

## REASONS AND FREEDOM

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### 1. Introduction

In this chapter, I intend to defend libertarianism against an important and recurrent objection to it. Libertarianism comes in different versions,<sup>1</sup> but common to all of them is the view that most adult human beings have, and sometimes exercise, free will and that free will and its exercise are incompatible with determinism. Therefore, libertarians consider indeterminism as a necessary condition of free will.

An important motivation to embrace libertarianism is the conviction that most persons sometimes are morally responsible for what they decide and do, in the deep sense that they actually deserve praise or blame, and eventually reward or punishment, on account of those decisions and actions. On my view, only libertarianism provides a solid enough ground for moral responsibility, understood in the indicated sense.

In taking indeterminism to be a requirement of free choices, libertarianism faces the objection that undetermined decisions and actions are bound to be made in an arbitrary, chancy way and thereby to be irrational or arational. If, holding fixed all the factors that precede the decision, all the beliefs, purposes, character traits, values, etc., the decision remains undetermined, how it finally goes will be a matter of chance and arbitrariness; hence it will not actually be a free and rational decision. This objection has been presented in different forms and has received several labels, such as the ‘Luck

objection’, the ‘Arbitrariness objection’ or the ‘*Mind* objection’.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I intend to defend libertarianism against this objection on the basis of a reflection on reasons and practical deliberation. I will argue for the consistency between causally undetermined choices and rationality.

There are several issues concerning the nature of reasons and the structure of practical reasoning and deliberation that are plagued with controversy. But an issue that seems especially relevant to a defense of libertarianism is whether deliberation is a matter of *weighing* reasons or of *weighting* them. I will try to defend the second option against charges of irrationality. In the next section I will present these two views. Sections 3 to 7 present several arguments for and against either view of deliberation. Section 8 proposes additional considerations in favor of indeterminate yet rational choices. And section 9 offers a brief conclusion.

## **2. Reasons and deliberation: weighing and weighting**

Those who take deliberation to be a matter of *weighing* reasons conceive the reasons that an agent considers in deliberating as having a determinate weight or force for the agent, before she starts considering them. Of course, this weight or force will be different for different agents, depending on such factors as their character, values, circumstances, and so on. On this view, deliberation is a process in which the agent registers or detects the weight that each reason or set of reasons she considers has for her. She then makes the decision that is backed by the stronger or weightier reason or set of reasons, and this decision will be the rational one to make. In this context, deliberating, and even deciding, are relatively *passive* processes. Neil Levy has recently characterized weighing in an especially clear way, and held that this is what we take to be doing in deliberating: ‘We *weigh* reasons when we try to find out how significant they are for us, given our beliefs,

values, plans, goals and desires ... It is, I think, quite obvious that when we engage in deliberation, we take ourselves to be weighing reasons...' (Levy 2007, p. 234).

Instead, those who conceive of deliberation as a matter of *weighting* reasons do not take reasons to come before the agent with a determinate, precise weight. It is rather the agent who gives or assigns them a determinate weight. Unlike the alternative conception, the agent does not restrict herself to recognizing a previously existing weight; instead, she contributes to the weight that different reasons will finally have for her. As in the alternative model, the agent makes her decision on the basis of the weightier or stronger reason, but which reason this is depends partly upon her. Deliberating and deciding are more *active* processes than in the weighing model.

As far as I know, it was Robert Nozick who firstly gave an explicit form to the weighting model of deliberation and defended it. He writes: 'The reasons do not come with previously given precisely specified weights; the decision process is not one of discovering such precise weights, but of assigning them' (Nozick 1981, p. 294). And this is Levy's recent characterization of weighting: 'We *weight* reasons when we assign them a weight and thereby a significance for us, either ignoring any preexisting weight they might have had, or varying it' (Levy 2007, p. 234). Besides Nozick, John Searle (2001), Patricia Greenspan (2012), David Wiggins (1978) and Robert Kane (1996), among others, have also advocated this model. Wiggins, for example, writes: 'The weight of the claims represented by ... [our] concerns is not necessarily fixed in advance' (Wiggins 1978, p. 145).

I have spoken of weighing and weighting as models of deliberation, and I have used the term 'model' in a half-technical way, for in both perspectives deliberation seems to be understood through an implicit comparison with a real process of estimating the weights of different objects by using scales. Before proceeding further, it seems clear that

to speak of the ‘weight’ of reasons is only a useful metaphor, something that tends to be forgotten, so that the talk about weightier or lighter reasons is often taken quite literally, with easily misleading effects. In what follows, we should keep in mind the metaphorical nature of the discourse about the weight of reasons.

The weighing model of deliberation is sympathetic with determinism about decision making, in that the preexisting ‘weight’ of reasons is taken to cause the invisible plates of the psychic scales to go up or down in a determinate way as a function or result of that weight, thus causing the decision according to it. From this starting point, the view can be developed in a compatibilist or in a hard determinist direction.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the weighting model is friendly to libertarianism, in that, according to it, before the decision there is, at least concerning reasons, no decisive element that acts with fixed strength on the agent’s decision.

### **3. Weighting, arbitrariness and irrationality**

As I have mentioned, the traditional and most important objection that has been raised against libertarians, especially by compatibilists, is that an undetermined decision is a random, arbitrary, and hence irrational act, so that it is neither a free act nor one for which the agent can be truly responsible.<sup>4</sup> Now, this objection can also be, and has actually been, raised against the weighting model of deliberation. According to Levy, ‘If you make decisions by assigning weights to your reasons, varying the weight that they would have for you were you instead to weigh them, you make your decision arbitrarily’ (Levy 2007, p. 236), and hence arationally or irrationally. ‘But a decision that is *arational*, or irrational, is not a free decision’ (Levy 2007, p. 236). So the power to weight reasons, an active causal power, ‘does not enhance freedom; it actually reduces it’, in that it introduces ‘an element of chance’ (Levy 2007, p. 236) in the process of decision making. In the same vein, later on he writes: ‘To the extent to which my decision departs from the

course that the weight my reasons have for me recommends, it does so arbitrarily' (Levy 2007, p. 238).

It may seem that Levy is right and that assigning weight and significance to reasons is made for no reason and hence in a capricious, random way, which in turn would make it into an irrational or arational process. However, I shall dispute this claim. I shall be contending, first, that, weighting reasons is an indispensable process in certain cases, in which the reasons we take into account cannot be compared as to their respective weight or strength, so that weighing them is not an available resource; second, that, even if it were to involve an element of arbitrariness, weighting need not be an arational or irrational process; and third, that there are additional sources of indeterminate yet rational decisions.

As a preliminary point, let me insist on the maybe obvious but no less important point that weighting reasons can only be done by agents who can be aware of their reasons and reflect on them. This opens for these agents the possibility of looking at their reasons from a certain distance, taking a reflective attitude towards them and asking themselves whether to act on them or not.

#### **4. Incommensurable reasons**

Concerning the first contention, a case where weighting seems indispensable has been pointed to by some libertarians. Kane, for example, has given central importance in his theory to choice situations where the options faced by the agent are supported by incommensurable sets of reasons. Situations like this are far from uncommon. Quite often we have to choose between two courses of action, one supported, say, by moral reasons and the other by prudential ones, so that, though both sets of reasons appear as very important to us, we are unable to place them on a single measuring scale. Cases like this

seem to require precisely weighting, giving weight to one or the other set of considerations, rather than merely weighing them.

A usual criticism raised against defenses of libertarianism based on these cases, which I myself made against Kane (Moya 2006, p. 153) is that a choice based on two incommensurable sets of reasons, with no criterion or higher value to cover both of them, involves an element of arbitrariness and arationality (if not irrationality) that seems incompatible with free will, at least if it requires rational control over one's decisions. However, and in relation to the second contention, I shall be arguing, following the steps of Patricia Greenspan (2012) and Kane himself, that, even if choosing between incommensurable sets of reasons were to involve some element of arbitrariness, it need not be arational or irrational. 'Arbitrary' is not synonymous of 'arational' or 'irrational', and the frequent transition from the former to the latter is not always justified.

In order to defend this claim, let me reflect on a somewhat different group of cases, where, unlike what happens with moral and prudential reasons, both sets of reasons are not, so to speak, on the same level.

## **5. First- and second-order reasons**

In situations where moral and prudential reasons conflict, both sets can be said to be on the same level in the sense that they are directly about actions, although each set favors an action (-type) that is different from, and incompatible with, the one favored by the other. Reasons of this kind may be called first-order reasons. In other cases, however, one of the reasons is not directly about actions, but about (first-order) reasons. Following Joseph Raz (1978), we may call reasons of this kind 'second-order reasons'.

Second-order reasons may resolve the conflict between incommensurable (sets of) reasons by discarding or 'discounting' one of them. Given that first- and second-order

reasons do not have the same object, in that the former concern directly ways of acting whereas the latter concern directly other reasons, talking about one of them being stronger or weaker, weightier or lighter than the other makes no clear sense. According to Raz, conflicts between first- and second-order reasons are not resolved ‘by the strength of the competing reasons’ (Raz 1978, p. 132). First- and second-order reasons are incommensurable, though in a different sense than moral and prudential reasons can be said to be so.

The problem is again whether embracing a second-order reason is arational or irrational, so infecting the solution to the conflict. My response will be that, on pain of regress, embracing a second-order reason need not itself to be based on (further) reasons and, nevertheless, it can be a rational mental act. I claim that second-order reasons involve the possibility of weighting (first-order) reasons without irrationality.

At this point, let me refer to a previous work of mine (Moya 1990), for I think it may help clarify this issue. In his (1970), Paul Churchland famously argued that reasons explanations of actions were nomological in character. To show this, he made explicit a universal conditional or ‘law’ that, according to him, is presupposed in such explanations. If we allow X to range over agents, F over things wanted by them and A over actions, Churchland’s ‘law’ was as follows:

L<sub>1</sub>: (X) (F) (A) (If [1] X wants F, and [2] X believes that A-ing is a way for him to bring about F under those circumstances, and [3] there is no action believed by X to be a way for him to bring about F, under the circumstances, which X judges to be as preferable to him as, or more preferable to him than, A-ing, and [4] X has no other want (or set of them) which, under the circumstances, overrides his want F,

and [5] X knows how to A, and [6] X is able to A, then [7] X A-s) (Churchland 1970, pp. 221-222)

In my book, I intended to show that  $L_1$  was false by proposing a ‘do-it-yourself’ refutation. The refutation was this:

Wait until there is something, call it D, you really want; make sure you know an action, call it A, by means of which you can get D and that there is no other action you judge preferable to A in order to get D; make sure there is not anything else you want more than D; make sure you know how to A and that you are able to do it. Given all that, to refute Churchland’s law, simply do not do A. Therefore,  $L_1$  is false. Q.E.D. (Moya 1990, p. 84).

Suppose that D is to sit comfortably and have a fresh, aromatic coffee after finishing some hard work. A foreseeable objection, which I considered there, is that one of  $L_1$ ’s antecedent clauses, namely clause [4], was not satisfied, for you actually had a stronger desire, namely to refute Churchland’s law, which overrode D (cf. Moya 1990, p. 84).

A response I gave to this objection is that it seems to understand by ‘the strongest (or stronger) desire’ the desire on which one finally acts. If this is so, then the law is irrefutable indeed, though at the price of losing its putative character of a true empirical law and becoming a sort of stipulation or quasi-analytic statement.<sup>5</sup>

However, I also met the objection in a different way. What my ‘refutation’ showed, I held, was that something was missing in Churchland’s law and in the view of



human agency that underlies it, 'namely that human agents show *reflexivity* in their intentional actions, that is, they can make their desires objects of further reflection and that, as a result of this, they can, at a higher level, decide or intend to act on this or that desire, and even on no desire at all' (Moya 1990, p. 85).

This second way of meeting the objection takes us closer to the issues we are dealing with. From our present vantage point, it can be seen to contain, in an implicit way, the notion of a second-order reason. If, at least for the sake of argument, we allow desires to be reasons, we can interpret the second response to the objection as implying that our reason not to act on our desire for coffee could not be said to be stronger (or weaker) than this desire itself. Such a reason, say to refute Churchland's law in an attempt to affirm our autonomy, could be said to be a second-order reason. It was not a direct reason for not having coffee, that is, it was not a reason to act in some particular way, but rather a reason to discard or discount another reason, a first-order reason, namely our desire for a fresh and aromatic coffee. That to refute Churchland's law is not a direct reason for not having coffee can be seen from the fact that if we gave it as a response to the question, 'Why don't you have coffee?' our interlocutor would not immediately understand it. It would be in need of an interpretation.

Just as conflicts between incommensurable first-order reasons, such as moral and prudential reasons, are quite common in ordinary life, it is also quite common to resort to a second-order reason in order to solve such conflicts. We can interpret Kane's example of the executive in these terms (Kane 2002, p. 417). The example is roughly this. An executive rushes to an important meeting that will take place in her firm in a few minutes and that can have important consequences for her career when she meets the victim of a recent assault, who has been injured and is in urgent need of help. Two options open to her. She can stop and care about the victim because she needs help; or she can proceed to

the meeting because it is very important for her career (hoping, maybe, that someone else will take care of the victim). The first is a moral reason and the second can be construed as a prudential one. It may be the executive's commitment to a moral principle or to a prudential principle, perhaps in view of a personal ideal, the decision to become a certain sort of person, which can adjudicate the conflict and lead her to assign more weight to one or another set of reasons and act accordingly. Both options are open to her; if we suppose that the reasons supporting each option are equally significant for her, though in different respects, then she can rationally choose either by weighting it in the light of a second-order reason.

Levy would maybe object to this line of thought by holding that we are not characterizing real weighting, but indirect weighing:

We do, of course, sometimes try to make things matter more (or less) to us than they do ... But (at least typically) this isn't weighting at all, but instead an indirect way of weighing ... Properly weighting reasons, in the sense at issue here, is not indirect weighing: it is not trying to give greater weight to a reason in the light of the weight of other reasons. Instead, weighting a reason is assigning a weight to a consideration *for no reason at all* (Levy 2007, p. 235, my emphasis).

Given this absolute lack of reasons for weighting, this process cannot but appear as arbitrary, *and hence* irrational (or arational). But this characterization of weighting is highly problematic. In saying that weighting is made for no reason at all, it gives an unfaithful and even question-begging picture of that process, as it has been defended by such thinkers as Nozick and Kane. In typical situations where weighting seems required,

such as a choice between two options supported by incommensurable reasons, the agent takes into account at least the reasons that support either option and assigns more weight to one set of reasons than to the other, at least partly, on account of those reasons themselves. Here is Nozick making this move, and holding that actions are caused, though not causally determined, by reasons:

As the person is deciding, mulling over reasons  $R_A$  which are reasons for doing act A and over  $R_B$  which are reasons for doing act B, it is undetermined which act he will do. In that very situation, he could do A and he could do B. He decides, let us suppose, to do act A. It then will be true that he was caused to do act A by (accepting)  $R_A$ . However, had he decided to do act B, it then would have been  $R_B$  that caused him to do B. Whichever he decides upon, A or B, there will be a cause of his doing it, namely  $R_A$  or  $R_B$ . His action is not causally determined, for in that very situation he could have decided differently; if the history of the world had been replayed up until that point, it could have continued with a different action. (Nozick 1981, p. 295)

Kane makes a similar move when he writes that, in situations of choice between two courses of action backed by incommensurable sets of reasons, ‘The agents will *make* one set of reasons or motives prevail over the others then and there *by deciding ...*’ (Kane 1996, p. 133), which means that, whatever decision the agent will make will be made for the reasons that speak for it, and hence it will be a rational decision.<sup>6</sup> These texts by Nozick and Kane unveil the unfairness of Levy’s presentation of weighting as made ‘for no reason at all’.

## 6. Contrastive explanations and rationality

However, even if he were to accept this rejoinder, Levy could contend that the real problem with weighting is that it leaves us without a *contrastive explanation* of the agent's choice (Levy 2008).<sup>7</sup> A contrastive explanation aims at answering a question of the form, 'Why is A the case *rather than* B?'<sup>8</sup> In the case of a choice, a contrastive explanation would provide a reason for the agent's choosing to do A *rather than* B or vice versa. And it seems that the weighting model cannot do it. This problem was already raised by Ernst Nagel. According to Nagel, a rationalization 'may render the action subjectively intelligible but it does not explain why this rather than another equally possible and comparably intelligible action was done'.<sup>9</sup> Though the agent has reasons to do A and reasons to do B, if he chooses to do A for the reasons that favor this option, there is no (additional) reason why she does not choose B instead for the reasons that favor this alternative option (and vice versa). The arbitrariness objection can then be raised again in a new form.

Taken as the demand for a contrastive explanation, Levy's arbitrariness objection can be met by the libertarian in the following terms. The factor that explains why the agent decided and acted on reasons A *rather than* B was precisely her assigning more weight to the former rather than the latter, then and there. This is likely to leave a critic like Levy unsatisfied. The question will surface again: why did she assign more weight to reasons A rather than to reasons B? However, if what the critic is really asking for when he requires contrastive explanations as a condition of rationality of choice is *causally sufficient conditions* for this choice then he is clearly begging the question against the libertarian, for he is assuming that only causally determined choices can be rational. Hence, interpreted as the demand for causally sufficient conditions of the agent's choice, the demand for a contrastive explanation is dialectically inappropriate.

Defendants of weighting, however, can accept (in a non-question-begging form) the contrastive explanation requirement and try to meet it by appealing to what we have called a second-order reason. In the case of a choice between incommensurable reasons, such as moral and prudential ones, the second-order reason may be a commitment to a moral rather than a prudential principle, or to moral rather than prudential goodness (or the other way round). We can also understand this way of solving the conflict by means of weighting as the mental act that Patricia Greenspan (2012, p. 193) has called ‘setting priorities’. The agent thought, then and there, that moral criteria should prevail over non-moral ones. Both Raz’s second-order reasons and Greenspan’s setting priorities are ways of discounting or discarding certain first-order reasons from the vantage point of a reflective stance towards those first-order reasons that the agent considers.

## **7. The arbitrariness objection strikes back**

But the arbitrariness objection can be raised again with respect to the agent’s commitment to certain values or to her setting priorities. Are not these acts made ‘for no reason at all’ and hence in a fully arbitrary way? At this point it is convenient to distinguish between more and less trivial cases.

A case of the former kind is Greenspan’s example (Greenspan 2012, p. 196) of choosing a place to spend a short holiday after a conference in Italy. Rome and the Riviera are the options she considers. Both appear as equally attractive, though for different and maybe incommensurable reasons. One way of solving the conflict is moving to a higher level of reflection and asking herself whether her priority concerning that holiday, then and there, would be enjoying works of art or relaxing. She opts for relaxing and thereby assigns more weight to the reasons in favor of the Riviera than to those in favor of Rome. She weights. Clearly, the arbitrariness objection is still there. Why not choose enjoying art instead? In the terms we put the issue, we still lack a contrastive explanation.

Greenspan's response is to bite the bullet and admit that the choice is somehow arbitrary, while denying nonetheless that it is thereby irrational. Given that she is overall a rational agent, making this choice in this particular situation is not an irrational move, even if it involves some arbitrariness. What Greenspan rejects, and plausibly so, is the move from 'arbitrary' to 'irrational' (or 'a-rational').

Raz (cf. Greenspan 2012, p. 197) gives an example which could also meet the arbitrariness objection in a similar direction. Someone may accept that in global terms certain films are better than others, but for some period of time she can choose which films to see exclusively in terms of their photography. Having a good or interesting photography becomes then a second-order reason, in terms of which she discards many reasons to watch certain films, and does so somewhat arbitrarily; but, on the face of it, there is nothing irrational in this way of proceeding.

In these rather trivial cases the relevant factor that provides the contrastive explanation is the agent's setting a priority or embracing a second-order reason in whose terms she assigns more weight to some reasons rather than others. This setting or embracing may be arbitrary, but is not irrational. And the deep part of the arbitrariness objection against weighting (and against libertarianism generally) is the irrationality or arationality part, rather than arbitrariness as such. The possibility of arbitrary yet rational choices can successfully meet that traditional objection to libertarianism.

Second-order reasons or priorities can be adopted for particular situations, without committing the agent to adopting them on future occasions. This may happen in trivial cases, such as Greenspan's example. The fact that she adopts relaxing as the priority for her holidays then and there, so choosing the Riviera rather than Rome, does not mean that she could not (rationally) adopt a different priority for her next holidays.

It would seem that, in less trivial cases, with the structure of the example of Kane's executive, these changes of second-order reasons or priorities must have narrower limits, on pain of the agent's becoming unforeseeable and unreliable, something that almost no one, libertarian or not, would consider as an ideal of free agency. In non-trivial cases, embracing a second-order reason or setting a priority in a particular situation may contribute to the adoption of a long-term policy, which becomes or constitutes part of someone's identity as a free and morally responsible agent. Even Kane (1996, pp. 113-115) takes choices in such non-trivial situations to be 'will-setting', in the sense of contributing to build up the agent's self in the long term and to incline her will in a certain direction on future occasions.

However, even in non-trivial cases there is some space for weighting in a somewhat arbitrary though not irrational way. The fact that, on a particular occasion, our executive chooses to favor moral reasons and help the victim does not commit her to making a similar choice in similar situations in the future, though it may increase the likelihood of her doing so. Faced with an analogous choice situation, she can privilege prudential reasons over moral ones. She can say to herself, 'Now it's time to care about myself'. Again, there can be an element of arbitrariness in this move. If asked whether she thinks prudential reasons to be more important than moral ones, she may answer, 'I don't know whether they are more important, but they are certainly important, and this is why I am making this choice'. Being an overall rational agent, this element of arbitrariness in her choice does not involve irrationality.

Suppose the executive reflectively privileges moral considerations on the basis of a second-order reason or high-level criterion. Is there a reason for her choice of this criterion? There need not be, if for a reason we understand an *additional* reason. The only reason is the criterion itself and its goodness, as it appears to the agent. If asked, she can

say she decided to stop and look after the victim because she needed help. She gives a reason for his act. If asked why the victim's needing help is a reason for her to help, she maybe can resort to some moral principle or reason. However, iterating this demand for further reasons leads in the practical realm to the same absurdity as we find, concerning theoretical reasoning, in the famous Lewis Carroll's example of Achilles and the tortoise (Carroll 1895).

That the moral second-order and/or first-order reasons appear to the agent as good is enough (within certain limits) to make deciding on them a rational mental act. In fact, we can also defend the rationality of weighting in cases like Kane's executive in terms of the distinction between satisficing and maximizing in rational decision theory. In many choice situations, satisficing, that is, making a decision that is good enough in the circumstances is already a rational act, whether or not it is the best decision one could make. Maximizing, that is, making the better or the best decision is not always necessary for rationality. However, if satisficing is a rational procedure itself, then the demand for a contrastive explanation, for reasons to choose act *A rather than B* as a general condition for the rationality of the choice loses justification. In many circumstances, it suffices for rationality that reasons for *A* are simply good ones; it is not also required that they are the best or at least better than those which favor *B*. And vice versa.

In situations of choice between options backed by first-order reasons, given the reflective power of our minds, there is always the possibility of moving to a higher-order level of reasons or priorities, thereby changing the terms of the practical problem. That the possibility is there speaks up for the undetermined nature of choice. Suppose that you face a choice between two jobs. In one of them you will be better paid than in the other. From this point of view, the scales favor clearly one option; but you can reflectively modify the choice situation and discard earnings as a valid reason in light of other



priorities or second-order reasons. This is the sort of reflective move that can lead to deep changes in your way of life, values and character.

### **8. Additional sources of indeterminate yet rational choices**

Now I would like to point to some other important sources of indeterminacy in decision making, which again can be consistent with rationality. It might seem that, once a second-order reason has been embraced or a priority has been set, the problem of choosing between courses of action according to the first-order reasons in favor of each is already settled. I do not want to deny that this may be so in some particularly clear situations, such as the example of Kane's executive, where the decision to help the victim, unlike the decision to rush to the meeting, is obviously backed by moral principles. But this example, as many others we find in the literature, is artificially deprived of many complexities that usually accompany choice situations in real life.

In many real-life circumstances, even if we face a difficult choice situation with a second-order reason, for example an evaluative principle, in place, it is still an open question what it means, in the particular circumstances, to act in accord with the reason or the principle; which of the first-order reasons should be assigned more weight in the light of the reason or principle at hand is an additional task which the agent must still undertake. An example may help make this point clearer. Suppose that someone embraces friendship as her guiding principle (second-order reason, priority) in a particular situation, where she has to choose whether to tell a dear friend of hers that he suffers a serious and incurable disease, something she has just known from the doctor who takes care of her friend, or to hide this unfortunate and depressing fact to him. It is plausible to think that there are good reasons for either decision, but the second-order reason she embraces, namely honoring friendship, does not give a clear verdict concerning which reasons she should assign more weight to and act on in this particular situation. What it means to be

faithful to the value of friendship in these circumstances is still undetermined. She cannot get rid of the effort to make a decision even after committing herself to a higher-level criterion. She has to engage in a subtle and complicated deliberation. And the decision she finally makes, whatever it is, far from being irrational, will be supported by good reasons. Before making it, the decision is undetermined by her reasons, even second-order, and once it is made, it is also rational.

On the basis of this reflection, the assumption behind the view that rational deliberation proceeds always as weighing, namely that reasons have determinate weights before deliberation, shows itself as highly simplistic. The very process of practical reasoning, with its different levels of reflection and interactions between them, may lead the agent to alter any putative pre-existing weights that reasons might have and change, even radically, the terms and structure of a practical problem.

## **9. Conclusion**

In this paper, I have argued for the possibility and the actuality of choices that are both undetermined and rational, as a relevant aspect of a general vindication of libertarianism. To this end, I have defended the weighting model of deliberation against charges of irrationality or arationality. The possibility of reflectively ascending from first-order to second-order reasons and priorities is a central part of this defense. Choices between alternative actions backed by incommensurable reasons as well as conflicts between first- and second-order reasons and priorities are two important cases that can give rise to indeterminate yet rational choices in practical reasoning. I have also pointed out that choosing for good reasons is often enough for a rational choice; it is not needed that those reasons are the best or better than any alternative. Finally, an additional source of indeterminacy-cum-rationality in practical deliberation comes from the fact that, in many circumstances, the commitment to a second-order reason or the setting of a certain priority

do not fix a unique response to a practical problem. If, as I hope to have shown, indeterminate-and-rational choices are possible, the Luck Argument loses much of its force.<sup>10</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In characterizing free will, some versions of libertarianism insist on the importance of alternative possibilities of decision and action effectively accessible to agents (leeway libertarianism), while others focus on the agent's being the ultimate source of her decisions and actions (source libertarianism); still others combine both requirements. My own preference favors the latter version. Additionally, there are non-causal, agent-causal and event-causal versions of libertarianism. These distinctions do not bear essentially upon our defense, which supports libertarianism at a quite basic level, prior to those differences.

<sup>2</sup> For two recent defenses of this sort of objection see Shabo (2014) and Schlosser (2014).

<sup>3</sup> It could even be developed in a libertarian direction, provided that the causal relation between reasons and action is interpreted as merely probabilistic.

<sup>4</sup> For different statements of the objection see Schlosser (2014).

<sup>5</sup> Schueler's (1995) distinction between two different senses of the word 'desire' is highly relevant to this issue.

<sup>6</sup> We can find a similar move in Kim (2010, p. 140).

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the demand of a contrastive explanation is one of the forms that the Luck objection can take.

<sup>8</sup> A simple, non-contrastive explanation would respond instead to a question of the form, 'Why is A the case?'

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Kim (2010, p. 140).

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