful, but if not I will continue this discussion in the section 2.2.

As was written in the introduction, my main claim is that the correct interpretation of free will and moral responsibility and their relationship is that free will is necessary but not a significant condition for moral responsibility. Except for freedom, moral responsibility requires at least a morally relevant context as a necessary condition. This claim is based on the examples of free but not morally responsible actions. One could say that practically every action executed by “agents” who lack the ability to be free (the word “agents” is in quotation marks because usually it is used for free persons or creatures) is an example of such an action. I would agree, the question as to which beings are not morally responsible for anything is an interesting question because any attempt to answer this leads to considering borderline cases, like little children who are morally responsible for some actions but not for others, and therefore, there needs to be an inquiry to develop a framework to distinguish beings with different moral status. However, the free but not morally responsible actions that are going to be discussed further herein are those that can be done by morally responsible and free agents.

I propose to consider three questions: 1) Is the action free?, 2) Is the action morally relevant?, 3) Is the action morally responsible? My further consideration will mostly consist from intuitively supported ideas and examples from life. My reason to do this is that philosopher sometimes are examining intuitions about different philosophical issue, for example, Strawson based his free will theory mostly on commonplaces and examples similar to those that I provide in this chapter. And the benefit of this method is that most of people, even those who disagree with each other, would not reject that it is fair to examine these examples, because they represent how we behave in social sphere. Intuitively, it seems that the first question refers to a larger category of actions than the second and the third. I think that both free and not free actions can be asked about moral relevance. Even if someone can intuitively reject the idea that not free actions can be morally relevant, the crucial point for us is that free actions can be both relevant and irrelevant (3). There is nothing contradictory to think free actions can be under or beyond the scope of morality. But another claim that is not intuitively contradictory is that an action should be morally relevant if we want an agent to be morally responsible for this action (4). The tree depicted in Fig. 1 shows that judgements about moral responsibility can only be made if an action is free and morally relevant (5). If an action is not morally relevant, it is impossible to speak about moral responsibility because of the lack of the necessary context: we cannot blame a person for choosing orange juice instead of apple juice, or praise a bacteria.

One more point to understand is that moral responsibility cannot be exercised without freedom<sup>10</sup> (6). It is also hard to imagine a situation where a person is regarded as morally responsible for a morally relevant but unfree action. An example of such a situation is blaming someone who was forced (but we also know that this person never would do so under other circumstances) to rob your house for doing so. We would regard this person as a victim of circumstances, and so we would not be so angry at them. Such intuitive reasoning leads to the intermediate conclusion that only free and morally relevant actions can be considered in terms of moral responsibility.

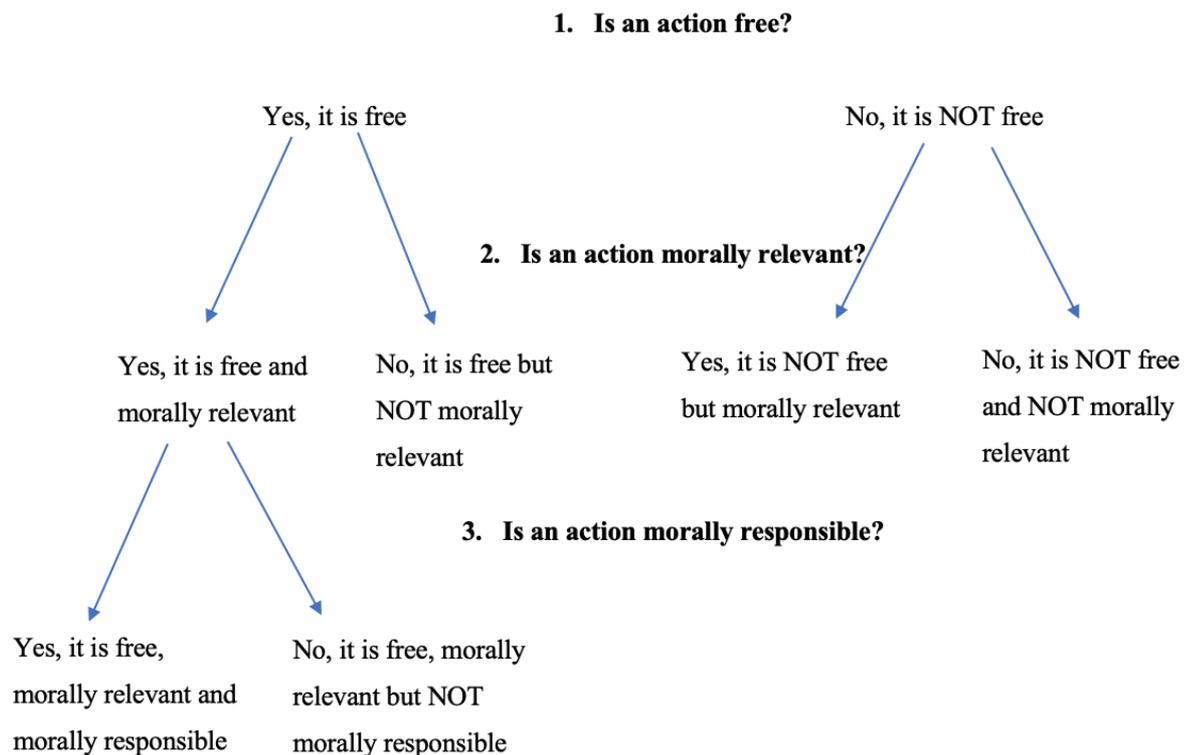


Figure 1. The relationships between free, morally relevant, and morally responsible actions

Coming back to free and morally irrelevant actions, it seems that morally relevant actions, for example, the decision to assassinate someone or to praise someone, life choices, friends and spouses, are ‘more free’ than daily routine, like waking up every working day at 7 am. The first type of actions is more interesting to discuss because difficult patterns related to the motives, desires, and opportunities are included in morally relevant decisions and actions, but it does not mean that habitual, repeated from day to day, actions are ‘less free’. To explain this by example, consider Rick, who raises his hand as part of doing exercises in the gym. Is Rick’s action a free action? Yes, Rick is not newborn or insane, he is not dreaming, manipulated, or forced; indeed, he has a specific motivation to raise his hand: he wants to improve his appearance and to become

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<sup>10</sup> In the beginning of the first chapter there were shortly presented views on free will that support this point.

healthier, therefore, Rick freely raise his hand. Is Rick morally responsible for raising his hand? Seems that the answer is negative, doing exercises is not morally relevant action, even if one would say that Rick's action cause admiration or jealousy, it would be a speculation. Regular hard training or features of the character that allow him to do such exercises could cause some admiration or jealousy, but not the single action of raising a hand. In a second scenario, Rick is Commander in Chief of the army, and when he raises his hand, the troops understand this gesture as a sign to start an attack. Again Commander Rick is free for the same reasons as sportsman Rick, but now he is held as a morally responsible agent for this action and for all the dead soldiers that may result from this action, with the loss or win being consequences too of his action. In the first scenario, there is the example of a free and morally irrelevant action, while in the second scenario, there is an example of a free, morally relevant and morally responsible action. Therefore, the example of sportsman Rick shows that free will can be exercised beyond the scope of morally relevant actions. Another question is could Commander Rick be morally responsible without being free? It seems that no, if he is not freely execute raise of hand, then we should treat him as disabled person or like he was forced to do this.

The argument that is defended in this paper is the following:

- (1) According to psychological compatibilism, an action is free if an agent is morally responsible for it (in other words, moral responsibility is necessary condition of free will).
- (2) Event-causal libertarianism interprets the relationships between free will and moral responsibility the same way as in (1).
- (3) Free action can be morally relevant and morally irrelevant.
- (4) Agents can be morally responsible only for morally relevant actions.
- (5) From (3) and (4), there is a group of free actions for which agents are not responsible for.
- (6) Moral responsibility cannot be exercised without freedom of will.
- (7) From (5) and (6), free will is necessary but not sufficient for being morally responsible for an action.
- (8) From (3)-(7), (1) and (2) are wrong.

Therefore,

- (9) Psychological compatibilism and event-causal libertarianism should be rejected or revised.

## **2.2. The discrepancy between free will and moral responsibility as a threat**

The definition of free will from section 2.1 is obviously different from the core idea (moral responsibility is a necessary condition of freedom of will) of compatibilism and libertarianism that are discussed in sections 1.1 and 1.2. But I would like to adapt the cases of sportsman Rick and Commander in Chief Rick to each of the mentioned free will views to explain in more detail why

these views should be rejected. This section is organized the same as the first chapter: we start with psychological compatibilism and then move to event-causal libertarianism.

Strawsonian compatibilism is about reactive attitudes. Do reactive attitudes grasp the case of sportsman Rick? I do not think so. Reactive attitudes, which by definition are natural reactions to the perception of other's good or ill will and are expressed as forms of blame or praise, cannot be performed as a reaction to morally irrelevant action. Blame and praise imply moral responsibility, but moral responsibility cannot be found in a morally irrelevant context. It is hard to imagine a person who would be outraged or who would praise Rick for doing exercises, it is most likely that sportsman Rick's actions would receive indifference as a reaction. Someone who wants to defend Strawsonian compatibilism could say that indifference is also a reactive attitude, and therefore, reactive attitudes are sensitive to free and morally irrelevant actions. My response would be, I think that a distinction between indifference and neutral emotions/reactions should be made. There is very thin border between them, but the border still exists. Indifference occurs when one says: "I do not care!" Neutral emotions are felt when one has some emotions, but they are not good and not bad. When one does not care, he or she just does not think about it and does not pay any attention to it, while neutral emotions are emotions and can be reactive attitudes. That is why I think that indifference is the reaction that can be performed in a morally irrelevant context.

The next response to my critique is common for both compatibilists and libertarians. They could say that if my suggestion that moral responsibility is a sufficient, but not necessary condition for free will is based on the examples of free but morally irrelevant actions, my argument is about freedom of action, and not freedom of will. And freedom of will is necessary for freedom of action, which means that by arguing against freedom of action, I do not say anything about freedom of will, which is thus safe and sound. But I would again raise the question, what is an action, is it not mental action? I think that, first, the existence of this distinction is controversial and, second, if the idea that volition or decision is a mental action is accepted, the distinction could be denied. M. McKenna and D. Pereboom support my claim:

But on a sufficiently permissive view of what actions are, decisions *are* actions—they are mental actions. Then it seems that the difference between a view like Kane's and one that denies the existence of the will becomes very small, especially if we treat freedom of decision as the especially important cases of free action, those that capture what is most distinctive in exercises of free will. (McKenna & Pereboom, 2015, p. 11)

Compatibilism here is weaker position than libertarianism. Strawson's method is based on commonsensical observations of relationships between people, and he discusses concrete actions and their reactive attitudes. My critique is also based on the same observations of actions that people perform in daily life; so, if the distinction works against my argument, it also works against Strawson. Moreover, Strawson wrote that the attitudes that he is writing about are non-detached

from actions and agents, and I focused attention on this point in the section 1.1. The similar comment could be addressed to Kane. Nevertheless, he invented the notion of ultimate responsibility, he practically limited the set of all free actions to the set of self-forming actions. By this, freedom of will can be exercised only during self-forming actions. On practice this means that free will is exercised only when freedom of action is exercised. I do not think that in this case there is a need in making the distinction between freedom of will and freedom of action.

Now it is time to move to libertarian objections. Except for the highly mentioned distinction, another objection may be that the action of sportsman Rick is not a self-forming action because it is not a difficult life-changing decision. This leads to the conclusion that sportsman Rick is not free, while Commander Rick is free. There are five steps to recognize SFA; so, let's check whether the case of Rick the sportsman suits the SFA framework. It is an indetermined action because there are alternatives to continue exercises or to give up and stop. It is controversial to say whether it is a difficult life choice, but I believe that it can be understood as such. I think most of us are fighting with our own laziness and procrastinations, which drives us to seek to improve our physical fitness and health. There is always a temptation to finish, to reject training, or to do less exercises. Every raising of the hand can be physically and mentally painful. In the same time, the question of our health and quality of life is our responsibility, and it affects many spheres of our life: we cannot work when we are ill, relationships with family members can also be influenced by our health or illnesses. So, we have an obligation to provide a good treat for ourselves in front of our relatives and colleagues Rick certainly makes physical and mental efforts to raise his hand and to win over laziness. Motivations to continue or to stop come from different fields: one is our laziness and another is a desire to improve our appearance and health. Moreover, this action changes Rick because it changes his appearance and improves his health in the long run. Indeterminism does not seem to be the most crucial cause of this behavior, but it does not exclude responsibility. So, according to event-causal libertarianism, Rick the sportsman is the ultimate creator and sustainer of his purposes to raise his hand doing exercises, and his action is SFA.

I do not believe that it would be rational to reject compatibilism and libertarianism after my critique because the aspect of the relationships between two discussed terms is not central claim of these theories. From my perspective, the easiest strategy for compatibilists and libertarians is to agree that their theories do not catch cases of free and morally irrelevant actions, and that they accept these examples to be examples of not free actions.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to analyze the relationships between free will and moral responsibility. Examples that come from daily life and intuitions show that without freedom there is no moral responsibility. This is so because it seems not fair and not effective to punish one who was not free to choose his or her actions. If a person is mentally ill or was forced to do something we are inclined to forgive some misdeeds. But this does not mean that free will is a sufficient condition of moral responsibility. In the second chapter, I brought the example of the action that is free, but not morally responsible one. Like for instance, Rick is a sportsman who is raising his hand doing exercises. Therefore, the correct interpretation of the relationships between these two terms is “free will is necessary but not sufficient condition of moral responsibility”. I have found out that there are at least two free will theories that interpret the relationships in a different way. Psychological compatibilism, that claims that agents are free if they can be a target of reactive attitudes which are expressions of moral responsibility; and event-causal libertarianism, that uses the idea of ultimate responsibility, which can be understood as moral responsibility; define free will in such a way that it is a sufficient condition of moral responsibility, and moral responsibility is necessary for free will.

The weak point of these two theories is that their definition of free will does not catch all cases of free and not morally responsible actions. And because it is impossible to reject the existence of free actions that people perform without being morally responsible for consequences of these actions, there is a need to revise this aspect of Strawsonian compatibilism and event-causal libertarianism or to reject them. I do not think that rejection is suitable because my argument does not criticize the main claims that Kane and Strawson make, it criticizes only one aspect of these theories. Moreover, if one tries just to reject positive free will theories, it means that he or she wants to reject the existence of free will. And this is not what I want. Moral responsibility makes freedom valuable for people. Because if there is no freedom, there are no moral practices. Giving up moral practices like blame or indignation is not the easiest task to do, so, it is more preferable to defend free will in some ways. Even if free will does not exist, or human being cannot exercise free will, and everything that we have is just an illusion of freedom, it is easier to behave like people are free and moral responsibility exists. Therefore, revision is a more preferable option. To be honest, I cannot find a way how to revise Strawsonian compatibilism without changing its core idea, and the only thing that followers of this theory can do is to say that sportsman Rick does not freely raise his hand. However, to my mind, it is possible to find other interpretations of ultimate responsibility or to say that ultimate responsibility cannot be reduced to any other type of responsibility, it is unique. In this case, it should be also mentioned how to recognize expressions of ultimate responsibility.

Revision of both discussed theories is not the only way to develop this research. It was mentioned that there are agents who can be included to 'morally responsible agents club', but sometimes they are exempted from responsibility, and agents who are not members of this club at all. As I see it, the question of their moral status can be examined from free will perspective, and it could be a step to the direction of practical usage of free will concepts. For example, children's capacity to exercise freedom of will changes as they grow, and for philosophers of education and ethicists, it may be interesting how children of different age should be treated. Moreover, more detailed research about the discrepancy between free actions and morally responsible ones can get a new impetus in law.

## **Abstract**

Two radical views on free will (compatibilism and libertarianism) that share the claim that free will exists are discussed in this thesis. Both theories share a positive definition of freedom and describe moral responsibility as a necessary condition for free will. According to the first discussed theory, Strawsonian compatibilism, agents are free when they are an apt target of reactive attitudes, which are our natural reactions to one's own good or ill will. Reactive attitudes are expressions of moral responsibility. Among the wide range of libertarians theories, I chose event-causal libertarianism, which claims that free will is the power to be ultimately responsible for one's own actions, and this power is formed during exercises of self-forming actions. I tried to prove that there are reasons to interpret ultimate responsibility as moral responsibility.

My claim is that the mentioned description of the relationships between free will and moral responsibility is wrong and should be replaced by "free will is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral responsibility". This is based on the example of free but morally irrelevant action: consider the case where someone named Rick raises his hand in gym doing exercises. Libertarianism and Strawsonian compatibilism would not accept this action as free.

## **Abstrakt**

Lõputöös on käsitletud kaht radikaalselt erinevat vaadet (kompatibilism ja libertarism), mis jagavad väidet, et vaba tahe eksisteerib. Peale ühtset sarnasust, mis puudutab vaba tahtet, iseloomustab antud vaateid järgmine ühistunnus: vaba tahte vajaliku tingimusena esineb just moraalne vastutus. Vastavalt Strawsoniani kompatibilismi teooriale on inimene vaba, kui tema suhtes on kasutatavad reaktiivsed hoiakud – inimese loomulikud vastused vaba tahte väljandamisele. Paljude libertarismi teooriate hulgast oli minu poolt valitud sündmuse-põhjuslik libertarism, mis väidab, et vaba tahte olemus on võime olla lõpptulemusena vastutav enda tegevuse eest ja see võim moodustub ja saab areneda vaid eneseharjutamise tegevuste jooksul.

Minu väide on, et mainitud vaba tahte ja moraalse vastutuse vaheliste suhete kirjeldus on vale ja seda tuleks muuta, asendades see järgmise väitega „Vaba tahe on vajalik, kuid see ei ole piisav moraalse vastutuse tagamiseks”. See sõnastus põhineb vabal, kuid moraalselt sobimatu tegevuse näitel: inimene, kelle nimi on Rick, tõstab käe jõusaalis ülesse, kus tehakse harjutusi.

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