

Freedom and Reason: An Anselmian Critique of Susan Wolf's Compatibilism

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Susan Wolf's compatibilism is unique for being 'asymmetrical.' While holding that blameworthiness entails being able to avoid acting wrongly, she maintains that our freedom consists in single mindedly pursuing Truth and Goodness. Comparing and contrasting her position to Saint Anselm's seminal, libertarian approach to the same subject elicits serious questions, highlighting its drawbacks. How could freedom entail the inability to do certain things? In what sense are reasons causes? What sense can be made of a double standard for assignments of responsibility? Is not self-control inconsistent with being caused to act by things independent of oneself? Does not virtue require struggling against falsehoods and evils by which one could be overcome? Wolf's compatibilism must be rejected, I shall argue, in light of Anselm's intuitively satisfying response to these concerns: we should prefer a philosophy that entails more of what we want from freedom without begging unanswerable questions of its own.

“And calling the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

How should we delineate the relation between freedom and practical reasoning? It is self-evident that a free agent, someone we should hold morally responsible, would, *inter alia*, be capable of acting for well-considered reasons. But how should we understand the nexus between his deliberations and subsequent choices and conduct? In what sense is it causal? What does it mean to act *because* of one's reasons? Susan Wolf maintains that the choices and actions of a free agent would be (approximately) caused by Goodness and Truth themselves, that these objective values, embodied in individuals and states affairs, are the ultimate source of free agency.¹ A free agent is someone whose choices are the immediate effects of her understanding of these values, though she be incapable of responding volitionally to any other concerns. Her philosophy, thus, raises two important questions. To wit: “Are not multiple possible courses of action required if one is to act freely?” and “Would not a free agent himself be the ultimate source of his activities?” Wolf persuasively argues for negative answers to both of these queries, throwing in her lot with those philosophers who maintain that free will and determinism are compatible.² Why would anyone, she pointedly asks, want to be even capable of acting for

¹ Susan Wolf, “Asymmetrical Freedom,” (AF) *Journal of Philosophy*, volume 77, no.3 (March 1980): 151-166, and *Freedom within Reason*, (FR) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

² Compatibilism is largely a creation of several of the British Empiricists. Cf. Thomas Hobbes, “Of Liberty and Necessity,” in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, v. IV (Boston, MA: Adamant Media Corporation, 2004), 272-78; John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) bk. 2, section XXI; and David Hume, *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) ch.8. and *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) Book I, Section VI. Prominent contemporary compatibilists include John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) Daniel Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Viking Press, 2003) and Harry G. Frankfurt, see below, notes 5 and 38. I defend a version of compatibilism in “Responsibility and Motivation,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. XXXV #3 (Fall 1997): 29-39.

reasons besides Goodness and Truth? Is not the “goal of freedom,” the single-minded pursuit of these ideals?³

St. Anselm provides contrary answers to the above questions, holding that freedom necessarily consists in an agent having more than one conatus and being completely in control of his will, the faculty of making and sustaining choices.⁴ He is an early advocate of what has come to be known as the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP), the notion that a free act is something that could be avoided, its agent being able to do other things.⁵ We are also, he says, the sole “efficient” causes of our choices, marking him, in contemporary terms, as an “agent causalist.”⁶ Wolf herself paradoxically embraces the first of these requirements when it comes to blameworthiness: those we are willing to rebuke or punish must not have been so deprived that they could not have helped offending us nor lack self-control.⁷ She, thus, also positions herself on the opposite, “incompatibilist,” side of the debate over the possible reconciliation of freedom and determinism: our freedom, she says, is “asymmetrical.”⁸

I shall critique Wolf’s philosophy in light of her own Anselmian leanings in considering misdeeds. The question is, can disparate requirements for praiseworthiness and blameworthiness

³ AF, 158, 160; FWR, ch. 4.

⁴ I will be drawing from all three of St. Anselm’s works on this subject: *On Free Will* (OFW) sections 3, 8, 10, and 13, *On the Fall of the Devil* (OFD) sections 12-14 & 27, and *De Concordia* (C) section 11. They may be found in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G.R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Cf. also Gergely Klima, “Primal Choice: Anselm’s Account of Free Will,” *Sapientia et Doctrina* Vol. 1 (2004) No. 2: 5-13; Peter King, “Augustine and Anselm on Angelic Sin,” in *A Companion to Angels and Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 261-281 (also available at Professor King’s website: <http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/articles.html>) and “Scotus’ Rejection of Anselm: The Two Wills Theory,” in *Archa Verbi Subsidia* 5, *Johannes Duns Scotus 1308-2008: Investigations into his Philosophy*, ed. Ludger Honnefelder, Hannes Mohle, Andreas Speer, Theo Kobusch, Susana Bullido Del Barrio (Munster: Aschendorff, 2011) 359-378 (also available at the above website) and Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵ PAP has been the subject of intense discussion in recent years. The debate commenced with the publication of Harry Frankfurt’s attack upon the principle in “Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities,” *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 829-39. Cf. also *Moral Responsibility and the Importance of Alternative Possibilities: Essays on the Importance of Alternative Possibilities* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006). I defend Frankfurt’s approach in “Re-examining Frankfurt Cases,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. XXXVII #3 (Fall 1999): 363-76, and “Robust Local Alternatives,” *The Journal of Moral Philosophy*, Issue 1, vol. 1 (2004): 21-29.

⁶ Agent causalists take their cue from Aristotle’s famous example of an unmoved mover: “The stick moves the stone, the hand moves the stick, but the man moves the hand.” Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) bk. 8, ch. 5. Thomas Reid is most closely associated with this philosophy in modernity. Cf. *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), Essay IV, ch. 1. The best known contemporary advocate of it is Richard Taylor: *Action and Purpose*, (New Jersey: Humanities, 1973). Randolph Clark surveys other recent versions of agent causalism in *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Cf. also John Bishop, “Agent-Causation,” *Mind* vol. 92 no. 365 (January 1983): 61-79, William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), and E.J. Lowe, *Personal Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷ AF, 155, 158; FWR, 85-9.

⁸ The aforementioned agent causalists are all incompatibilists, as are those who base PAP satisfaction upon supposed irregularities in Nature, such as Epicurus with his “swerving” atoms. Cf. Cyril Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964). The leading contemporary “event causal” incompatibilist is Robert Kane: see his *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

conceptually co-exist, or must a philosophical house thus divided fall? Our plot thickens, though, once it becomes clear that Anselm himself denies that alternative possibilities are a necessary concomitant of free agency. The cogency of his denial must then be contrasted with Wolf's attempt to make freedom and single-mindedness seem compatible.

Asymmetrical Freedom

Wolf begins by defining a free agent as someone who exercises “self-control,” whose actions are “up to him.” Free agency (FA) is a matter of making a difference in the world, bringing about things that would not occur but for one's doings. Anyone who lacks self-control, whose choices are not made ‘under his own steam’, is simply not acting freely.⁹ (If his behavior even qualifies as *any* form of agency.) Brain-washing, severe mental illness, dementia, and demonic possession would obviously bring about this awful state of affairs. She then defines the *bete noir* of anyone who thinks that FA is possible—psychological determinism (PD): an agent is psychologically determined if his actions are determined by “values or desires” that are themselves determined by his “heredity and environment.”¹⁰ If one's conduct is (approximately) caused by his genome and experiences, via the “interests” they bring about, then he is psychologically determined.

PD presents a problem for those who believe in FA because it is evidently at odds with the notions of self-control and being able to do otherwise. In what sense am *I* making a difference in the world if my actions are the distant effects of things that occurred long before I had any idea of the person I wanted to become? How much control can I be said to have over my doings if I myself am not their ultimate source? If PD is true of me, then it also seems true that none of my actions were/are/will be avoidable. And being avoidable appears to be necessary property of any free act. Hence, I don't seem to have a say in how my life turns out: my actions neither originate from me nor are performed instead of doable alternatives. Wolf herself will eventually reject this line of thinking, but, to establish the basis of her own philosophy, she considers the possibility that PD is false. What does indeterminism portend for the existence of FA? Wolf argues convincingly that it does not augur well.¹¹ For if my actions are undetermined by my interests (though the latter yet be the distant effects of my genome and experiences) then I am, right up until any time at which I act, able to do something that is contrary to my deepest concerns, making conformity thereto an accident and deviation therefrom a misfortune. (Further, how can my freedom rest upon the existence of an ability the exercise of which I should hope to avoid?) On the other hand, should those interests be nomically divorced from matters objective (while still being responsible for my choices), then I could never justify my actions in terms of my apprehension of Goodness and Truth. Either way, those who here pin their hopes on indeterminism come away disappointed: if my actions are psychologically undetermined, then I am erratic or irrational, not a free agent.

⁹ AF, 151; FWR, 6-11.

¹⁰ AF, 152; FWR, 78-81.

¹¹ AF, 152-3; FWR, 53-62.

Wolf next sides with Roderick Chisholm in summarily dismissing the Moorean “conditionalist” solution to this problem.¹² If I could have done otherwise only in the sense that I would have acted differently had I tried or chosen to, then the question becomes “Could I have done either one of these things, given my past?” Conditionalism only postpones the problem, making it a matter of the avoidability of certain mental states (rather than the bodily movements forming an action). Freedom entails being able absolutely to avoid doing certain things, not merely avoid them assuming that other (prior) doings were not necessary. (We shall see that these absolutely avoidable things are our choices.) Were I truly in control of a situation, its outcome would not yet be settled. Those concerned would be required to wait patiently for my fiat. Its denouement, as it were, would be my command. Right up to the instant at which *I* issue it, the possibility of me settling matters some other way exists. If the outcome of a situation is a foregone conclusion, if I myself am only waiting for “my” contribution to happen to me, I can hardly be said to be in charge of things so as to responsible for whatever ensues. A free agent not only has more than one course of action on which he can embark. The realization of any one of these possibilities depends solely upon him; his responsibility will consist precisely in his having embarked upon one rather than the others via his uncaused bringing about of the willingness to proceed in that manner. A free agent must be the *causa sui* of his activities.

But is this libertarian standard always applicable? Or is it only true of putative miscreants? Yes, we need to make sure that those we blame had options besides their misdeeds, the rejection of which was an exercise of self-control, especially if punishment is to be meted out. But what of those displaying virtue, whom we are inclined to praise? Should it matter if they could not have done otherwise? Can someone be truly praiseworthy if he is incapable of wrongdoing? Of course, the explanation of the incapacity would make a difference. To use Wolf’s example, if someone is being generous so as to please his mother, then his behavior would not redound to his credit—it stems from the wrong sort of reason.¹³ But consider someone who has learned that generosity is intrinsically good; various examples of generosity have impressed him with *their* goodness. The moral excellence of these deeds, evinced by the gratefulness they evoke, has caused him to value generosity for its own sake. It is this quality that he now endeavors (whenever an opportunity presents itself) to mark his dealings with others: for no other reason than the felt desire to emulate the generous human beings with whom he has come in contact. His commitment to generosity is, thus, not grounded in selfishness; it is his own self-control at work here, not his mother’s influence.

Wolf believes that it would be “absurd” to require the ability to do otherwise as a condition of freedom in this case.¹⁴ Don’t we laud, not deprecate, someone “incapable of hurting a fly, or telling a lie”? How could one not be free were one doing the right thing for the right reasons? Should Goodness or Truth be itself the source of one’s activities, what more could one want as far as freedom is concerned? Being determined to choose by these values is certainly

¹² AF, 154; FWR, 97-100. Cf. Roderick Chisholm, *Person and Object* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1976), 56-7; G.E. Moore, *Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.

¹³ AF, 157.

¹⁴ AF, 156; AFW, 79-80.

compatible with being free. Is such motivation not the ultimate goal of practical reason? It simply should not matter to us here, for the purpose of judging merit, that the agent's experiences of these values, via the interests/reasons they effect, are determining his conduct. For they are not vitiating his self-control: he would act differently were there (*per impossibile*) better reasons.¹⁵ The explanation of his generosity in terms of the "Past," according to Wolf, does not nullify the one based upon Goodness; they are perfectly consistent with each other.¹⁶ The generous man is, as other "compatibilists" would emphasize, "reason-responsive," able to adjust his behavior to meet the changing demands of his surroundings and values.¹⁷ The "problem" is, there are simply no better reasons available to guide his conduct, and he is firmly committed to acting in accord with reasons of the best sort. He is not incapacitated in the manner of a poorly educated criminal, who can't help but responding affirmatively to his misguided sense of self-interest, being determined by his lack of exposure to affirmations of goodness and truth to shun whatever high-minded considerations happen to present themselves in the course of his "reasoning." A person "deprived" of such experiences would not be responsible for his conduct, not because, as Wolf originally maintains, he would not know that his actions are wrong.¹⁸ His failure would not be cognitive, but affective: to him morality would simply not matter. As she later explains, he "could not have," the well-being of others as a motive, even though it is something (good) of which he is fully aware. It is this learned, depraved indifference that nullifies his culpability.¹⁹ Thus, the inability to do otherwise, when borne of deprivation or some other misfortune, militates against holding individuals responsible for their misdeeds. But should it arise from one's commitment to Goodness and Truth, one may yet be praiseworthy.

Wolf goes on to argue that agents often are in possession of the ability to do otherwise. We know this crucial, freedom-relevant fact from observing numerous cases of conative/behavioral differences in persons whose backgrounds are similar: we see that a given upbringing may lead to more than mind-set, while the latter may be the well-spring of multiple courses of action. Employing Wolf's example, all those who grow up underprivileged do not develop anti-social tendencies, nor do all those with memories of deprivation turn to crime.²⁰ These psychological findings, she maintains, would yet support our judgments of freedom even if "deeper, physiological explanations" were to surface entailing the inevitability of all human conduct.²¹ We also reflectively observe the whimsicalness of certain choices, seeing ourselves as having done things without afterward being able to put our fingers on why.²² Then we find ourselves faced with decisions for which reasons are not lacking, but overabundant: one has more good reasons than one needs, each one of opposing courses of action being equally well-supported.²³ There are finally instances of seemingly inexplicable cogitations, ideas become

¹⁵ AF, 156-9; FWR, 80.

¹⁶ AF, 161-2; FWR, 80.

¹⁷ Cf. Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 62-91.

¹⁸ AF, 160.

¹⁹ AF, 160; FWR, 85-89.

²⁰ AF, 163; FWR, 86.

²¹ AF, 164-5; FWR, 100-116.

²² AF, 163.

²³ AF, 163.

salient ‘out of the blue’ or disappear without warning, leading to decisions that would have not been taken but for the foregoing happenstances.²⁴ In none of these cases do our choices seem determined by our interests.

To summarize: according to Wolf, an agent is free if and only if he is being guided by either Goodness or Truth (via his interests) in pursuing praiseworthy objectives or he is committing misdeeds while being able to pursue praiseworthy courses of action. Freedom affording praiseworthiness does not entail the ability to do otherwise; the freedom providing for blameworthiness does require alternative possibilities in acting. Such is the asymmetrical nature of freedom that to be praiseworthy one needn’t be able to do anything besides what one is doing, to be blameworthy alternatives to one’s actions are necessary.

Let us first consider the libertarian side of this philosophy. Her putative examples of indeterminism do not augur the existence of blameworthiness. Let’s suppose a malicious thought did just pop into my head, completely disconnected from the foregoing deliberation, thence to cause a wicked deed. Valerian freedom, as such disorderliness has been called, only militates against self-control, mitigating praise or blame. The same would be true were I to act wickedly for no good reason at all. Derangement, not freedom, would inhere in such agency. The so-called liberty of indifference seems no more rational; merely shrugging one’s shoulders and exercising an option because one must do something could hardly qualify as a praiseworthy choice. Or, in the case of a moral decision, perhaps we should say that indifference is impossible, that reason always favors goodness, *akrasia* explaining why it is not always sought? Wolf is also confident, as noted above, that physiological explanations of our conduct do not render folk psychology otiose. But should I be handed a cogent instance of the former, why wouldn’t I attach moral significance to it such as to supersede available subjective reports? If it does appear compelling, isn’t blameworthiness *eo ipso* out of the question, psychological considerations notwithstanding, indeed by Wolf’s own libertarian lights here?

Wolf is aware that her philosophy also invites this criticism: the so-called *Mind* objection.²⁵ If an agent’s evildoing is neither caused by him nor even any of his mental states, then it appears as an unfortunate occurrence, not something for which *he* must be held accountable. Blameworthiness entails that something about an agent made it the case that something untoward happened. But misdeeds, according to Wolf, must be wholly uncaused so as to allow for the alternatives, the existence of which is also necessary for blameworthiness. How, then, could we truly blame those whom we deem miscreants: but for an accident, none of them would have done anything wrong? Nay, it appears that there would not even be any *wrongdoing* were Wolf’s understanding of the ability to do otherwise true. We would have to say that a misdeed involving someone inexplicably occurred, that it was an accident rather than an instance of agency.

²⁴ AF, 163.

²⁵ AF, 165. Cf. Peter van Inwagen, “Free Will Remains a Mystery,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 167-68.

Her response here is ineffectual. Self-control, she says, is being able to exercise unimpairedly and act upon practical reasoning skills.²⁶ But how much control can one exercise over an instance of practical reasoning without being the cause of its outcome— one’s choice? If it would be a stretch to maintain that self-control is compatible with one’s choices being (mechanistically) determined by one’s beliefs and desires—states of which one is the subject but with which one is not identical—then autonomy in the event of undetermined reasoning should strike one as entirely out of the question. Just who would be in charge here, focusing attention upon crucial considerations, delimiting what is relevant to one’s concerns and, in general, guiding the process to a justifiable resolution? Is one not lucky to have been caused by one’s experiences to realize, understand, and respond to Goodness and Truth? Given the gravity of the situation, our concern being nothing less than the fair-minded appraisal of those facing punishment, we should insist that an agent is not in control of himself in exercising his volitional faculties unless he himself is the sole cause of their issue.

As for Wolf’s use of idioms to refute PAP, these expressions clearly do not imply nomological necessity, an actual incapacity on the part of the agent cited. When we issue the compliment ‘He couldn’t hurt a fly’ or ‘He doesn’t have it in him to lie’, we do not mean to suggest that there are *no* circumstances consistent with natural law in which the recipient hurts someone or lies. The idea is rather that it would be exceedingly difficult for him to do such a thing, hard even for us to imagine him acting that way, the circumstances being extremely remote (but not impossible). He is not in the habit of doing anything along those lines; it would be out of character. But, again, to use Wolf’s metaphor, the implication is not that he couldn’t go off the rails. He may not have to struggle as much with this particular temptation as the rest us, but, as they say, every man has his price. Of course we would be shocked at learning of his transgression, but it wouldn’t be as if we’d witnessed a miracle, a violation of some natural law. Thus, it is far from clear that we can use such examples to free ourselves from the notion that those who are praiseworthy could have managed to act in a blameworthy manner.

Anselm *contra* Wolf

It is at this point, I believe, that we must consult Saint Anselm’s philosophy. To Wolf’s pointed question, “Why would anyone want the ability to nill Truth and Goodness,” he has a ready answer. In *On the Fall of the Devil*, Anselm argues that a volitionally viable alternative to even the morally best course of action is required for free choice, hence moral responsibility.²⁷ A free agent could not be ‘locked into’ seeking objectives of only one sort. Free will, as defined by Anselm in his treatise on the subject, is the ability to preserve, for its own sake, the will’s “rectitude.”²⁸ We were empowered by our Creator, he says, to conform to His will, which is correct or “true” willing.²⁹ Exercising this power for no reason except that it is divinely mandated is to realize one’s freedom. Yet the imposition of a requirement entails the possibility of its violation, willing incorrectly: that I am being directed to engage in a certain activity

²⁶ AF p. 165.

²⁷ OFD, sections 13 & 14.

²⁸ OFW, sections 3 & 13.

²⁹ OFW, section 8.

implies that my shunning it is possible. Why is it possible to lose one's rectitude? In order to become just oneself, one must not only be inclined to seek justice; one must also be endowed with a potentially conflicting inclination:

If Satan received only the will-for-happiness, he was able only to will happiness and was not able to keep from willing it; and regardless of what he willed, his will was neither just nor unjust. . . . The case is similar if Satan received only the will-for-uprightness. Thus, he received both wills at the same time in order to be just and happy.³⁰

It is our ability to seek happiness, to be exercised when and only when justice is not at stake, that entails the will's possible loss of its rectitude. To utilize this "tool" in contravention of the God's will, which is doable, neither power being ascendant, is to forego one's rectitude: the two abilities taken together as entailing avoidable actions (what the Aristotelians would term a "rational power"). Thus, I must struggle to preserve my will's rectitude, resisting whatever urges make possible its loss. Yet I am fortunate to engage in this conflict. Were I "stuck with" doing God's will, were my will-for-uprightness necessarily calling the shots when it came to making decisions, I could have no share in His rewards: I cannot be said to have achieved something He made it impossible for me to avoid (unless its inevitability was brought on by something else I did that itself wasn't His imposition, a qualification to be discussed presently). Credit requires doing that at which one could have failed. To say it again, a just will, in the case of creatures, is developed, earned over time by laying hold of, in the face of trials and temptations, both the (sanctifying) grace and rectitude it obtained, as St. Peter clung to our Lord in the drink. It is not something that in this life can be given irrevocably, though the means to achieving it will always be at hand: "(B)ehold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

Anselm further distinguishes, in *The Concordia*, between the will as a "tool" or faculty with "affectivities" or dispositions, which are used to determine an agent's objectives, its self-determined exercises, and resulting "wills" or volitions.³¹ Drawing on this important distinction, we can say that a free agent would neither be consigned to willing happiness nor determined by its own uprightness to will uprightness; both would be possible volitional objects, his will being disposed to willing (choosing) either value as its content upon any given deliberation. That is, the will can in any exercise manifest itself as the willingness to seek happiness or the willingness to seek justice, again depending solely upon its own fiat: "(the) will has no other cause by which it is forced or attracted, but it (is) its own efficient cause, so to speak, as well as its own effect (as a manifestation of one of its dispositions)."³² The maker, the made, and that out of and for which he makes himself are all one here. To maintain its rectitude a will must, then, *will* justice for its own sake, should reasons for choosing both values happen to present themselves, clinging to what could be lost. (The same thing appears surprisingly true of happiness—felicity also requires one to "work at it.") It turns out that there is also an asymmetry in Anselm's philosophy: willing

³⁰ OFD, sections, 13 & 14.

³¹ C, section 11.

³² OFD, section 27.

happiness is unavoidable; willing rectitude (for its own sake) is not. The former disposition is secure; the latter can be taken away by Him who instilled it should it not be used to temper the former, *à la* our first parents. The will devoid of this disposition is yet self-determinative and may be exercised in pursuit of advantages—it will continue to prefer those things thought to constitute happiness. But it can never again will freely until its ability to pursue justice on its own merits is restored by God, a greater miracle, according to Anselm, than bringing the dead back to life.³³

The angels and saints in Heaven, who may appear as a counterexample to this definition, being perfected, will have at least formerly struggled with temptation. They will, moreover, not have lost their ability to sin—manifest the will to happiness when justice is called for—only the opportunity, finally realizing, through habitual cooperation with grace, that there is nothing worth desiring beyond God’s will.³⁴ Someone *created* or rendered by something else incapable of willing anything but justice would not merit this “extension” of his or her freedom, as Klima calls it.³⁵ That lack of desert indicates a lack of freedom. If I freely ask to be “delivered from evil,” on the other hand, and my prayer is answered in the form of a mitigation of an inordinate desire, have I suffered a loss of freedom? Not if free will is willing in accordance with God’s will, not if the purpose of freedom is to draw one closer to the Almighty. Such an arrangement is a far cry from the case of an agent caused by factors beyond his control—not by himself—to adhere unswervingly to the dictates of Goodness and Truth. In Wolf’s philosophy no provisions are made for distinguishing oneself as an adherent of these values. It matters not that they came to be one’s dominant motives, overriding concerns because of the fortuitous discovery (made possible by innate perceptiveness) that they are winsome while their contraries alienate. Should they manage over time to insinuate themselves into one’s mindset because of their obvious utility, becoming one’s favored reasons for acting, one is good to go, according to Wolf, as far as “self-control” is concerned. Praiseworthiness here only requires the realization that Goodness and Truth are paramount concerns. It would be fortuitous by Wolf’s lights to be rendered forever incapable of going off the rails they establish by one’s milieu. But then they could not be said to represent who one really is, if character is something that must be developed. Moreover, if freedom entails being responsible for one’s character, there is no freedom to be found amongst those whose “goodness” was not earned. Hence, we cannot regard freedom as simply being ruled by Goodness and Truth.

Given this result, we can see that Wolf’s compatibilism promotes a false ideal. An agent whom others render incapable of willing in more than one way would obviously lack freedom. But, if it is in the nature of the will to be disposed in multiple ways, then to seek, on one’s own, to lose the capacity to will contrary to Goodness and Truth is to desire volitional mutilation. Having lost the will to happiness, an agent would then lack motivation were justice not a consideration, being incapable of seeking anything else. One must, then, simply live in this vale of tears with the possibility of engaging in some form of wrongdoing. Here on earth, there is no

³³ OFW, section 10.

³⁴ OFD, section 25. Cf. Klima, “Primal Choice,” 12-13.

³⁵ Klima, “Primal Choice,” 13.

such thing as moral 'cruise control'. (Why would anyone think in the first place that this goal is psychologically attainable? Even if one were to break various bad habits once and for all, one would remain susceptible to other vices.)

There is another closely related Anselmian reason, alluded to above, having to do with self-control, for abjuring Wolf's philosophy. It would be an abdication of one's autonomy to allow oneself to be caused to will by anything but oneself, even Goodness and Truth. Anselm's philosophy is not open to the *Mind* objection because it posits the will as the uncaused efficient cause of its own willing. Here one finds true self-control. Were one to realize Wolf's ideal, on the other hand, Goodness and Truth themselves would be doing all the work when it came to choice formation. (One is here reminded of Robert Nozick's "pleasure machine" thought experiment.³⁶) It would, moreover, simply be a matter of "circumstantial moral luck" whether or not one ever came into sufficient contact with those values to imbibe them as motives.³⁷ How, then, could an agent thus controlled and fortunate be praiseworthy? Wolf, then, fundamentally misconceives the relation between freedom and reason. I should not desire to be controlled by anyone or anything but myself: not even my highest standards should appear as a fit replacement for my own self-determining will. I should seek instead to be guided by those ideals while retaining the final say in what I choose. In Aristotelian terms, they are to be the material and final, not efficient, causes of my actions.

Wolf, in rejecting the favor-currying son's claim to praiseworthiness, realizes that an agent's free choices could not simply be "those whose immediate causes are psychological states in the agent," rather than "those whose immediate causes are states of affairs external to the agent," à la W.T. Stace.³⁸ Fears and addictions also obviously do not facilitate anything of the sort, even if they originate in one's own mind. There are plenty of other "internal states" that are not conducive to freedom. So there must be more to it than acting independently of unwanted external forces. She is also unwilling to embrace Harry Frankfurt's attempted upgrade whereby free will consists in having one's choices caused by "reflectively endorsed" beliefs and desires, internal states originating internally or externally but having thence been given one's own stamp of approval.³⁹ Identifying with motives the objects of which are neither good nor true no more suffices for free will than those impulses *sans* an endorsement: really, what is the difference in terms of freedom between a willing and an unwilling addict, between someone fighting an addiction and someone benighted enough to think that a lack of self-control is part of his "deepest" self? Ah, but being motivated by Goodness and Truth themselves would be different. Addicts, willing or not, would be missing these marks. But if being determined by Badness and Falsehoods nullifies self-control so as to render one incapable of becoming blameworthy, why

³⁶ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 42–45. Cf. also E.J. Lowe, *Personal Agency*, 182 and 189.

³⁷ Cf. Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Thomas Nagel "Moral Luck," in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 24–38. Wolf herself addresses this issue in "The Moral of Moral Luck," *Philosophic Exchange*, 31 (2001): 4-19.

³⁸ AF, 157. W.T. Stace, *Religion and the Modern Mind* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1980).

³⁹ FWR, 29-30. Cf. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of Will and the Concept of a Person," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (January 1971): 5-20.

shouldn't determination by their contraries have the same effect? The same intuition illuminates both judgments: neither pair is oneself. Self-control, as defined by Anselm above, is having one's choices solely determined by oneself. The praiseworthy and the blameworthy, far from being asymmetrical, have this power in common.

How, for that matter, could Goodness and Truth become one's reasons but via an exercise of self-control? We have seen that they could not innately be one's reasons- for then they would merely be one's program, not rationale. For the same reason, they could not be determining one's conduct as the result of manipulation while still functioning as one's reasons. Nor would they be reasons were they to become one's *idée fixe* through one's own machinations: obsessions are not reasons either. No, the only way that those or any other values could become an agent's reasons is if they are freely chosen as such *any time* they figure in his deliberations. To repeat, there is no such thing as being automatically rational, the goal of freedom in Wolf's philosophy. To act for a reason, is freely to make it one's primary concern in the face of opposing considerations.⁴⁰ One would cease to be rational should reasons besides Goodness and Truth simply disappear instead of being rejected, dismissed as of lesser importance. Thus, at the very heart of rationality, we find the notion of a free choice. Pace Wolf, rationality depends upon free will. The goal of the latter, beyond sustaining itself, is to facilitate deliberation in light of Goodness and Truth. But these values themselves are not meant to be substitutes for other determinants. Nay, they would not be human values were they capable of rendering us incapable of choosing other things. They are not meant to enthrall us; we must "work out our salvation in fear and trembling." To answer the question posed at the beginning of this essay, the connection between the reasons of a free agent and her choice is causal only in a material and a teleological sense, *à la* Aristotle.⁴¹ The former are that out of which the latter are made and its objective, its basis in desires, beliefs, and values to be cited in the event it needs explication or defense.

When discussing the efficaciousness of grace, Anselm does not make Wolf's mistake of bypassing the role of the will in deliberation. Neither does the grace entailed by Christ's sacrifice of himself on Calvary suffice to bring about an individual's salvation, according to his soteriology. Rather, the grace (freely) bestowed upon a man "harmonizes" with his choices to achieve that end. Neither can on its own bring it about; but they are together necessary and sufficient for its achievement, with each having its own distinctive role to play. Grace restores rectitude to the will—if it is but chosen via a self-determined (though divinely prompted) exercise of its will to justice, enabling it to realize its purpose, the retention of that same rectitude for its own sake. The will's self-control, on the other hand, allows that grace to function as a gift, its acceptance in no way alienating a man from himself, accentuating instead his freedom. Should grace and the rectitude it entails be rejected, it will be withdrawn (but not the ability to preserve it should it be possessed), our wills being inviolable even by God himself. From its acceptance, though, will flow the additional graces needed to preserve rectitude in the face of

⁴⁰ Richard Taylor and E.J. Lowe also insist upon drawing a distinction between reasons and efficient causes. Cf. Richard Taylor, *Action and Purpose*, 139-52, and E.J. Lowe, *Personal Agency*, 8-11, 130-1, 155-9, 182-3, 188-9, 195.

⁴¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, book B, ch.3.

future trials, those occasions on which the affection for happiness once again inclines one to act against God's will, made manifest by that same gift. Doing one's volitional part when they arise, re-affirming one's commitment to divine sovereignty and assistance, allows one to resist that temptation.

There is not a hint of Pelagianism⁴² here, no attempt to isolate some sanctifying act for which the fallen man alone would be due credit. If there is no merit in accepting any gift, what should we say of those pathetic souls (like the present author) who have tearfully received and are now clinging with all their might to the saving grace to be found only in Holy Mother Church and her sacraments, purchased by the sacred blood of God's only begotten Son? Free will, according to Anselm, *is* cooperating with God. Without grace there could be neither a turning to the Lord, one not having been prompted by Him, nor preservation of the will's rectitude, entirely lacking but for His sacrifice on Calvary—only a self-aggrandizing manifestation of the will to justice. *Sans* self-determination grace could not be what it is—a gift with which one is free to act in concert. In its place would be something automatic, even coercive: responsible for the will's rectitude in the same credit nullifying way that Goodness and Truth would be were freedom asymmetrical. Without Him we can do nothing, yes; but without freedom we cannot have Him: Love cannot be received any way but freely. The irresistibility of grace must, then, be taken as conditional: it will “have its way” with one, do its salvific work, provided that it is freely accepted and then retained through an act of self-determination. That is to say, should it be freely chosen as part of a commitment to the primacy of the will to justice—God's authority—there is no temptation that cannot be resisted, no sin one cannot avoid.⁴³ With great difficulty would one remain just in the face of a threat to one's earthly existence, but if one can choose ignominiously to buy more of a perishable good, why should we think that it could ever become impossible to eschew that good so as to enjoy life everlasting? By its very nature grace can be rejected, but by that same nature it cannot fail to conquer sin once accepted.

Conclusion

The philosophical house that is asymmetrical freedom must indeed fall for being divided. Having posited alternative possibilities as a requirement for blameworthiness, Wolf is in no position to eschew them when it comes to being praiseworthy. As Anselm demonstrates, one must perform avoidable acts in order to become just, truly free. Merit simply cannot be earned by those for whom the plea ‘Deliver us from evil’ would be otiose. Nor does her philosophy provide for the element of self-control in free will. Neither the individual whose conduct is undetermined nor the one being determined by Goodness and Truth to act rightly is the source of his deeds. Anselm encourages us to see self-determination as an ineluctable aspect of our freedom, being yet possessed by those who must no longer worry about being led into temptation.

⁴² That is, the heresy according to which it is possible to save oneself by freely choosing goodness over evil, grace being otiose given this power of the will, left unimpaired by original sin. Those who have exercised this power are to be commended for earning their place in Paradise. Cf. *St. Augustine Anti-Pelagian Writings* (Whitefish, MA: Kessinger Publishing 2004).

⁴³ OFW, 6 & 7.

