



ORDER: GOD'S, MAN'S AND NATURE'S

Classical Theism has No Implications for the Debate between Libertarianism and Compatibilism

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Abstract

Many classical theists have been libertarians; many have been compatibilists; and some, e.g. myself, have been both at different times. My suspicion – the suspicion which I'll explore in my chapter - is that classical theism *per se* does not give one reason to be either a libertarian or a compatibilist. One might perhaps most easily argue for the truth of my suspicion in the following way: because classical theism attributes the property of (perfect) freedom to God, the solution to the debate between libertarians and compatibilists must be given logical priority: classical theism *per se* cannot imply any particular solution to it. Whilst sympathetic to this thought, I accept that, for philosophers at least, worldviews come as packages; for example, one's worldview might include as elements the existence of a God of the classical theistic sort; substance dualism; libertarianism of a certain sort; and so forth. And thus, as a philosopher, one is in the business of finding reflective equilibrium as new arguments and considerations come in. Thus one may find oneself wondering whether the package that contains classical theism and libertarianism as elements finds more support for the latter element from the former than the package which has classical theism and compatibilism as elements finds support for the latter from the former. My suspicion is that it does not: the package with theism and libertarianism and the package with theism and compatibilism have the same properties of internal support 'in this direction', as one might put it. (At the end of the chapter I suggest tentatively that the same might not be true in the other direction: that libertarianism gives one a reason to believe in theism that compatibilism doesn't.) If that's right, then one's reason for going for one package rather than the other cannot spring from one's commitment to classical theism *per se*. Rather, I suggest the reason arises

from one's view of which of libertarianism or compatibilism seems, on independent grounds, to be right.

Introduction

I begin with an autobiographical reverie. I was a classical theist before I was anything else 'philosophical' and whilst other bits and pieces of metaphysics have moved in and out of my mind with the years, classical theism has never shown much sign of budging. On the issue of free will, I started my undergraduate degree predisposed towards libertarianism - e.g. I initially had incompatibilist intuitions in response to the usual sorts of questions asked of me by my tutor and I believed that I knew with more certainty than almost anything else that we were sometimes free in the sense necessary for a robust moral responsibility, that is one justifying retributive acts of punishment, not merely consequentially-justified interventions. But, almost as quickly as I learned what conclusion to draw from these premises, I lost – or rather decided to mistrust - the incompatibilist intuitions (within the first term or so). I kept those intuitions connected to moral responsibility and converted then to a compatibilism of a Humean type (not unconnected, I am sure, to the fact that it was Hume we were studying at the time). I maintained that view and, in the back of my mind, developed it, for fifteen to twenty years. I changed back to libertarianism quite recently, when writing a book on free will, and none of the reasons I took, and currently continue to take, myself to have for the change (and give in the book) depend on theism's being true. So it is that I come now to believe that classical theists should be libertarians simply because I have come to believe, against my earlier self, that libertarianism gives the right account of freedom. And my suspicion is roused – the suspicion which I'll explore in my chapter - that classical theism *per se* does not give one reasons to be either a libertarian or a compatibilist. Because if it did, then I'd have somehow missed them despite having been looking for them, on-and-off, for fifteen to twenty years, and I'd rather be suspicious in the manner I explore in this chapter than entertain the altogether more worrying suspicion that I might not be very good at spotting reasons. (After all I've already got reason enough for that worry coming from what I take to be my realisation that I backed the wrong theory of freedom for fifteen to twenty years.)

One argument, which might initially seem to show the falsehood of my suspicion that theism *per se* has no implications for the libertarianism/compatibilism debate, could be put as follows. One of the properties that the God of classical theism is traditionally supposed to have is perfect freedom. Given that the God of classical

theism is defined as perfectly free, one might hence argue that theism *per se* already commits one to giving either a libertarian or a compatibilist (whichever is right) account of freedom through articulating this property in the right way. Thus if libertarianism is true, then theism already has a commitment to libertarianism built into it; if compatibilism is true, then theism already has a commitment to compatibilism built into it. So, one might suggest, Theism *does* in fact commit one to Libertarianism or it commits one to Compatibilism; it commits one to whichever of these is right.

To this argument, I would simply concede that these conditionals do hold, but at the same time insist that the question of which of these – libertarian or compatibilist - *is* the right way to articulate freedom isn't itself something that theism is telling us the answer to when it's insisting that we must understand the divine property of perfect freedom in the right way; it isn't something that theism is committing us to when it's committing us to these conditionals. (Of course I am leaving to one side the point that divine freedom and human freedom may be relevantly different from one another.) One might as well suggest that because one of the traditional properties of God is omniscience, so theism commits one to the most-recently-developed safety account of knowledge, assuming that's right (an account which, due to its only emerging recently in the literature, has in fact not been endorsed by *any* classical theists as yet). Obviously, victories so easily won are hollow; there's no way they can gain for us the conclusion that theism *per se* commits one to a particular account of freedom, knowledge, or anything else.

This point having been made then, we might be tempted instead by the following, diametrically opposed, argument, which is much more congenial to my suspicion that theism implies nothing with regards to the debate between libertarians and compatibilists, but which I think equally fails to establish its conclusion.

One might suggest that precisely *because* theism makes mention of the property of (perfect) freedom in characterising its God, so the solution to the debate between libertarians and compatibilists must be given logical priority and ergo theism *per se cannot* imply any solution to it. Unfortunately from the point of view of providing an easy victory for the suspicion that I'm exploring, we cannot take this route either, for the following reason.

For philosophers at least, worldviews come as packages; for example, one's worldview might include the existence of a God of the classical theistic sort; substance dualism; libertarianism of a certain sort; and so forth. And thus, as a philosopher, one is in the business of finding reflective equilibrium as new arguments and considerations come in. Thus it is that one may quite legitimately – indeed will necessarily - find oneself wondering in this context whether the package that contains classical theism and libertarianism as elements finds more support for the latter element from the former element than the package which has classical theism and compatibilism as elements finds support for the latter from the former. My suspicion then amounts to the thesis that it does not: the package with theism and libertarianism and the package with theism and compatibilism have the same properties of internal support when going in the theism-to-libertarianism and the theism-to-compatibilism directions. (In the conclusion, I talk about whether or not they have the same properties of internal support when going in the libertarianism-to-theism direction and the compatibilism-to-theism direction and tentatively suggest they do not.) If my thesis is right, then it follows that one's reasons for going for one package rather than another cannot spring from one's commitment to classical theism *per se*, but must rather spring from an external source. The most proximate external source is of course one's view of which of libertarianism or compatibilism seems in itself right.

Let me take a moment or two to underscore how it might be that even if my suspicion is right – that is that theism in itself gives one no reason either to be a libertarian or to be a compatibilist – it might nevertheless *also* be right to think that the most *rationaly defensible* form of theism will come as part of a package with libertarianism or come as part of a package with compatibilism. I don't think this concession at all undermines my thesis in that what one will by then be considering is a matter of external support (or lack of it), not internal (at least in the theism-to-theory-of-free-will direction), for the package in question. But because it is nevertheless true and because its being true is, I think, a part of the explanation of why so many able philosophers think that theism *per se* has implications for the libertarianism/compatibilism debate, it is worth spending a bit of time noting the point.

The arguments offered in favour of classical theism (including one's counter-counter-arguments to counter-arguments to classical theism) will differ of course depending on whether one's a libertarian classical theist or a compatibilist classical theist. So, for example, during my compatibilist phase, I didn't run arguments to God's being

outside time which advanced it as the solution to what would otherwise be the problem of God's infallibly foreknowing what we'll do in ten minutes and thus us not really being free when we do whatever it is we do in ten minutes (we'd fail at that time to satisfy a 'could have done otherwise' condition, crucial for genuine freedom). That 'problem' – I then supposed - had faster, easier, solutions. Nor did I think that the solution to the Problem of Evil depended on its being very valuable for God not to 'interfere' with or 'manipulate' us by determining our choices. Now, as a libertarian, I would be more inclined to run that argument and think that way about the Problem of Evil. But these differing preferences for lines of defence obviously don't affect the fundamental position defended – the belief in the omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good God of classical theism. Even though the package that best combines theism with the most plausible form of libertarianism and the package which best combines theism with the most plausible form of compatibilism are each internally as strong as the other in the relevant direction (the theism-to-theory-of-free-will direction), I must admit that one of these packages now strikes me as vastly more plausible than the other (the other one to the one that struck me as more plausible ten years ago), but that is only because libertarianism now strikes me as vastly more plausible than compatibilism (contrary to the way I was struck ten years ago). So indeed, as a libertarian, I'd insist that if you want to be the most plausible sort of theist, you should be a libertarian, and I might couch this in terms such as the following: the most rationally defensible theism requires libertarianism. But that's only because as a libertarian I'd insist that if you want to be the most plausible sort of anything (anything other than compatibilist or denier of free will, that is), you should be a libertarian: the most rationally defensible naturalism requires libertarianism too. It's not then, I am suggesting, because some central tenet of theism *per se* implies one thing, rather than the other, about which of these two theories of free will – libertarianism or compatibilism - is right that it's right that theists should be libertarians even though it is right that theists should be libertarians (I now think, *pace* my earlier self).

The crucial notion here then, it will have been noticed, is that of the amount of 'internal' support given (or I would say not given) by theism to either libertarianism on the one hand or compatibilism on the other, internal support in that 'direction', as I've been putting it. And my claim here is that it is no good arguing against my thesis that there is no difference in the levels of support going in that direction by pointing out that one of the packages (theism plus libertarianism or theism plus compatibilism, take your pick) is rather counterintuitive or has more cogent objections which may be raised against it when considered as a whole than does the other package. For that I

can and indeed do grant, but I explain that fact as arising solely as a matter of their relative differences in *external* support (and - a complicating factor, of which I have already made passing mention and to which I shall return at the end - the level of support going in the other direction). To run the risk of repetition: I'd quickly grant, for example, that I now find theism plus compatibilism wildly implausible as a package and can hardly believe of my earlier self that the opposite once seemed to me so obviously the case. But what has changed my mind in this particular is not reflection on what the world would need to be like for *classical theism* to be true *per se*, but rather reflection on what the world would need to be like for us to be free. One might say, roughly, that my view is now that the heroes of my youth - Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Leibniz, Edwards, and the like (the follies of youth are - I hope - easily forgiven) - aren't wrong in their theism; they're wrong in their theories of freedom.

Theism and Compatibilism

According to Hume, as long as one does what one wants to do as a causal result of one's most wanting to do that thing and as long as the want from which one acts is a characteristic one, that is sufficient for one to be doing what one does freely. Humean freedom then is quite compatible with Determinism. It is easy to show that Humean freedom isn't what the majority of us think of as freedom by what might thus be called 'counterexamples' to it. Davidson's nifty mountaineer might be one such¹. But there is no limit to the sophistication with which compatibilist accounts of freedom such as Hume's may be built; in order to evade a counterexample of a Davidson's nifty mountaineer sort, for example, a neo-Humean might simply add in a Frankfurt-inspired epicycle, requiring for freedom the presence of the right sort of higher-order desire. Other counterexamples would nevertheless present themselves. A persistent source of counterexamples will be the thought that whatever psychological structures are posited as sufficient for freedom, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which a skilful hypnotist generates exactly those structures in one of his or her patients and yet we'd fail to hold the patient at all responsible for his or her resultant behaviour. Nevertheless, by increasing the number and style of epicycles and (even if it must seem somewhat *ad hoc* in its specification of deviance) ruling out deviant causal chains and manipulation (e.g. stipulating that no hypnosis was involved), the Compatibilist may generate an account of freedom that is close to 'counterexample free', that is to say, a Compatibilist account of freedom which is such that those

¹ D Davidson, *Essays on actions and events* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1980), p79. In order to be a counter-example, one would have to add to the case as Davidson gives it that such wishes as cause the behaviour in this case are in fact characteristic of the mountaineer in question.

actions which display it are close to coextensive with those which the man on the Clapham omnibus would judge to be free. The gap that remains can be put down to the bizarreness of the situations which by then one will be considering. Who'd trust the man on the Clapham omnibus to get his judgements of freedom right when considering, for example, some entirely-imaginary brain-chip which, whilst technically not generating hypnosis on some stipulated definition of hypnosis, is functionally equivalent in the relevant respect? Or trust him to get them right when considering some unique and un-experienced (possibly even metaphysically impossible) mode of causation? Nobody sensible. This then is the best that a Compatibilist can do. For the purposes of my thesis, I need merely point out that this best is entirely sufficient for the purposes of theism; if it's not good enough, it doesn't fail to be good enough by failing to make space for some tenet of Theism. That then will establish that theism gives one no reason not to be a compatibilist. In moving on in the next section to pointing out that libertarianism is similarly entirely sufficient, I'll be establishing that theism gives one no reason not to be a libertarian either. Thus, overall, the case will be made that theism *per se* gives one no reason to be either a libertarian or a compatibilist.

Assuming the best compatibilist account were to be accepted as in and of itself the correct account of freedom, there would then be no theistic beliefs that one could reasonably suppose couldn't be accommodated by it. You want people to be morally responsible for their actions, so they can be held to account at the Last Judgement? You've got it. (It came as standard in fact: the best compatibilist approach was the best in part because it best preserved moral responsibility as judged by the man on the Clapham omnibus.) You want God to be able to foreknow infallibly the future free actions of his creatures? You've got it too, and you've not had to put God outside time to get it (though you can do that too, if you like). You want a historical fall? You've got it. Alternatively, you want the Fall to be an 'ahistorical event' or something only mythically true. You can get that instead. You want to throw a lot of weight on certain words of Augustine when it comes to understanding God's prevenient grace as entirely sufficient for salvation in and of itself and regardless of human response? You've got it. You, conversely, want to suggest that human salvation is dependent in part on our response; you can get that instead.

When we go searching for what it is that someone might – *qua* theist – want and find that Compatibilism can't give them, we come up empty-handed. We should not be persuaded otherwise by considering the compatibilist's difficulties in meeting the

demands of theists who have already gone well beyond bare theism and into schismatic articulations of it, for example, by considering how the compatibilist would have difficulty meeting the demands of an Open Theist. Let us suppose that someone tells us as compatibilists that they want to put God inside time; have God be ignorant of the future actions of free creatures; and thus be taking risks with his creation, so that their theism can thereby, they suppose, best solve the problem of evil. To such a list of wants, it is true that as compatibilists we cannot blithely say in the manner of the previous paragraph, 'You've got it'. All of that you *can't* get on Compatibilism, or at least you can't get it without what should surely be admitted to be a worrying restriction on omniscience (counting as omniscient a being who doesn't know now all that could be known now). But such an Open Theist is surely going to turn out to be someone who has drawn up their list of demands precisely because they were already committed to Libertarianism being true. It's their theism plus their commitment to libertarianism that's providing them with reasons not to be a compatibilist, not their theism *per se*. And thus it is no embarrassment for my thesis that theism *per se* gives one no reason to be either a libertarian or a compatibilist that we cannot meet the demands of such a theist if we are compatibilists. If you're an 'Open Theist', then sure, the Compatibilist can't give you what you want, but you're an Open Theist – rather than some other sort of theist - in part, I suggest, because you're a libertarian rather than a compatibilist. You're not a libertarian rather than a compatibilist because of a prior commitment to the theses that jointly constitute Open Theism and, even if you were, the theses that jointly constitute Open Theism are not the theses that constitute Theism *per se*; rather, they add to these and thus constitute a larger set.

What then is the area in which it seems most likely the Compatibilist will come up 'empty-handed', as I am putting it, when his or her theistic friend asks him or her for help? From the literature, it is clear that there is a consensus: the Problem of Evil. And I think this consensus is right – as long as the 'likely' is interpreted merely as 'epistemically likely', of course - and thus that this topic in particular deserves some more attention, both now – under the 'Theism and Compatibilism' heading – and later – under the 'Theism and Libertarianism' heading.

As I have said, worldviews come as packages and thus it could be argued that the package that has theism and compatibilism as elements would have a weaker relationship of internal support in the relevant direction (and thus we'd be getting a reason to suppose false my suspicion that theism *per se* gives one no reason to be

either a libertarian or a compatibilist) if a solution to the Problem of Evil within the parameters imposed by compatibilism were to prove lacking relative to one which may be constructed within libertarianism. The line of reasoning might be put like this. Theism *per se* does support Libertarianism over Compatibilism because it supports there being a theodicy/defence (there's room for a number of weaker and stronger notions here, of which more in a moment) against the Problem of Evil and Libertarianism (in contrast to Compatibilism) cannot provide that theodicy/defence/whatever. Because of the number of weaker and stronger notions in play within the theistic community governing what it is the theist is viewed as being obliged to attempt to do with regards to providing a theodicy/defence/whatever for the problem of evil, the issue threatens to become one over which different theists will demand different standards be met, thus judging the issue differently and thus generating an *impasse* for any argument arising from this area and purporting to give one reason to suppose that theism *per se* provides one with any reason for libertarianism over compatibilism. For example, a compatibilist might take some results along the lines that are apparently damaging for my thesis 'on the chin' and say, for example, 'Sure I can't provide a complete theodicy (and, for the sake of argument, a libertarian can), but that's no reason to think that theism gives one a reason to be a libertarian, for we shouldn't be in the business of thinking that a commitment to theism brings with it a commitment to there being a theodicy, rather than merely say a commitment to there being a defence. Indeed it's hubris on our part – as sceptical theists have shown us – to think we'd be in a position to do more than x, y, z, when 'solving' the Problem of Evil, which x, y, z I can, pretty uncontroversially, do *qua* compatibilist.' This *impasse* then is going to be hard to move around. It's just *not* part of theism *per se* that a theodicy or even defence is possible. Nevertheless, we may – despite this – get around this *impasse* to some extent at least by noticing that all parties to the debate may agree that at the minimum theism implies that there is a solution to the logical Problem of Evil. (I am ignoring then those who do perhaps deserve the name 'theists' who would say that God doesn't need to be 'constrained by logic'.) Via Plantinga, we know that Libertarianism can give a solution to the logical Problem of Evil. (A big assumption, I know, but I hope it will be granted so I can move on.) Can Compatibilism do likewise?

I concede then for the purposes of argument that if it were to turn out that Compatibilism cannot provide a solution to the logical problem of evil, then my thesis that theism doesn't in itself give one reason to be a libertarian would be in trouble, given that libertarianism (I'm taking it) can provide such a solution. It'd even then not

yet be shown to be false, for it'd not yet have been shown that there was not a weakness of corresponding magnitude in the package that has theism and libertarianism as elements; perhaps such a package can't give an adequate account of God's providence or some such and that's as big a problem for it as not being able to solve the logical problem of evil is for the package that has theism and compatibilism as elements. But we would be being given reasons to think my thesis false. And, I concede, weighty reason – the other 'weaknesses' to which one may gesture in the theism-plus-libertarianism package don't seem likely to be of the same magnitude; they don't seem likely to be logical problems. So one question that I concede one may legitimately press here is the following: can the Compatibilist solve the logical Problem of Evil? And, whilst appreciating that not all theists will think that he or she should be trying to do more than this and thus not all will agree that pressing the next question is legitimate, one may also ask this: can he or she in fact do more than this and offer a defence (or even a theodicy) against the evidential Problem of Evil, a defence or theodicy that is at least as strong in its own terms as any the libertarian can offer? In fact, I think the answer to both these questions is, 'Yes'. The compatibilist can in fact say, 'You want as good a 'solution' to the Problem of Evil as you could have got if you'd been a theist and a libertarian? You've got it.' I thus advance the below in these terms, but, for the purposes of my argument in this chapter, all that is necessary is that the below be plausible as a compatibilist solution to the *logical* Problem of Evil, not a solution to the wider Problem of Evil that I characterise it as, because (to repeat myself) it's not a component of theism *per se* that the Problem of Evil in this sense *has* any solution.

Fully articulating a compatibilist solution to the Problem of Evil would of course take much space. Elsewhere in this volume Fischer contributes to the project. For my part, in this section I shall simply sketch a variant of the account I provide at greater length elsewhere (in my book, *Belief in God*, OUP, 2005). In the next section, on 'Theism and Libertarianism', I'll turn to the issue of whether the fact that the compatibilist can't run as plausible a 'Free Will Defence' as the libertarian has negative implications for my thesis. First though, let's see what we can do to solve the Problem of Evil without utilising the purported higher good of free will at all.

Consider the choice, which I imagine most couples face, of whether or not to have a child. If one were to specify various conditions (that there are no health risks involved in the potential-mother conceiving; that having a child would not be financially ruinous to the couple or in some other way reduce their ability to meet

their obligations; et c.), then it seems reasonable to suppose that there is no obligation and nor would it be better either to produce or to refrain from producing a child: they ought to be morally indifferent. Imagine now a drug becoming available to this couple. It costs nothing; has no side effects; and the consumption of it affects ones' gametes such that the more of the drug one takes, the healthier; more intelligent; *et cetera* any child conceived is. With the arrival of this drug, no couple comes under an obligation and nor does it become better for them - a supererogatory act - to refrain from having any child at all just because it is now true of any child that they do have that they could always have had 'one better' by taking more of this drug. So, by analogy, even if it were true that for any possible world, God could always create a better, it would not – as Rowe for example has suggested - follow that His perfect goodness would compel Him not to create any world. It might be helpful in driving this latter point home were I to introduce you to Leibniz's ass, a hypothetical donkey which is a close cousin of a more famous donkey, Buridan's ass.

Buridan's ass was a donkey which, finding itself equidistant from two equally nourishing bails of hay, reasoned correctly that it had no more reason to eat one rather than the other. It then went on to conclude that the only reasonable thing for it to do was eat neither; it thus starved to death. Leibniz's ass was a donkey which found itself equidistant from an infinite number of bails of hay, such that for each of these bails of hay there was one more nourishing. It thus reasoned correctly that of any particular bail of hay it might eat it had less reason to eat that bail than it did to eat another. It then went on to conclude that the only reasonable thing for it to do was to eat none; it thus starved to death.

So, if there is a best of all possible worlds, God is not under an obligation and neither is it supererogatorily good for Him to create it, for prior to His creation there are no creatures to whom He can have obligations or be supererogatorily good. If there is no best of all possible worlds, God is not under an obligation and neither is it supererogatorily good for Him to create nothing just because for any world He does create it is *ex hypothesi* true that He could have created one - indeed, an infinite number - better. We may be tempted to conclude at least that God's perfect goodness would have compelled Him to create any creature He did create in the best of all possible worlds for it (if there is a best) or in one of the joint best (if there are two or more which are equally good and none better), though personally I think that even this would be wrong. But I admit it is plausible to maintain that if

there is a best of all possible worlds for a particular creature, whilst God would have been morally indifferent about whether or not to create that creature at all, it seems as if we should say that if He does create that creature, He has reason to create it in that world rather than any other; and, if there are joint best worlds for it, if He creates that creature, He has reason to create it in one of those rather than any other. Fortunately, it is also plausible to maintain that all actual creatures are such that there is no best or joint best of all possible worlds for them. That is to say, it's plausible to maintain that for any creature (that actually exists), whatever world it might exist in, there's always a possible world that that creature could have found itself in instead and that would have been better for it than that world. As we've already seen from considering the case of parents who could take a drug to 'improve' what sort of child they conceived and Leibniz's ass, if this were the case, then God's perfect goodness would not dictate that He not create this creature. His perfect goodness plausibly only dictates that He do the best or joint best for His creature where one is possible. It is plausible to maintain then that there is no best or joint best of all possible worlds for us and thus God's perfect goodness left Him with *carte blanche* not just over whether or not to create us at all but over what world to create us in having decided to create us. Matters would be rather as they would be with a more acute version of Leibniz's ass. Although sadly Leibniz's ass did not realise it, he had *carte blanche* over which bail of hay to eat. If God doesn't quite get *carte blanche*, that'll only plausibly be because there's some threshold, worlds below which he mustn't create, and that threshold will most plausibly be something along the lines of his being obliged not to create worlds which contain more evil than good, a threshold which it's not at all plausible to maintain we know or can have any reasonable belief our world falls below. (Again, for my purposes – just showing that the compatibilist may defeat the logical Problem of Evil – something weaker would suffice, but the stronger claim is, I think, pretty obviously right, so I hazard it.)

Given that this argument may be advanced by the compatibilist as well as by the libertarian and it shows how evil is not incompatible with theism, possibly even how the evil in the actual world isn't (much/any?) evidence against theism, given that we're plausibly creatures for whom there is no best and the evil we experience isn't (much/any?) evidence that our world falls below any plausible constraining threshold, so the Problem of Evil is solved.

Any paragraph which one ends with the construction, 'so the Problem of Evil is solved', is bound largely to fail to win friends and influence people. But I might be forgiven nevertheless for hoping as I do, that I have done as much in the last few paragraphs as could reasonably be expected in the space allocated to advance an argument to the effect that one may maintain that the logical Problem of Evil is no more problematic for the compatibilist than it is for the libertarian (and possibly even that the evidential problem is no more problematic), and thus support my contention that Theism *per se* gives one no reason to be a libertarian rather than a Compatibilist, for theism *per se* does not commit one to anything but the logical problem being soluble. Allow me, in any case, to move on.

The best Compatibilist accounts of freedom seem to many - despite all the advantages wrung by great labours in distinguishing various forms of freedom-removing manipulation from non-freedom-removing causation – to be missing out on something crucial. There is no reason, I have suggested, why the compatibilist cannot render as true an arbitrarily large proportion of the judgements of the man on the Clapham omnibus as to where moral responsibility lies, but it will still seem to many that in doing so the compatibilist is engaged in what remains fundamentally a subterfuge – not a 'wretched subterfuge' perhaps, but a subterfuge nonetheless. This intuition – though I resisted it for many years myself – I now believe to be right. What is missing? In my recent book on the matter, I argue that it is most fundamentally 'sourcehood', as Kevin Timpe amongst others has put it. One thing that is necessary for a free action to be a free action is that the agent in question be the ultimate source of its occurring, which he or she may be whilst causally influenced by (though not if causally necessitated by) factors beyond his or her control. Fortunately, I argue, we have no reason to suppose we are not the ultimate authors of our actions in this way and quite a bit of reason to suppose that we are. Incompatibilism is right, but we may – indeed everything about our experience suggests we should – be Libertarians about free will rather than deniers of it. Now it's time to state this view in a bit more detail and then see if Theism *per se* gives one any reason either to endorse it or deny it.

Theism and Libertarianism

The most defensible form of Libertarianism accommodates five things, all of which I would argue (against some) strike philosophically-uneducated commonsense as true, and indeed it's in part because they do so strike philosophically-uneducated commonsense as true that the most defensible form of Libertarianism has to find a

home for each of them. These five are as follows. (1) Sometimes I could do something other than what I actually do. (2) Sometimes I'm morally responsible for what I do. (3) If I couldn't do other than what I actually do, then I wouldn't be morally responsible for what I do. (4) If I wasn't the ultimate author of my actions, then I wouldn't be morally responsible for them. And, finally, (5) To the extent that I did not will an action under the morally salient description, I am not fully morally responsible for it. Fortunately these five thoughts 'lock together' into what seems to me (now, anyway) a very plausible view, one which we have no reason to reject and quite a bit of reason to think true and true of us; I call it simply 'Libertarianism' hereafter, though there are of course other variants of Libertarianism than this one.

According to Libertarianism so understood, we live in a universe where more than one future is really possible for us at moments of choice (Indeterminism). This is as well for us being free, for were it not the case that we could sometimes do things other than whatever it is we end up doing, we would never really be morally responsible in a robust sense (Incompatibilism). But in fact we *are* sometimes morally responsible in a robust sense (Moral Responsibility). When we are, it is in part because we are the ultimate authors of those movements of our bodies for which we are morally responsible; they are genuinely actions which we are performing, rather than merely events which we are undergoing (Ultimate Authorship). Of course, if we did not fully know what it was we were doing when we did it, we might yet escape moral responsibility for what was nevertheless genuinely an action of ours. That is why, for moral responsibility, the action must not only be an action, but must also be a well-informed and unrushed one. It must also be un-coerced or again one escapes moral responsibility. Only then can it be said that not only did we wilfully do a certain thing, but we wilfully did it under the description that makes it a praiseworthy/blameworthy action (Morally salient willing). But such conditions are sometimes satisfied and, when they are satisfied, the conditions which are necessary and jointly sufficient for moral responsibility are satisfied: we freely did whatever it is we ended up doing under the morally salient description and hence we are morally assessable for it.²

Libertarianism, I suggest, is quite sufficient for the purposes of Theism; it can accommodate its tenets as readily as compatibilism – no more readily, but no less readily either. You want people to be morally responsible for their actions, so they

² I give a full account and defence of the view in my book, *Free Will: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum, 2011).

can be held to account at the Last Judgement? You've got it. You want God to be able to foreknow infallibly the future free actions of his creatures? You've got it too, though – and here of course I assume various controversial things - you've got to put God outside time to get it. What? Not prepared to do that? Okay then, you can have him inside time and being omniscient in the sense that he knows all that it's possible for anyone to know at the time it is now; you can be an Open Theist. You want a historical fall? You've got it. Alternatively, you want the Fall to be an 'ahistorical event' or something only mythically true. You can get that instead. You want to throw a lot of weight on certain words of Augustine when it comes to understanding God's prevenient grace as entirely sufficient for salvation in and of itself and regardless of human response? You've got it, though then of course you have to concede that we're not free when we do respond positively (or negatively). You, conversely, want to suggest that human salvation is dependent in part on our response; you can get that instead. As was the case with the compatibilist, the libertarian may say, 'There's nothing that you can ask for *qua* theist that I can't give you.'

It must also be admitted though that the libertarian can give us something that the Compatibilist seems to struggle more in providing – a 'Free Will Defence' to the Problem of Evil.

Libertarianism, as will be seen in considering theses 1 - 5, doesn't make any claims about how good it is that we have the sort of freedom it describes as the only genuine freedom; it doesn't suggest that creatures who didn't have that but had instead a proper subset of its components or some other 'ersatz sort of freedom' altogether – perhaps a compatibilist sort – would be inferior; less creation-worthy; or what have you. But Libertarianism can be combined with views that introduce an evaluative element and it would be fair to say it is usually so-combined when theist's utilize it. Only then can freedom fulfil the role of a higher-order good and thus be potentially used to justify the lower-order evils that occasion it and that it in turn occasions; the classic 'Free Will Defence' and its variants can only then be brought into play.

The fact that Libertarianism is usually so combined though is not in itself, I would suggest, a reason to suppose that Theism supports Libertarianism as an account of freedom; if anything, it supports a set of packages, the set characterized thus: Any-theory-of-freedom-as-long-as-you-add-to-it-a-positive-assessment-of-the-value-of-freedom-as-understood-on-that-theory. Assuredly there are libertarian members of

this set, but there are also compatibilist ones. That the theism-plus-libertarianism-plus-positive-assessment-of-the-value-of-freedom-thus-understood package has one more arrow in its quiver when it comes to shooting down the Problem of Evil (than some other packages) is not then a reason to suppose that Theism *per se* gives one reason to be a libertarian if only because (of which clause, more in a moment) there's a corollary theism-plus-compatibilism-plus-positive-assessment-of-the-value-of-freedom-thus-understood package that has the same properties of internal support in this direction. (And, as already mentioned, it's not in fact 'only because'. It's also because theism *per se* doesn't imply anything about whether or not any variant of the Problem of Evil – other than, as I have conceded, the logical Problem of Evil – can be solved to any extent.) True, theistic compatibilists seldom deploy something that they wish to call a 'Free Will Defence', but they could do so and it seems to me that the only reasons for thinking that it wouldn't be overall as plausible were they to do so (as the libertarian's parallel manoeuvres) spring from thinking that their account of free will isn't as plausible. But if that's right, then again it's not that theism *per se* is giving one reason to be a libertarian, but that something's being implausible about compatibilism from the 'get go' is giving one a reason to be a libertarian. And that I grant (having in my youth denied it). If – as I'd now say, '*per impossibile*' (metaphysically speaking) – compatibilism were to be the right account of freedom and – as of course is not *per impossibile* – were it to seem more plausible to us as the right account than the libertarian one, then the compatibilist could point to the fact of us being free and assert that this fact about the world was as good as the libertarian had been telling us it was (the libertarian merely having mis-identified the metaphysics of the fact) and that its being this good is what justifies God in the face of moral evil; and the compatibilist could do all this with just as much plausibility as the libertarian has when he or she speaks to someone of my current (also libertarian) persuasion in a parallel manner.

Of course a question will have been raised by the ruminations of the previous paragraph and it is a question that deserves an answer: why can't God determine everyone freely to do the good? In response, the libertarian has a straightforward story to tell – well, more or less straightforward; notions of weak and strong actualization might need to be brought in before the story comes to an end. In any case, the end of the story is that it just can't be done, even by God. What can the compatibilist say? Well, in order to preserve the parallel, it'll have to be a story that ends in the same place: it can't be done, even by God. But this he or she may maintain without its seeming entirely *ad hoc*. Any determination of a second agent's

behaviour by a first agent who has complete knowledge of the details of how he/she is determining the second and the full and detailed intention to determine the second in every respect is an unacceptable – manipulation – form of determination, unacceptable from the point of view of that second agent being nevertheless free when he or she then goes on to do whatever the first agent has so determined him or her to do. That's a part of what reflection – extended man-on-the-Clapham-omnibus-style reflection – reveals; it applies in an incomplete form to mundane forms of manipulation - brainwashing by pretty powerful and knowledgeable brainwashers and the like – and so we've reason to think it'd apply in a more complete form to extra-mundane super-powerful and super-knowledgeable agents such as God. A lot of weight would then perhaps fall on the distinction between intending to bring about consequences x, y, z , (for not all values of which God does intend x, y, z) and foreknowing that one is bringing about x, y, z (for all values of which God does know x, y, z) and so the discussion would move on. Again I must plead space considerations for not moving on with it, but again I can also point to the fact that it can move on and that in moving on any problems which are then revealed in compatibilism's way of carving off freedom-denying causal determinations from freedom-compatible causal determinations will be problems which were problems with Compatibilism *per se* and thus problems with it well before (logically speaking) one tried combining it with Theism. So again it seems to me that it'll be plausible to maintain that it's not theism *per se* which is giving one a reason to reject compatibilism and be a libertarian. It's these other problems, if problems they be, which one's now had revealed to one by the demands of theism casting light into what might otherwise have been unexplored and dark corners of compatibilist metaphysics, unexplored and dark corners which, if they are thus revealed to be problematic, were already problematic prior to one's interest in theism thus causing one to shine a light into them.

Conclusion

If one had been persuaded by my arguments thus far, a question it would be natural for one to raise at this stage would be this: even though theism being true doesn't give one reasons to suppose that libertarianism is true (or that compatibilism is true), does libertarianism (or compatibilism) being true give one reasons to think that theism is true? If Libertarianism but not compatibilism did so - in even the weakest of ways - then that fact could be made to do some work in explaining the strong correlation between theistic and libertarian belief. And there is an at least one *prima*

facie plausible argument to the effect that libertarianism does raise the probability of theism.

The way to argue this that seems most plausible to me is to suggest that libertarianism raises the probability of theism through the intermediary step of its raising the probability of substance dualism. Before I venture some thoughts on this argument, allow me to labour somewhat the point that I don't need to defend any particular view of the strength of this or similar arguments in order to defend the claim of this chapter. For example, I don't need to defend the view that the debate between libertarians and compatibilists has no implications for the defensibility of theism in order to defend my claim that theism has no implications for the debate between libertarians and compatibilists. We're now turning to consider the issue of support internal to the packages of beliefs in 'the other direction', as I put it, from that direction which I've been considering in the main body of my chapter. That having been said then, does an argument along these lines for libertarianism giving support to theism seem viable?

The agent-causal variant of Libertarianism that I have elsewhere argued emerges as that which we have most reason to believe is right requires either top-down causation of a particular sort within the physical world or souls. Personally, I do not believe there is any reason not to believe in top-down causation of the right sort within the physical world, but I admit that one might disagree with me there – many would - and thus one might – assuming one didn't disagree with me significantly elsewhere too - take my argument for this variant of Libertarianism as giving one reason to accept Substance Dualism, which I would concede may dispense with this particular type of causation. With substance dualism thus on the table, it seems to me that theism in turn would become more probable (than it would have been had one not had independent reason to believe that a sort of substance other than physical substance existed). This is of course rather sketchy, but in this way or similar ways it seems not absurd to me to suggest that libertarianism gives one reasons to be a theist by being some evidence that substance dualism is true and substance dualism's being true in turn being some evidence that theism is true. Compatibilism fails to give one this sort of reason to be a theist. And, if all of that is so, the debate between Libertarianism and compatibilism may have some implications for the rational defensibility of Theism even though Theism *per se* has no implications for the debate between Libertarians and Compatibilists. I shall leave the matter there save to observe that this would do something to answer the question I'm about to raise in conclusion.

If the suspicion that I have been exploring in this chapter is right - theism *per se* gives one no reason to be either a libertarian or a compatibilist - then, if we grant various empirical facts, we face another question: why is there a widely-held presumption that theism gives one reason to be a libertarian and why is there a strong positive correlation between theism and libertarianism? These are of course largely psychological questions and thus beyond my field of specialism. However, let me venture this as an explanation.

We almost all - atheists, theists, agnostics alike – start with experiences that would support libertarianism, experiences of us making a difference to the way the world goes, a difference from the way it would have gone had we not chosen as we did and a difference for which we are hence morally responsible. This then – as articulated in claims 1 – 5 above - is our commonsense view. Many theists then find themselves able to continue believing in the veridicality of this experience, because they find that - as another part of their worldview, roughly due to its making easiest sense of life after death - they are drawn to substance dualism about human persons and substance dualism makes the sort of agent-causation essential to libertarian freedom obviously non-problematic. In fact, one can have life after death whilst being a Physicalist about human persons. And in fact believing in top-down causation within the physical world will do the same job as substance dualism when it comes to explaining agent-causation in the libertarian sense. So, theism doesn't commit one to substance dualism about persons and there is a non-obviously non-problematic route out of the problem of agent causation even had one not been a Substance Dualist, but this route *is non-obvious*. And herein lies the explanation of the difference in opinion that has been observed between theists and atheists on this front. Atheists, by contrast to theists, are usually physicalists about human persons (they almost certainly don't treat substance dualism with favour because it'd make life after death easy!) and thus they can only keep going with their commonsense presumption that they are free in the libertarian sense if they discover the non-obvious route of top-down causation and, its being non-obvious, a smaller percentage do so. Therefore, many more atheists than theists take themselves (erroneously) to have a defeater for their initial belief in libertarianism; thus atheists disproportionately go for compatibilism. Some theists and some atheists then are led to think that it is the theist's theism that is giving them reason to be libertarians. But in this they are mistaken. My tentative closing suggestion? That this explains the correlations which we seem to observe between belief in theism, substance dualism, and libertarianism.

Be that as it may, I hope to have shown earlier in the chapter, that correlation is not to be explained by supposing that theism *per se* gives one reasons to be a libertarian. Theism *per se* has no implications for the debate between libertarians and compatibilists.

22nd June 2011

Now just waiting to make any changes suggested by Jerry Walls' comments

21st July 2011

And also perhaps comments from Neil Levy to whom I've just sent it.