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A METACOMPATIBILIST ACCOUNT OF FREE WILL:  
MAKING COMPATIBILISTS AND INCOMPATIBILISTS  
MORE COMPATIBLE

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**ABSTRACT.** The debate over free will has pitted libertarian insistence on open alternatives against the compatibilist view that authentic commitments can preserve free will in a determined world. A second schism in the free will debate sets rationalist belief in the centrality of reason against nonrationalists who regard reason as inessential or even an impediment to free will. By looking deeper into what motivates each of these perspectives it is possible to find common ground that accommodates insights from all those competing views. The resulting metacompatibilist view of free will bridges some of the differences between compatibilists and incompatibilists as well as between rationalists and nonrationalists, and results in a free will theory that is both more philosophically inclusive and more firmly connected to contemporary research in psychology and biology.

INTRODUCTION

Of all the disputes that have divided philosophers, none has proved more intractable than the problem of free will. Richard Taylor claims that genuine free will requires such radically free and self-caused choices that “an understanding of it must be sought in some metaphysical realm wholly different from that appropriate to the understanding of nonliving things” (Taylor, 1963, p. 51). Along similar lines, Roderick Chisholm asserts that in acting freely “we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we really act, is a prime mover unmoved” (Chisholm, 1975, p. 395). Robert Kane does not insist on such metaphysical excesses, but he does require a powerful jolt of indeterminism in order to preserve free will (Kane, 1985). In contrast, David Hume argued that indeterminacy would destroy free will (Hume, 1902). Harry G. Frankfurt (1971) takes Hume’s view in a hierarchical direction, and insists that the willing addict – who has no genuine open



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choices – may nonetheless have a full measure of free will. Susan Wolf pushes well beyond Frankfurt; on her view, open alternatives are not necessary for free will, since genuine freedom consists in following the narrow path of the True and Good. Such open alternatives are instead an impediment to true freedom: “Why would one want the ability to pass up the apple when to do so would be merely unpleasant or arbitrary?” (Wolf, 1990, p. 55). Thus free will accounts run the full spectrum, from miraculous choices among open alternatives to single-minded pursuit of the one true path.

If this were not confusing enough, there is a second controversial issue in the free will debate: the role of rational deliberation in free will. This dispute generates its own range of competing views. From Susan Wolf’s Kantian perspective, the hallmark of genuine free will is rational deliberation leading to the True and Good. Daniel Dennett also makes deliberation central to free will, but not deliberation aimed at the True and Good; rather, deliberation that we choose to continue or terminate: “. . . our ultimate decision as to which way to act is less important phenomenologically as a contributor to our sense of free will than the prior decision affecting our deliberation process itself: the decision, for instance, not to consider any further, to terminate deliberation” (Dennett, 1978, p. 297). Moving to the other extreme, Sartre (1975) insists that reason cannot help us: the burden of freedom is that we must choose with neither reliable precedents nor rational guidance.

It would be neater if we could match the rationalists with one side of the libertarian vs. compatibilist contest, and engage the anti-rationalists on the other; if, for example, libertarians adored rationality and compatibilists abjured it. No such luck. There are libertarians such as Kant and Richard Taylor who regard reason (or in Taylor’s case, genuine deliberation) as central to libertarian free will, and other libertarians – Sartre and Dostoyevsky, for example – who think reason is more likely an impediment to real freedom of the will. And there are compatibilists who think that reason is vital for free will – Fischer’s work on reasons-responsiveness (Fischer, 1987) and Susan Wolf’s rational allegiance to the Good and the True are very different justifications for compatibilist free will, but they concur in thinking that reason is essential; and other compatibilists, such as Hume, for whom reason has little or no role in free

will. Thus we find not only deep divisions between libertarians and compatibilists, but additional schisms within the two camps.

So what can we conclude about free will? Libertarians say it requires open alternatives; others say it does not. Some deny that free will can exist in a deterministic world; others respond that it can exist only under determinism. Some proclaim that free will requires reason, or even the spectacular transcendent power of Reason; others insist that reason has nothing to do with it. Small wonder that after judicious review of this controversy, Richard Double (1991) concluded that there is no real concept of free will to discover: the entire question is based on a hopeless confusion of disparate and fundamentally irreconcilable free will exemplars.

But the situation is not so grim as it first appears. Like the blind men touching the elephant, the major competing philosophical views of free will have each grasped an important constituent of free will but then mistaken that part for the whole. The insights of these apparently conflicting accounts can be integrated into a more comprehensive view, and the two main camps – those who insist that free will requires open alternatives, and those who seek free will in authentic singular true choice – can find a common goal. Furthermore, this *metacompatibilist* account of free will incorporates contributions from both sides of the second longstanding free will dispute: from those who believe that reason is vitally important to free will, as well as from philosophers who regard reason as irrelevant to genuine free will.

#### OPEN ALTERNATIVES

Consider a key element of the free will literature. We want genuine options, open alternatives. For William James (1907, pp. 60–61) and William Barrett, the desire for free will is “the desire for freshness, novelty, genuine creation – in short, an open rather than a closed universe” (Barrett, 1961, p. 46). Robert Kane insists that free will requires ultimate dominion over choices among real alternatives (Kane, 1985). As philosophers and theologians have elaborated this “open alternatives” element of free will, it has often become a wondrous quality indeed: a creative power to remake the direction of the cosmos, and the foundation for the special human status

that sets us apart from the natural world and gives us our special “dignity.” On such accounts, humans require not merely open alternatives, but the power to choose among them as an unmoved mover (Chisholm, 1975); we don’t just examine our paths, but engage in radical reevaluations of who we are and what we value (Taylor, 1976); we don’t merely choose, but exercise a creative contra-causal power that has no history or precedents (Campbell, 1957). In this tradition, Dostoyevsky is willing to embrace fantasy and vulgarity if that is the price for escaping the deterministic and option-destroying laws of nature:

What he [humanity] wants to preserve is precisely his noxious fantasies and vulgar trivialities, if only to assure himself that men are still men . . . and not piano keys responding to the laws of nature . . . (1961, p. 114).

When free choice among alternatives becomes a miracle-working power it becomes empirically suspect, and naturalists – from Baron D’Holbach to B. F. Skinner – have sometimes denied free will in order to anchor humans securely within the natural world. In fact, Skinner rejects free will for precisely the reasons that Dostoyevsky and Barrett value it, and his *Walden Two* protagonist states his position clearly:

“My answer is simple enough”, said Frazier. “I deny that freedom exists at all. I must deny it – or my program would be absurd. You can’t have a science about a subject matter which hops capriciously about” (1948, p. 257).

But denying open alternatives throws out the free will baby with the miracle-working bath water. Rather than rejecting alternatives, we should take a closer look at why open alternatives are deeply valued by many animals, human and otherwise.

While teaching feral white-footed mice to run a maze to obtain food, J. Lee Kavanau (1967) observed that even after repeated trials – when the mice had apparently mastered the swiftest path to their reward – they still did not consistently take the “correct” path through the maze, instead occasionally taking less than optimum routes. Kavanau wondered why these mice were such flawed learners, until he realized that their behavior was not flawed at all: it was highly adaptive behavior for animals that live in changing environments (see Zuckerman, 1979). The path that currently offers the most reliable food source is travelled most often, but exploring

alternative paths (paths that the white-footed mouse has successfully learned are not now the most promising) is valuable, because it keeps options open. If the current food source dries up, or is blocked, then the white-footed mouse will have other paths to pursue; and if a new food source develops, the mouse's deep preference for exploring alternatives makes its discovery more likely. The white-footed mouse may not indulge in profound reflection about maintaining options, but that does not diminish its real preference for open alternatives.

There is nothing mysterious or miraculous about our commitment to open alternatives, whether we are humans or chimps or white-footed mice.<sup>1</sup> Such preferences are not a "capricious jumping about", and they require neither "noxious fantasies and vulgar trivialities" nor "unmoved movers" with their special metaphysical or super-rational powers. In fact, it is not difficult to find the basis for the valuing of open alternatives. We live in – and successful animal species evolved in – a world filled with changes. That does not mean that we can never step in the same river twice, or successfully follow the same path to food or safety or seminar. But while our world is not a blooming buzzing capricious muddle, neither is it immutable. Productive food sources wither, formerly barren berry patches become fruitful, favorite paths are blocked by predators and floods and highway construction, and animals that keep their options open enhance their survival chances. There are advantages to open escape alternatives, whether you are a deer exploring the forest, a rabbit visiting Mr. MacGregor's garden, or a commuter driving through heavy traffic.

Alternatives help us avoid starvation, predators, and traffic jams, and it is not surprising that we – humans and other animals – value them. But these valued alternatives are not transcendent mysteries. What we need is not cosmic choice, but instead the capacity to pursue alternatives in response to changing environmental circumstances. Humans may be able to create more alternatives, and through the resources of language and higher cognitive abilities – and novels and movies and paintings – explore paths without physically trudging down them. But the value of our more elaborate alternatives is rooted in the same survival advantages that lead mice and rabbits and chimpanzees to also value open options.

Millions of years before philosophers – or any other primate – walked the earth, animals that had taken the evolutionary path away from insects found value in having choices.<sup>2</sup> It is only when we seek ways in which humans are somehow special and distinct and different-in-kind from the rest of the animal world that this common and valuable element of free will gets apotheosized into something mysterious and complex, the exclusive property of deities and godlike humans.

#### AUTHENTICITY

It is not difficult to demonstrate the value and importance of alternatives. But the claim was that the alternatives version of free will could find common ground with authenticity views that *reject* alternatives. Friendly as this approach is toward open alternatives, authenticity seems to be excluded. Harry Frankfurt and Gerald Dworkin and Susan Wolf champion a free will that does not require alternatives; instead, it makes profound authentic commitments. Proponents of this version of free will differ concerning the measure of such true commitment: for Harry Frankfurt (1971, p. 16) it is a “resounding Commitment” at some upper hierarchical level of willing (I decisively will to have this character, and that willing “reverberates” through every hierarchical level); for Susan Wolf (1990), it is a commitment to “the True and the Good”. But whatever the diversity of these views, they join forces in denying that alternatives are essential for free will. The authenticity emphasis is on deep commitments: commitments that do not shift with the tides and times, but are instead fixed marks for setting a steady course through the changing fads and fancies of immediate environmental contingencies. This authenticity approach seems to be in mortal conflict with the open alternatives view of free will: Hilary Bok (1998, p. 21) compares it to the basic value split of the American Civil War. And indeed it does appear difficult to discover any common ground between them. After all, how could one follow the straight and narrow authentic path while exploring open options? But from a larger metacompatibilist perspective, the alternatives and authenticity accounts can be viewed as having a common purpose. The free will of authenticity and deep commitments and allegiance to

principle is the perfect complement for the free will of alternatives. Rather than fundamentally opposed conceptions of free will, they are two sides of the same natural process.

The capacity to “stick with” a path or project when it offers no immediate benefits is valuable. If a mouse abandons a productive foraging route because of one failed run, she will reject many paths that would reward continued pursuit. And as Thomas Kuhn (1962) noted, if scientists abandoned promising research programs when one prediction failed, then many productive new paradigms would die aborning. Thus authentic commitments are a way of keeping paths open that might otherwise fall into disuse and be lost. Of course such deep commitment can go wrong. There may be something noble about the knight who battles for lost causes, the captain who goes down with the ship, and the engineer who dies with hand on the throttle; but like Voltaire’s Dr. Pangloss, commitment can become an obsession that destroys rather than enhances free will (and postulating an absolute True and Good may be one of the best ways to turn healthy commitment into stifling obsession).

So authenticity is not a competitor to alternatives, but an ally. It maintains valuable options that would otherwise be too hastily abandoned. When we benefit from following a particular path, we tend to take that path again. If the path has offered extensive benefits we become dedicated to the path, and continue to follow it for some time after its rewards have dried up, gradually reducing the frequency of taking that route – but certainly not dropping the path after one dry run. If the once bountiful but recently barren path again offers rewards, our path-following is swiftly restored to high level. If this happens on numerous occasions – a path offers benefits, then yields none, and later the benefits are restored – this pattern shapes deep commitment to that path, and we will not give up on the path even when it remains long barren. Certainly humans have more resources for fashioning deep authentic commitments than do other animals (we can employ explicit rules and principles, for example) but the underlying authenticity function remains the same. The deep rooted desire for alternatives discovers new paths that authenticity keeps open.

This metacompatibilist account of alternatives and authenticity makes them allies. But some compatibilist advocates of authenti-

city may ask: are option-preserving commitments *really* authentic? Mustn't they have a deeper basis that marks them as commitments that reflect our *true* selves, something more than the commitments that our environments happened to shape? I concur that this model can not satisfy such demands; but I doubt that any naturalistic model can make sense of a true self established independently of our genetic and conditioning history. That will require instead a true self assigned by God, or a true self that conforms to Susan Wolf's transcendent standard of the "True and Good". It is sometimes suggested that a deeper account of authenticity can be established on the basis of reflective higher-order approval, without requiring appeal to godly standards of "True and Good". Certainly reflection is a useful means of strengthening and sustaining our commitments. If I am committed to a friendship, and reflectively approve that commitment, then I can take deliberate steps to strengthen the friendship should I sense that it is waning or my affection is cooling: steps such as reviewing the many kindnesses my friend has shown me and the pleasant experiences we have shared. But if such reflection is employed to establish a deeper "true" authenticity, it generates more problems than solutions.

Consider Frankfurt's famous example of the willing addict. This addict not only desires drugs, but deeply and reflectively *prefers* to desire drugs, and Frankfurt counts him a free and authentic addict. Along similar lines, Gerald Dworkin's reflective authenticity account of freedom drives him to count even one who is deeply enslaved as free: "a person who wants to be restricted in various ways . . . is not, on that account alone, less autonomous . . . . In my conception, the autonomous person can be a tyrant or a slave . . ." (1988, pp. 18, 29). So on this account one who is willingly enslaved – whether to drugs or a human tyrant – can be free and authentic if he reflectively approves his enslavement. But when a theory of authentic free will reaches the conclusion that some people are "true and authentic slaves" and thus *free* in their enslavement, surely that should lead us to doubt the legitimacy of the theory (whatever Aristotle and antebellum Southern planters might have thought to the contrary). For consider one who has become a willing addict or satisfied slave: such an individual has lost the struggle to escape, has developed – in psychologist Martin Seligman's (1975) phrase – a

deep learned helplessness, and has lost the will and capacity to seek other paths and better options. On this view, the slave who strives to be free lacks freedom, but the slave who has been so profoundly defeated and discouraged that he abandons hope and accepts – even identifies with – his enslavement has somehow gained authenticity and freedom. The slave who struggles for freedom is certainly not free; but the slave who has been so completely shackled that she loses all hope of freedom and identifies totally with her enslavement is even further from freedom. The addict who struggles to escape the addiction that is destroying her career, her family life, her hopes and dreams and ambitions, is not free; but the addict whose addiction has left her bereft of all other opportunities and options and who now clings to addiction (because life without addiction would be totally empty) has not regained her freedom.

The metacompatibilist model does not count willing slaves as truly authentic and therefore free, and it can offer a principled justification for limiting such extreme authenticity claims of free will. For the metacompatibilist views authenticity as a complement to alternatives: authentic commitments enhance alternatives by keeping options open that would otherwise be too quickly abandoned. A deep and “authentic” commitment to friendship enlarges alternatives by preventing the loss of an enriching friendship; in contrast, a resigned commitment to enslavement or addiction closes other paths and destroys alternatives. Thus metacompatibilism offers a natural explanation for why authenticity considerations are useful, and does so with no appeal to mysterious or transcendent ideals. Authentic commitments serve their useful function of preserving options with no aid from final truth or ultimate goodness or perfectly rational evaluation.

Metacompatibilism shows the value of open alternatives without requiring miracle-working or naturalism-transcending special powers: it preserves the benefits of open alternatives without the nonnatural burdens. It also exhibits the benefits of authenticity, without the problems of requiring implausible conditions on the commitment process. Individual free will requires both alternatives and authenticity, and we can examine their complementary benefits on a larger social scale. Marvin Zuckerman describes the advantages of combining sensation-seeking, alternative-pursuing adventurers

with others who are steady reliable followers of proven authentic paths: “The survival of species that live and move in groups is enhanced by having some members who are adventurous and others who are more cautious and orderly. The biological value of a Columbus to the species is incalculable, but for every Columbus there must be more cautious types who stay at home and keep the books, make the star charts, codify the laws, and plant the crops” (1983, p. 38). And just as both types contribute to a productive and adaptive social group, so also individuals – whether mice or men, explorers or bookkeepers – prosper when they can pursue new alternatives as well as preserve authentic productive paths.

#### REASON AND SPONTANEITY

Metacompatibilism forges an alliance between alternatives and authenticity, but there is another basic division among traditional accounts of free will, and the opposing sides seem even more intransigent. One side sees reason as the key element of genuine free will, while the competing perspective counts spontaneity – even irrational spontaneity – as the hallmark of free will, and the two accounts apparently have little in common. But if we look deeper at the rationalists and anti-rationalists, then we discover a common motive behind their positions.

Reason offers a useful enhancement of human free will. Humans are rather slow and clumsy primates, and vulnerable to attack. Reflective deliberation is often our best way of exploring more alternatives at less risk. Donald Campbell (1974) insightfully describes human intelligence and language as “vicarious locomotor devices”: they offer information on alternative paths without requiring that we take the time and risk to physically explore them. So intelligent reflection expands alternatives for humans, just as keen scent or swift feet increases alternatives for other animals. And turning to the authenticity side, reasoning – including conscious rule-following – can sustain us on a temporarily trying path. When our friend is short-tempered we may reflect on past kindnesses and thus maintain our loyalty; and we can employ rules to stay on the sometimes harsh path of virtue when its advantages seem distant and the temptations immediate. Thus reason is a powerful enhancer of both the alternatives and authenticity elements of free will.

On the other hand, spontaneous exceptions to rational rules keep us from getting too deeply set in our ways. Susan Wolf notes that on the open alternatives model of free will we “want not only the ability to act rationally but also the ability to act *irrationally* – but the latter is a very strange ability to want, if it is an ability at all” (1990, p. 54). But in fact we may sometimes benefit from Dostoyevsky’s two plus two equals five kind of irrational (or at least nonrational) choice: it keeps us from settling single-mindedly into the currently optimum path to the exclusion of other open possibilities. e. e. cummings reminds us that

wholly to be a fool  
while Spring is in the world  
my blood approves

and only the most obsessively rationalistic, profoundly enslaved, or religiously indoctrinated will be immune to the charms of a spontaneous foray down a new path of discoveries or ideas or romance. Most new foraging paths come up empty, and pose unknown hazards besides: the narrowly rational would avoid such risks. The great majority of new businesses fail, so the cautiously rational entrepreneur would stick with a safer course. And as Thomas Kuhn noted, new paradigms often are initially less successful in their overall predictions than are the established theories they ultimately replace; so an exclusively rationalistic deductivist account of the history of science will not capture an important element of scientific change. Thus rationality has an important role to play in human free will, but not to the exclusion of nonrational spontaneity. They are valuable parts of the same option-enhancing process.

#### CONCLUSION

The metacompatibilist approach to free will transforms apparently conflicting elements – alternatives as well as authenticity, rationality but also nonrational spontaneity – into complementary components. But the account is not likely to satisfy the longings of all philosophers. If one looks to free will as a way of insuring humans a special semi-divine status and setting humans apart from the natural world – a motive felt by Pico della Mirandola (1948) in

the 15th Century, Kant in the 18th, and Chisholm in the 20th – then this decidedly naturalistic account will offer no solace. Instead this reconciliation project will appeal primarily to those who find charms in deep authentic convictions but are also drawn to free and open alternatives, who cherish reason but who also feel the appeal of foolish risk-taking. If one can suppose that philosophers as diverse as Barrett, Campbell, Wolf and Frankfurt have all revealed something important in their various accounts of free will, then metacompatibilism shows how that can be a consistent and coherent judgment.

Does this actually reconcile *compatibilism* with *incompatibilism*? In one strict sense – compatibilists insist that free will is compatible with determinism, while incompatibilists hold that it is *not* – making the two views consistent is a logical impossibility. The goal here is not to show that libertarian open-alternatives *incompatibilism* can be made strictly compatible with single-path authenticity *compatibilism*. Some basic differences between Jean-Paul Sartre and Susan Wolf are irreconcilable. Rather, the goal is to show that, contrary to philosophical appearances and assumptions, those opposing views stem from a common deep motive: the natural desire for open options.

But does metacompatibilism support *compatibilism* or *incompatibilism*? Which side does it favor? Fundamentally, metacompatibilism favors open alternatives: the need for open alternatives is a basic motivation and common goal behind the libertarian, authenticity, rationality, and anti-rationality free will factions. So in one respect metacompatibilism is aligned with the libertarians. That commitment to open alternatives notwithstanding, metacompatibilism is ultimately a compatibilist view. Open alternatives are basic, but they require neither mysteries nor the absence of determinism. Metacompatibilist open alternatives are available to us in changing environments and in response to new situations, and we have been shaped by our long-term history to favor and preserve such options. Such open alternatives could be generated by Kane's (1985) amplified random quantum events, but there is no reason to suppose that determinism could not generate an adequate variety of paths.<sup>3</sup>

Metacompatibilism will not provide the "ultimate responsibility" that Kane (1985) seeks in his naturalistic libertarian position

and that has driven many other libertarians toward mysteries and miracles; thus it will obviously not satisfy all libertarians, and may satisfy none. The goal is not, however, to convert libertarians to the compatibilist or metacompatibilist cause, but to respectfully incorporate their genuine insights into an account of free will that is empirically plausible, simpler, and more comprehensive. Metacompatibilism does not aim at adding another weapon to the compatibilist struggle against incompatibilism. Philosophical adversaries have emphasized the conflict between the views; metacompatibilism insists that our deep desire for both open alternatives and deep authentic commitments, as well as our need for both rational caution and irrational spontaneity, are *all* vital elements of our natural and adaptive free will. Given the conflicting “intuitions” that are held concerning free will, it is not likely that one competitor can triumph on its inherent merits. But this unifying model has the advantage of being psychologically and biologically plausible; and for those who take seriously a naturalistic approach to free will, metacompatibilism accommodates significant elements of the major free will accounts within a purely naturalist framework.

Metacompatibilism has another advantage, beyond its attempt to show how several distinct philosophical tunes can be sung in harmony. It gives an explanation of *why* we should find free will appealing, and without appeal to contested notions of moral responsibility or special godlike human status. We value options and alternatives; and like our mammalian cousins the white-footed mice, we have good natural grounds for favoring such alternatives.

Metacompatibilism takes four basic elements that philosophers have widely thought to be essential elements of free will – elements that appeared to be fundamentally incompatible – and demonstrates how important features of each can be integrated into a single account: open alternatives enhance our opportunities and protect us from disaster; authentic commitments preserve valuable alternatives that would otherwise be lost; reason facilitates the discovery and exploration of a wider range of alternatives (and reduces the exploratory risk); and some degree of irrationality permits imprudent voyages of discovery and exploration that sometimes reveal useful options. Furthermore, this unified metacompatibilist account is not an *ad hoc* construction crafted merely to accommodate those diverse

philosophic intuitions, but instead an account that rests squarely on empirical research findings in psychology and biology. This obviously does not establish the truth of metacompatibilism nor answer all our questions about free will; but metacompatibilism is at least a broad and congenial setting in which compatibilists and incompatibilists, rationalists and irrationalists, might devote less energy to their differences and more attention to exploring common ground.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Recent research on sensation seeking establishes strong links between the human preference for open alternatives and comparable preferences in other animals: links that include common psychophysiological phenomena in the sensation seeking (alternative pursuing) of humans and other species. While studying sensation seeking in rats, G. D. Ellison (1977) found levels of serotonin and norepinephrine that were correlated with the levels in sensation seeking humans. Research by Redmond, Murphy, and Baulu (1979) found corresponding variations in levels of platelet monoamine oxidase in rhesus monkeys and humans that were high in sensation seeking, and Shekim et al. (1989) found similar results in human personality studies. (See also Zuckerman, 1983 and 1994.)

<sup>2</sup> That is not to say that they found no value in rote behavior. Obviously they do, and we do: consider our swallowing reflex and eye blinks. Nor is it to suggest that the turn to alternatives will ultimately be the most successful. My own bet is that insects will be around long after primates have joined the dinosaurs in peaceful extinction. The point here is that for the path we have started down, and from which there is no turning back, maintaining open alternatives is very adaptive. The capacity to pursue alternatives may not ultimately prove most adaptive, but it's our best shot. Razor sharp teeth may be a better defense than a strong kick, but if a strong kick is what you've got, best make good use of it.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Kane's (1985) libertarian theory shares with metacompatibilism a firm commitment to naturalism. Thus it is legitimate to query the evolutionary plausibility of Kane's posited generator of amplified random quantum events. Such a randomness amplifier serves two functions: it protects from (what Kane calls)

covert non-constraining controllers (such as the mad neurological scientists of philosophical infamy) and it supports claims of *ultimate* responsibility for our choices. But it is difficult to imagine how a hypothetical philosophical peril and a high-level philosophical principle could exert the selective pressure required for the evolution of such a mechanism. The open options required by metacompatibilism can be explained in terms of our changing environment and the natural advantages of sensation seeking. On the naturalism measure, metacompatibilism seems to have an advantage.

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