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## On the Signpost Principle of Alternate Possibilities: Why Contemporary Frankfurt-Style Cases are Irrelevant to the Free Will Debate

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# **On the Signpost Principle of Alternate Possibilities: Why Contemporary Frankfurt-Style Cases are Irrelevant to the Free Will Debate**

William Simkulet

## **Abstract**

This article contends that recent attempts to construct Frankfurt-style cases (FSCs) are irrelevant to the debate over free will. The principle of alternate possibilities (PAP) states that moral responsibility requires indeterminism, or multiple possible futures. Frankfurt's original case purported to demonstrate PAP false by showing an agent can be blameworthy despite not having the ability to choose otherwise; however he admits the agent can come to that choice freely or by force, and thus has alternate possibilities. Neo-FSCs attempt to show that alternate possibilities are irrelevant to explaining an agent's moral responsibility, but a successful Neo-FSC would be consistent with the truth of PAP, and thus is silent on the big metaphysical issues at the center of the free will debate.

## **Introduction**

Frankfurt-style cases (FSCs) are modeled after a case in Harry Frankfurt's "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," where in an agent is purported to be uncontroversially morally responsible despite lacking the ability to do otherwise.<sup>1</sup> If FSCs are as advertised, they would be counterexamples to the principle of alternate possibilities (PAP), according to which one is morally responsible for something only if she could do otherwise. Much has been written about FSCs, but the general consensus is that they fail to be genuine counterexamples to PAP.<sup>2</sup> The reason FSCs have garnered such attention is that PAP is said to play a vital role in the debate over whether free will is consistent with determinism. Contemporary proponents of FSCs have largely abandoned the goal of constructing a counterexample to PAP, and instead aim to show merely that alternate possibilities don't play a role in determining an agent's degree of moral responsibility. This article

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<sup>1</sup> Frankfurt 1969.

<sup>2</sup> See Fischer 2010 and Widerker and McKenna 2003/2006 for strong work on the topic.

argues that this concession by proponents of FSCs dramatically undermines their relevance to the free will debate.

The main goal of this article is to show that while a successful traditional FSC would demonstrate the falsity of PAP, a successful Neo-FSC, sometimes called a "buffer zone" FSC<sup>3</sup>, would be irrelevant to the truth or falsity of PAP. PAP, the principle Frankfurt claims "is false" (1969, 829), is most often interpreted as asserting that indeterminism is metaphysical prerequisite for true moral responsibility<sup>4</sup>. Frankfurt says of PAP that "Its exact meaning is a subject of controversy, particularly concerning whether someone who accepts it is thereby committed to believing that moral responsibility and determinism are incompatible." (1969, 829) While traditional FSCs are meant to be genuine counterexamples to PAP<sup>5</sup>, Neo-FSCs attempt to show only that alternate possibilities are irrelevant to explaining an agent's moral responsibility for her free actions.<sup>6</sup> The best way to illustrate the difference between these two approaches is in terms of their implications for a specific interpretation of PAP, known in this paper as the signpost interpretation of the principle of alternate possibilities (SPAP):

SPAP - A necessary, but not sufficient, condition for agent *A*'s being morally responsible for something *s* is that *A* could have done otherwise.

This article is divided into three sections. In the first, I discuss the virtues of traditional FSCs as purported counterexamples to PAP, but demonstrate why these cases fail.<sup>7</sup> In the second section, I show that Neo-FSCs are

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<sup>3</sup> Franklin 2009.

<sup>4</sup> By "true moral responsibility" here I mean to capture, roughly, what Galen Strawson discusses in "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility." See Strawson 1994/2002. For the purposes of this paper, "moral responsibility" is to be understood as "true moral responsibility."

<sup>5</sup> See Fischer 1992; Mele, Robb 1998.

<sup>6</sup> See Hunt 200, 2005; Pereboom 2001, 2005, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Oddly, this approach is largely indifferent to Frankfurt's original goal of undermining PAP by undermining its appeal. Initially Frankfurt argued that PAP was appealing because of its relationship to a different commonsense moral principle, the coercion principle, which is sometimes said to leave an agent no alternative to doing as their coercer desires. (1969) Frankfurt's initial versions of the case were meant to provide a counterexample to coercion principle; his case, he says, called attention to an important distinction, "that making an action unavoidable *is not the same thing* as bringing it about that the action is performed." (2003/2006, 340) He says "Appreciating this distinction tends to liberate us from the natural but nonetheless erroneous supposition that it is proper to regard people as morally responsible for what they have

concerned with demonstrating the falsity of a robust principle of alternate possibilities (RPAP):

RPAP - A necessary and sufficient condition for agent *A*'s being morally responsible for something *s* is that *A* had robust alternate possibilities to *s*, where a robust alternate possibility is relevant to explaining *A*'s degree of moral responsibility for *s*.

I argue Neo-FSCs fail to demonstrate the falsity of RPAP, and instead illustrate its truth, that an agent's genuine alternate possibilities play a vital role in determining her degree of moral responsibility in both traditional and Neo-FSC. In the third section, I argue that a hypothetically successful Neo-FSC that demonstrates the falsity of RPAP would fail to demonstrate the falsity of SPAP. Furthermore, such a case is consistent with SPAP and would be insufficient to undermine our commonsense commitment to SPAP. While a successful Neo-FSC would break significant ground in the study of how one's degree of moral responsibility is determined, it would be silent about the metaphysical prerequisites of moral responsibility that are at the heart of the debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists about free will.

### **I. On Frankfurt Style Cases**

Prior to Frankfurt's attack, there was little doubt about our commitment to PAP. Frankfurt says of the principle, "Practically no one... seems inclined to deny or even to question that the principle of alternate possibilities (construed in some way or other) is true." (1969, 829) Frankfurt sought to convince the reader of the principle's falsity by tying it to another supposedly commonsense moral principle, the coercion principle. On Frankfurt's interpretation, both principles offered sufficient conditions to absolve an agent of moral responsibility; in PAP's case if the agent lacked the ability to do otherwise; in the coercion principle's case if the agent was coerced. Frankfurt believed that our commitment to PAP was contingent on the truth of the coercion principle, and by demonstrating the falsity of the coercion

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done only if they could have done otherwise." The problem is that this distinction is largely irrelevant, as the supposition in question just is the supposition that moral responsibility and determinism are incompatible. In all cases where an agent is determined to act, the thing that makes it unavoidable just is that which causally determined the agent to act; the intuition in question just is the intuition that it would be inappropriate to blame someone in such a case. See Ginet 1996.

principle he would undermine the appeal of PAP.<sup>8</sup> He argued that when an agent acted indifferently to a coercive threat, and freely chose to do the same actions he might otherwise have been coerced into, that agent would be uncontroversially morally responsible for her actions despite the coercive threat.<sup>9</sup> After this, Frankfurt shifts to presenting a case meant to be a direct counterexample to PAP. Here is an updated version of this case:

Neuroscientist Black wants Jones to kill Smith at time *t*. Black is fairly certain that Jones will do this freely, however he doesn't want to take any chances. Black secretly installs a device in Jones's brain that is designed to causally determine him to choose to kill Smith at time *t*. Unbeknownst to Black the device will remain dormant if Jones were to freely choose to kill Smith at time *t*; however if Jones would have freely chose not to kill Smith, the device would activate causing him to kill Smith.<sup>10</sup> As it so happens, Jones freely chooses to kill Smith and the device remains dormant.

The appeal of Frankfurt's case is that it attempts to sidestep the more thorny metaethical and metaphysical issues that have become the calling card of the free will debate, and is designed to be an open-ended counterexample to any reasonable interpretation of PAP, regardless of what kind of alternate possibilities one interprets PAP as requiring. Frankfurt stipulates that Jones's choice is free, allowing the reader to fill in whatever metaphysical

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<sup>8</sup> Frankfurt contends our intuitions about PAP are related to our commitment to the truth of the coercion principle but offers no explanation for this being the case. Although it sometimes makes sense to say that coerced agents can't do otherwise; Frankfurt contends that this isn't "strictly speaking" true. (1969, 834) Rather, when faced with some threats, one shouldn't do otherwise, and would be blameworthy if they tried. To act to avoid the bad consequences of a sufficiently horrible threat, then, is not responsibility absolving; rather it is *prima facie* praiseworthy. Not only is the coercion principle not implied by PAP, it doesn't even have the same kind of implications as PAP. The coercion principle is about how we ought to calculate one's degree of moral responsibility; where as a thief might be *prima facie* blameworthy, where we to learn the thief acted under a coercive threat to save her children's life it would become clear that she acted in a praiseworthy manner. In contrast, according to PAP, if we were to learn that a thief was actually a complicated robot wholly causally determined by its programming to steal, PAP offers a quick explanation why that thing is not morally responsible like a person would be; because it had no say, no alternatives.

<sup>9</sup> Frankfurt worries that it doesn't make sense to say that such an agent is coerced; however he expands upon this view later to great effect. See Frankfurt 1973.

<sup>10</sup> This case is partially based one found in Alfred Mele and David Robb's 1998 article "Rescuing Frankfurt-Style Cases."

prerequisites they believe are necessary for moral responsibility. For incompatibilist readers, this means Jones inhabits a world where there are multiple possible futures at any given time. Jones is said to be both uncontroversially morally responsible for his free choice to kill Smith, and to be unable to do otherwise. Frankfurt says "Of course it is in a way up to him whether he acts on his own or as a result of Black's intervention. That depends upon what action he himself is inclined to perform." (1969, 836)

The problem with Frankfurt's original case, and traditional attempts to build upon it, is that either it is unable to effectively cut off alternate possibilities, or it is such that the agent is not uncontroversially morally responsible. This argument against FSCs is known as the Kane-Widerker objection, sometimes called the "dilemma defense."<sup>11</sup> In order for Black's device to interfere only when Jones would choose otherwise, critics contend that it must pick up upon some prior state of affairs that is causally related to Jones's choice, such that either his choice is wholly causally determined, and as such he isn't morally responsible for his action according to the incompatibilist, or there are some situations where in the device will fail to prevent Jones from choosing otherwise. Alfred Mele and David Robb propose that the device could be triggered by some step within Jones's natural decision making process, and thus only activate if he would choose otherwise. While there is some concern that such a device wouldn't be consistent with the kind of libertarian agency incompatibilists believe is necessary for moral responsibility; the question is largely beside the point as Frankfurt, Mele, and Robb seem to agree that Jones can either act freely, or be forced to act, and that these are distinct possibilities.

Compatibilist John Martin Fischer has argued that FSCs can still be persuasive even if one needs to assume determinism in order to ensure that Jones cannot do otherwise and that it doesn't even matter if Jones is uncontroversially morally responsible.<sup>12</sup> The problem with this approach is that it ignores and abandons the open-endedness and persuasiveness of Frankfurt's original case. Fischer contends "... it is not alleged by the Frankfurt-style compatibilist that the strategy is *knockdown* or *decisive*." (2007, 470) However, this seems to miss the point of FSCs; if Jones's action is wholly causally determined by events that occurred long before he was born, Black's machinations are irrelevant to the explanation of why Jones

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<sup>11</sup> See Kane 1985, 1996; Widerker 1995; Ginet 1996; Wyma 1997; Goetz 2005; Simkulet 2012, 2014a.

<sup>12</sup> See Fischer 2000, 2007, 2010.

can't do otherwise. Fischer-style interpretations of FSCs might convince *compatibilists* of the falsity of PAP, but compatibilists already widely reject PAP.

Frankfurt's own account is inconsistent with Fischer's; Frankfurt volunteers that Jones has alternate possibilities, and that he can act either virtuously or viciously (1969, 826; 2003/2006, 343); he stipulates that there are two possible futures open to Jones; Jones can either freely choose to kill Smith, or be forced by Black to choose to kill Smith. The former is vicious and blameworthy; the latter is virtuous, perhaps even praiseworthy!<sup>13</sup> On Frankfurt's view it seems Jones would be praiseworthy for trying to make his choice in such a manner that would trigger Black's device; but because the device ultimately determines Jones's choice, it would be inappropriate to hold him morally accountable for the outcome of that deliberation.

Frankfurt's case is said to be a counterexample to SPAP because Black's device prevents Jones from choosing anything but to kill Smith, and intuitively he's morally responsible for that choice because he freely chose to do so. The problem is that Jones is only morally responsible for his choice if he freely chooses it; had he been forced to make the choice by Black's device, although his deliberation would have the same outcome, he wouldn't be morally responsible for its outcome. Jones has alternatives; he can freely choose to kill Smith, or freely choose to act in a way that, *sans* Black's device, would result in him choosing something else, but that thanks to Black's device instead results in him being (unfreely) caused to choose to kill Smith.

SPAP is agnostic on the role that one's alternate possibilities play in determining how morally responsible one is; it merely states that alternate possibilities are a necessary condition for moral responsibility; because Jones can act in either of two ways, Frankfurt's case fails to cut off alternate possibilities of the kind relevant to this principle, and thus fails to constitute a counterexample to the principle.

## II. On Neo-Frankfurt-Style Cases

Recent attempts to construct FSCs have moved away from trying to construct scenarios in which an agent completely lacks alternate possibility. Instead

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Otsuka similarly argues that the morally relevant kind of alternate possibilities in question are the alternate manner in which Jones can act; either freely (viciously) or be forced to act by Black (in such a way that makes it absurd to hold him accountable for his action). See Otsuka 1998.

these Neo-FSCs are meant to restrict an agent's alternate possibilities to possibilities that don't seem to be morally relevant. David Hunt and Derk Pereboom have each constructed cases of this kind, designed to show that the alternate possibilities open to the agents in question are insufficient to explain their moral responsibility.<sup>14</sup> Here are concise versions of these cases:

*Hunt's Revenge case*

Smith humiliates Jones, which causally determines Jones to have a strong desire to kill Smith. If Jones does not rid himself of this desire soon, it will causally determine him to choose to try to kill Smith. Jones knows acting on this desire would be wrong, and knows that to rid himself of this desire he must first *consider* his alternatives, then he must choose not to kill Smith. Black is monitoring Smith's thoughts, and if Jones considers not killing Smith, Black will intervene and force Jones to choose to kill Smith. As it so happens, Jones never considers his alternatives, and his desire to kill Smith causally determines that he chooses to kill Smith, and he does. (Hunt, 2005)

*Pereboom's Tax Evasion case:*

Joe believes that he can get away with cheating on his taxes, but that doing so would be wrong. His strong desire to advance his self interest will causally determine him to cheat on his taxes unless he chooses otherwise. However, he cannot choose otherwise *on a whim*; he knows a prerequisite for him to choose otherwise is for him to freely raise his moral attentiveness level through the use of his libertarian free will. If he raises it enough, he will be able to use his libertarian free will to reconsider; however he might then freely choose act either in his self interest, or act as he believes is moral. Unbeknownst to Joe, Black has implanted a device in his brain that is triggered by him reaching the appropriate level of moral attentiveness. When triggered, the device robs him of his libertarian free will and causally determines him to cheat on his taxes. As it so happens, Joe never uses his libertarian free will to raise his moral attentiveness level "and he chooses to evade taxes while the device remains idle." (Pereboom, 2008)

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<sup>14</sup> See Hunt 2005, Pereboom 2001, 2005, 2008.



Jones and Joe are supposed to be uncontroversially morally responsible for their actions, and both have the ability to do otherwise - Jones can freely consider not killing Smith (which would prompt Black to intervene and rob him of his free will), while Joe can freely raise his moral attentiveness level (which would trigger Black's device and rob him of his free will). The primary difference between these cases and Frankfurt's original is that in the original, Frankfurt admits Jones can act virtuously - he can act in such a way that would counterfactually lead to him choosing not to kill Smith - and in doing so be *prima facie* praiseworthy; however in Hunt and Pereboom's cases, the best Jones can do is to freely *consider* not killing Smith, while the best Joe can do is raise his attentiveness level to *consider* not cheating on his taxes. Because after this consideration, Jones and Joe could go on to freely act immorally, they do not consider the alternate possibility to consider doing otherwise as a robust alternate possibility, where an alternate possibility is robust if and only if an agent knew she would be differently morally responsible if she chose that action.

Hunt and Pereboom contend that Jones and Joe, respectively, are morally culpable for their actions, despite lacking robust alternate possibilities and if this is the case RPAP is false. The problem for this account is that both Jones and Joe *know* that considering alternatives and raising one's moral attentiveness level, respectively, are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for freely choosing to do otherwise.<sup>15</sup> While it is true that the needlessly complicated (and evolutionarily deficient) buffer-step that Hunt and Pereboom incorporate into their agents' decision making process might lead to either a morally praiseworthy or blameworthy decision by that agent, both agents know that this step is a necessary prerequisite to doing what they believe is right.<sup>16</sup>

If one has a moral obligation to do something *y*, and *x* is a necessary, but not sufficient, step for obtaining *y*, one has a moral obligation to do *x*. As such Jones and Joe are each morally obligated to take this step; Jones has a moral obligation to freely consider his alternatives, and Joe has a moral obligation to raise his moral attentiveness level. Although Black's

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<sup>15</sup> In Hunt and Pereboom's original cases they fail to specify whether Jones or Joe have sufficient working knowledge of their bizarre mental faculties to *know* the steps they need to take to act otherwise. This article stipulates that they have this knowledge, because if they were ignorant of such things it would be absurd to expect them to do otherwise as they would have no reason to do so, and thus absurd to hold them morally accountable for failing to take the steps to change their minds.

<sup>16</sup> See Simkulet 2014a.

monitoring makes it impossible that Jones can ever freely choose not to kill Smith, and Black's device makes it impossible that Joe can ever freely choose not to cheat on his taxes; both Jones and Joe know that they have a strong moral obligation to do otherwise, and fail to do so. Implicit in the idea of a moral obligation is that if one fails, one is differently morally responsible than if one succeeds. As such, the buffer-step that Hunt and Pereboom construct constitutes a robust alternate possibility - if Jones and Joe take this step intending it to be the first step in avoiding a blameworthy action (killing Smith, cheating) in favor of a praiseworthy action (not killing Smith, not cheating), they are inherently praiseworthy for doing so.

I've argued that Jones and Joe have a strong moral obligation to engage in the steps they believe are necessary prerequisites for freely choosing to do what each thinks is right - not killing Smith, and not cheating on taxes, respectively - and that if they do these prerequisites for these reasons, they are morally praiseworthy for doing so. However, it is possible that Jones and Joe engage in these steps for other reasons. Suppose that Jones knows that unless he considers his alternatives, he will be causally determined to kill Smith, but that Jones wants Smith to experience worse, say by letting Smith live and systematically killing everyone and everything Smith loves. By stipulation, Jones knows the only way he can choose to do such a thing is to freely consider his alternatives. If, intent upon getting his revenge, Jones considers his alternatives (with the hope of choosing this long drawn out torture over a swift death), Black will intervene and rob Jones of his free will and causally determine that he kills Smith then and there. If this were the case, it doesn't make sense to say that Jones is morally blameworthy for Smith's death... but he is blameworthy for something. He is blameworthy for freely acting in such a way that he believes is a necessary prerequisite for his murdering Smith's friends and loved ones to bring about that very consequence.

Although critics of Neo-FSCs could focus on demonstrating the *prima facie* praiseworthy possibilities of Jones or Joe acting otherwise, it is clear that whether they would be praiseworthy or blameworthy for their alternate possible actions depends upon the intentions they take those actions with.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It strikes me as possible that a well-intentioned Jones might still freely choose to either kill Smith, or get revenge on Smith by killing Smith's friends and family; however such a Jones would still be *prima facie* praiseworthy for acting in a manner such that he believed was necessary for him to do what is right. He is, however, blameworthy for his latter, wrong, free choice.

Rather than demonstrate the falsity of RPAP, it seems as though Neo-FSCs actually demonstrate its truth; an agent's beliefs about the moral character of their possible intentional actions play a vital role in determining her degree of moral responsibility. If Jones were to consider his alternatives hoping to do worse than kill Smith, he would be blameworthy for doing so (and blameless for being forced to kill Smith by Black), while if Joe were to raise his moral attentiveness level in hopes of doing the right thing, he would be praiseworthy for doing so (and as Pereboom contends Joe's choice to cheat on his taxes is the result of his being determined to act in his self interest, Joe would be blameless for being caused by his beliefs about his self interest to cheat on his taxes as a result).

### III. Why Neo-Frankfurt-Style Cases are Irrelevant

In the previous two sections I've argued that traditional FSCs fail to demonstrate the falsity of SPAP, and Neo-FSCs fail to demonstrate the falsity of RPAP. The goal of this section is to compare the implications of a hypothetically successful traditional FSC with those of a hypothetically successful Neo-FSC.

For our purposes a successful traditional FSC is stipulated to have the following characteristics: The agent, Jones\*, is actually and uncontroversially truly morally blameworthy for his free choice,  $s$ , and he is blameworthy to non-zero degree  $d$  for  $s$ . Jones\*'s moral responsibility for  $s$  is not derivative of some prior act  $r$  that preceded it. Jones\* could not do otherwise; by this I mean that from the moment that immediately preceded Jones\*'s deliberative process in which he chose  $s$ , there was only one possible way in which he could choose  $s$  and no possible way that he could choose other than  $s$ . There was no way such that he could choose  $s$  and be morally blameworthy in any other degree than  $d$ .

A successful traditional FSC would be a decisive counterexample to both SPAP and RPAP, directly demonstrating the falsity of the principles. Jones\* would be morally responsible despite lacking the ability to do otherwise, but even if he had the ability to do otherwise it would be irrelevant to explaining how morally responsible he is. This case does not show that moral responsibility is impossible within an indeterministic universe, but it would demonstrate the truth of compatibilism.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Note that a successful Fischer-style interpretation of a FSC would prove the truth of compatibilism. It strikes me that such a successful case would also undermine the majority of

For our purposes, a successful Neo-FSC is stipulated to have the following characteristics: The agent, Joe\*, is actually and uncontroversially truly morally responsible for something, his free choice *c*, and he is blameworthy to degree *b* for *c*. Joe\* had alternate possibilities, but these alternate possibilities are not relevant to explaining his moral responsibility for *c* to degree *b*. By this I mean that Joe\* has a set of alternate possibilities *a*, composed of one or more alternate possibilities, and that had he had acted on any of the alternate possibilities within set *a*, he would still have been blameworthy to degree *b*.

A successful Neo-FSC demonstrates the falsity of RPAP; Joe\* would be morally responsible despite lacking robust alternate possibilities because the alternate possibilities within set *a* would be irrelevant to explaining Joe\*'s blame. However, at least as formulated above, a successful Neo-FSC is not a counterexample to SPAP, Joe\* is stipulated to have alternate possibilities. If this were the case, then it is still possible that there is some connection between moral responsibility and indeterministic metaphysics, such that compatibilism is false.

Assuming the existence of a successful Neo-FSC, critics of SPAP have two options to attack SPAP: First, they might revise the successful Neo-FSC such that Joe\* would be blameworthy to degree *b* for choice *c* regardless the size of the set of alternate possibilities he has, such that if Joe\* had no alternate possibilities (an empty set *e*), Joe\* would be blameworthy to degree *b* for choice *c* in the same exact way as if he had alternate possibilities. If successful, all this approach does is turn the Neo-FSC into a traditional FSC, which by assumption would be a counterexample to SPAP.

The second way in which a critic might argue against SPAP, given a successful Neo-FSC, is to argue that our belief in SPAP is contingent on our belief in RPAP. This style of argument is similar to Frankfurt's original assertion that our commitment to the truth of PAP is based, at least in part, on our commitment to the coercion principle. I don't see how this argument could gain any traction among proponents of SPAP. The appeal of SPAP is that alternate possibilities serve as signposts that indicate an agent might have the kind of control over their actions necessary for moral responsibility. In contrast, the truth of RPAP might actually be a problem for incompatibilists; the thought that such alternate possibilities might play a role in determining an agent's moral responsibility is actually quite troubling, raising the specter

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our beliefs about moral responsibility and undermine the idea that commonsense moral intuitions could be a reliable guide to either metaphysical or moral truth.

of moral luck.<sup>19</sup> Analytically, the truth of RPAP necessitates the truth of SPAP; but proponents of SPAP leery of the problem of moral luck are far more likely to reject RPAP than attribute their belief in SPAP to it.<sup>20</sup>

Not only would a successful Neo-FSC fail prove the falsity of SPAP, but there is no reason to think that a Neo-FSC's proving RPAP false would give us any reason to rethink our commonsense commitment to SPAP. To my knowledge, proponents of Neo-FSCs don't argue RPAP is connected to our beliefs about any other principles relevant to the free will debate; and thus I have to conclude that a hypothetically successful Neo-FSCs would be silent on the issues relevant to the debate over free will; in contrast a successful FSC would have substantial implications for the debate, demonstrating the truth of compatibilism. This is not to say that a successful Neo-FSC would be irrelevant; quite the contrary. A successful Neo-FSC would seem to show that some actions have fixed moral value; for example maybe killing Smith always wrong to the exact same degree and always wrong in the same manner. On this view, killing Smith for embarrassing you at a party might be as wrong and equally as bad as killing Smith because it is the only way to stop him from murdering thousands of helpless newborn infants.

If that sounds wrong, it's probably because it is. I've argued there are no successful traditional FSCs and that there are no successful Neo-FSCs. Rather than demonstrate the falsity of RPAP, I've argued (unsuccessful) Neo-FSCs demonstrate its truth; killing Smith out of revenge is *prima facie* blameworthy; however killing Smith because it is the only way to prevent him from murdering infants is *prima facie* praiseworthy. The reason why killing Smith in the former case is morally abhorrent is because there are better alternatives; the reason it is morally necessary in the second is because there are no better alternatives. However all of this is quite beside the point; what this article set out to show was that while a successful traditional FSC would have substantive implications for the free will debate, a successful Neo-FSC would do nothing of the sort; I believe it has succeeded in this goal.

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<sup>19</sup> For more on moral luck see Nagel 1976, Zimmerman 2002, 2006, Simkulet 2014b.

<sup>20</sup> Moral luck would occur if and only if something outside of an agent's control would determine their moral responsibility; however as demonstrated in Hunt and Pereboom's cases, the existence of alternate possibilities don't determine the moral responsibility of either Jones or Joe; however the agent's beliefs about their alternate possibilities plays a vital role in explaining why they are morally culpable to the degree in which they are, much as Frankfurt argues that an agent's beliefs and intentions surrounding a coercive threat determines how morally culpable they are for acting in accordance with that threat, because of the threat, or indifferent to the threat.

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