Journal of Philosophical Theological Research
Print: 1735-9791
Online: 2538-2500

Free Agency and Lemos's Indeterministic Weightings Model of Libertarian Free Will

Neil Campbell

Professor Department of Philosophy Wilfrid Laurier University necampbell@wlu.ca

Abstract

I explore John Lemos's recent indeterministic weightings model of libertarian free will and evaluate its promise as a model for human and artificial free agency. First, I disambiguate two different interpretations of the model and clarify which interpretation Lemos prefers. I distinguish between an episodic model and a non-episodic model. According to the first, there are discrete weightings of reasons that occur during deliberation. According to the second, there are no such discrete weightings; instead, reasons are assigned their weights at the end of deliberation just before choosing. I argue that Lemos prefers a non-episodic model that avoids a version of the luck objection, namely, one raised by Haji. I then raise some problems for the non-episodic model. First, I argue following Haji that the model lacks a sufficiently agent-centered account of how an agent assigns weights to her reasons. However, I propose that the model might avoid this problem if it included an appeal to a higher-order setting of priorities by the agent. Despite this possibility, I also argue that without providing a deeper account of the plural voluntary control agents have over the undetermined weighting of reasons, the model is too luck-infected to succeed.

Original Research

Keywords:

artificial agency, free will, indeterminism, deliberation, plural voluntary control

Received: 2026/04/03; **Received in revised form:** 2026/06/12; **Accepted:** 2026/07/15; **Published online:** 2026/07/20

Campbell, N. (2026). Free Agency and Lemos's Indeterministic Weightings Model of Libertarian Free Will. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, (Special Issue on AI, Consciousness, and Human Agency), 28(3), 91-110. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2026.17198.3657

Copyright © The Author

Introduction

With rapid developments in Large Language Model artificial intelligence and connectionist systems that learn at unprecedented rates, it is natural to raise questions about the kind of agency of which such systems might one day be capable. Could an artificial intelligence make free and responsible choices, and hence, be a morally responsible agent? As companies rush to incorporate AI into a variety of physical systems that interact with the environment (and with us), from smartphones to autonomous vehicles, the importance of this question becomes increasingly palpable. While it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of the possibilities presented by emerging technology, sober reflection suggests that there is little reason to hope for a clear answer to the above question about artificial agency without first understanding the nature of free and responsible agency in ourselves. It was only by creating models of human intelligence that artificial intelligence became possible, and so it seems that if we want to assess the viability of artificial agency, we need a model of human agency first. If one is a libertarian about human agency, a viable model appears to be a long way off.

Libertarians about free will claim that non-derivatively free choices must be undetermined.1 This is because libertarians believe that to choose freely agents require alternative possibilities, which would be precluded if all choices were determined. The libertarian appeal to indeterminism has taken a variety of recent forms in the literature, leading to several competing models of free agency. To mention just a few, Kane (1996, 1998, 2009a, 2009b, 2014, 2015, 2021, 2023, 2024) describes undetermined efforts of will to choose one alternative over another; Valerian approaches (also sometimes called "modest libertarianism") proposed (though not endorsed) by Mele (1995) and Dennett (1981) appeal to the indeterministic coming to mind of the considerations that figure in deliberation; similarly, Pitman (2012) invokes undetermined acts of the imagination in the generation of conceived alternatives and their potential consequences; while Franklin (2013, 2018) appeals to undetermined basic mental acts over which agents have direct control; and Balaguer (2004, 2012, 2014) describes torn decisions settled by a quantum neurological process. All these models face problems about luck and control. In each case it is claimed by various critics [2] that the presence of an indeterministic process in

1. I use the term "non-derivatively" free choices in contrast to derivatively free choices because of a distinction made by Kane (1998). The former (what Kane calls "self-forming actions") must involve alternative possibilities and be undetermined. The latter can be determined by one's character but are free to the extent that the character from which such choices issue was of one's own free making via previous undetermined (non-derivatively free) choices.

2. The luck-based objections to libertarianism are too numerous to list here, but the following provides a recent sample: (Haji, 2000; van Inwagen, 2000; Mele, 2006; Levy, 2008; Moore, 2021).

deliberation renders the choice too luck-infected to ground free and responsible action. However, in several recent works, John Lemos (2018, 2021, 2023) proposes another libertarian option in the form of his indeterministic weightings model. In the following discussion, I explore Lemos's theory and assess whether his model is any more successful than those that precede it at avoiding the traditional problems of luck and control, and hence, evaluate its potential to serve as a model for human and for artificial agency.

Lemos's Indeterministic Weightings Model: The Basics

I begin with an initial sketch of Lemos's proposal. Lemos's central idea is to locate the indeterminism operative in non-derivative libertarian free choices squarely within the process of deliberation as opposed to putting it at the beginning as Franklin, Pitman, and Valerian theories do, or at the very end as Kane or Balaguer do. Drawing on Nozick (1981) and McCall and Lowe (2005, 2008), Lemos proposes that what is undetermined is the weight that the agent assigns to her reasons during deliberation. Here the somewhat metaphorical notion of "weight" is a matter of the relevance or degree of rational, pragmatic, or other justification a reason provides for one of the alternatives about which the agent is deliberating. That is, when the agent deliberates about whether to choose A or B, one should assume not that each of the reasons for and against A and B has objective weights that the agent tallies up, but that the agent assigns weights to these reasons. Furthermore, the agent's weighting of her reasons is undetermined, meaning that she might have weighted her reasons differently, and if she did, her reasons might have supported a different choice.

To illustrate, consider Lemos's example of Jane deliberating about whether to vacation in Hawaii or Colorado:

> Suppose that as Jane deliberates she assigns in an undetermined way a greater evaluative weight to snorkeling and surfing and lesser weight to mountain views and whitewater rafting, and suppose as well that her choice of the Hawaii vacation is dictated by this assignment of weights. Here we have a vision of her choice as the product of an indeterministic deliberative process which she controls by her assignment of weights to the reasons in favor of each of the options. She ends up choosing the Hawaii vacation because she gave the greater weight to the reasons which support that option, but she could have chosen otherwise had she weighted her reasons differently." (Lemos, 2021, p. 143)

Lemos emphasizes the fact that weighting reasons is something the agent actively and intentionally does. In part, this is to avoid a difficulty he identifies

for Valerian libertarian theories. The problem, Lemos claims, is that on Valerian accounts there is insufficient opportunity for the agent to exercise control over the process such that the resulting choice is both a reflection and a product of the agent's character as opposed to something that merely happens to her. On the Valerian model it is undetermined what considerations come to the agent's mind, but once these arise in an undetermined way in consciousness, they determine the agent's choice. Since the agent does not control what thoughts come to mind or how they lead to choice, it is hard to see how the resulting choice could be an expression of the agent's will. The agent appears to be a mere conduit for these processes. However, things look different if the agent actively weights her reasons during deliberation. Since the weights that are assigned to the reasons that justify a choice are actively and intentionally assigned by the agent, the agent shapes her deliberation in a way that is reflective of her will.

But what of the claim that the weight that the agent assigns to a reason is undetermined? Wouldn't that undermine the idea that the resulting choice is something over which the agent exercises the kind of control required for the above sense of agency and for moral responsibility? If the way the agent weights her reasons is undetermined, isn't the weighting of her reasons and the resulting choice just a product of luck?

To address this, Lemos adopts a strategy employed by Robert Kane. Kane has long argued that an agent is responsible for an undetermined outcome so long as that outcome is the product of the agent's effort. The angry husband who tries to break a glass tabletop is responsible if he succeeds even if, due to some indeterminism in the angular momentum of his arm, he might have failed. Because he accomplished what he was trying to do and succeeded because of his effort, he is responsible for breaking the tabletop even though it was undetermined that he would succeed. As Kane puts it, "It would be a poor excuse for him to say to his wife, 'Chance did it (broke the table), not me'. Though there was a chance he would fail, chance didn't do it, he did" (Kane, 2014, p. 43). Lemos treats the agent's weighting of reasons in the same way:

> … the agent's active assigning of weights to his reasons plays the role of the efforts of will in Kane's view. By assigning a greater value to the reasons for A and lesser weight to the reasons for B, I actively do something which makes me then choose A and not B. On this view, the choice of A doesn't just happen to the agent; rather, just as on Kane's view the agent makes it happen by his actively and intentionally assigning a greater weight to the reasons for A (Lemos, 2018, p. 113).

Lemos also follows Kane in his claim that the agent exercises a compatibilist

variety of control over this intentional activity:

> By meeting … compatibilist requirements while assigning the weights, this ensures that it is the agent who is responsible for assigning the weights; she is not subject to the controlling will of another through force, manipulation, or coercion, and she is not overcome by foreign emotions that do not reflect her higher-order desires (Lemos, 2018, p. 114).

In this schematic form, Lemos's proposal looks like an attractive option for those drawn to libertarianism. First, it accounts for how an agent can have alternative possibilities. Since the way that an agent's reasons are weighted is undetermined, even if the agent's choice follows in a deterministic way from her reasons, she could have chosen otherwise since she might have weighted her reasons in a way that favored the other option. Second, the model does not appear to generate the concerns about irrationality that sometimes plague libertarian accounts of the ability to choose otherwise. Since the agent will (except for cases of weakness of will) choose in accordance with those reasons to which she has assigned greater weight, her choice is guaranteed to fit in a rational and explanatory way with her deliberation. Third, since assigning a weight to a reason is something the agent does intentionally and is something over which she exercises compatibilist-style control, this approach also appears to mitigate the usual concerns about luck. If such a model of freedom of choice holds up to scrutiny, perhaps it could serve to inform attempts to create artificial free agency. At least we would know roughly at what point we need to build indeterminism into an artificial system—assuming such a thing is possible.

To evaluate Lemos's proposal, there are a few details about the position that I need to bring into greater relief. I will focus on three points in the following paragraphs and raise some issues along the way.

When Are Weights Assigned to Reasons?

In *A Pragmatic Approach to Free Will*, Lemos is clear that agents assign weights to reasons prior to choosing. Indeed, this is the primary respect in which his account differs from Nozick's: Nozick holds thatthe weighting of reasons happens at the moment of choice. However, from Lemos's description it is not entirely clear when during deliberation but prior to choice the agent weights her reasons, or how often. One possibility is that the agent assigns a weight to each reason as it occurs to her during the process of deliberation. This would require a series of individual undetermined weightings that follow

each other in sequence as relevant reasons occur to the agent in temporal succession. It might also involve the possibility that an agent assigns a weight to a reason at time t, but later re-weights the same reason in light of new information or further reflection, say at time $t + n$. I will call this the episodic model, since the central idea is that there is a series of episodes of weighting of reasons by the agent throughout the process of deliberation.

At times, it seems as though Lemos intends to motivate an episodic model. In his discussion of objections to libertarianism by Neil Levy (2008, 2011), Lemos describes Jane's deliberation about where to vacation as follows:

> … as she considers the prospects for mountain views and whitewater rafting in Colorado, she may acknowledge that she is from Eastern Tennessee where one can do these things as well, but one cannot surf or snorkel. In light of this, she may give less weight to mountain views and whitewater rafting. Then, she may consider that she fears sharks, and knowing that sharks are present in the waters of Hawaii, she may begin to give less weight to the Hawaii trip. She may look up information on the likelihood of shark attacks and find that they are very rare, and this may lead her to give more weight to the Hawaii trip again (Lemos, 2021, pp. 144–145).

As presented, the example suggests that the agent has a consideration for or against one of the options come to mind, and then assigns that consideration a certain weight, though does so in an indeterministic fashion such that it might have been weighted differently. When Jane thinks about her fear of sharks this is given a certain weight against the Hawaii trip, though when she discovers how rare shark attacks are this is also given a certain weight in favor of the Hawaii trip. Jane's deliberation will, on the episodic model, involve a running tally of the pros and cons for each of the options and the choice will be a product of the net totals, whichever way they lean just prior to choosing.

Before I move on to an alternative interpretation, I want to flag an ambiguity that crops up in the passage just quoted. Under the episodic model the idea is that as reasons for and against each holiday destination occur to Jane, she assigns those reasons a certain weight and those reasons will, depending on the balance of the reasons for and against each trip, dictate which choice she makes. Note, however, that in the passage quoted above Lemos shifts from describing the agent assigning weights to the reasons for or against each option, to simply assigning greater or lesser weight to each trip. Perhaps I am being pedantic, but it does seem to matter which of these two things is happening if we are to be clear about the processes unfolding during deliberation and exactly what part or parts of those processes are

indeterministic. If what is happening is that the agent is assigning greater weight to one of the target choices as opposed to the reasons that support that choice, it becomes more difficult to see how the process of weighting reasons differs from choosing or how Lemos's model differs from Nozick's. Furthermore, the explanatory connection between the agent's reasons and choice loses its resolution if it is the alternative choices that are weighted without first weighting the reasons that justify each choice.

Given that Lemos is elsewhere quite clear that the weightings happen before choosing, I suspect Lemos's intention in the above passage was not to deviate from his earlier claim that agents assign weights to their reasons (as opposed to the choices or options), and so I suspect the ambiguity I have identified is simply the product of Lemos speaking loosely about the process. Setting aside this ambiguity, my first interpretation of Lemos's theory is that agents assign a certain weight to each reason as it occurs to them and then choose in accordance with the option that has the on-balance weightier reasons. I called this the episodic model.

However, in a more recent paper where Lemos (2023) addresses criticisms raised by Haji (2022), he says something that suggests a different interpretation than the episodic model:

> I don't see there being discrete distinct weightings made at different moments during deliberation. The weighting that occurs throughout the deliberation leading up to a choice is a continuous fluid process, and when a decision occurs it is typically made in conformity with where the weights are set at the time of decision (Lemos, 2023, p. 112).

Lemos has a tactical reason for denying that his model involves the discrete weightings described by the episodic model. He wants to avoid a model according to which it is possible to compare exactly similar agents in two contrast worlds at a particular time during deliberation who weight a reason differently at the next moment. Such a possibility would, as Haji argues, generate the intuition that what weight the agent assigns to the reason is a matter of luck, and this is an intuition Lemos understandably wants to avoid. (I will return to the issue of luck later. For now, I just want to clarify Lemos's model.)

If agents do not make discrete weightings of the considerations that occur to them as they come to consciousness during the process of deliberation as the episodic model claims, we are instead to think of the weighting of reasons as a process that continues up to just before the moment of choice. Given the passage just quoted, I do not think that one could even say that a consideration is given an initial weighting that might change over the course of deliberation as the agent revisits some of her reasons in light of new thoughts and ideas. It now seems that

the process of deliberation involves a keeping in mind of what factors are relevant to the choice, but how relevant those factors are (i.e., how much weight they are given) is not decided until just prior to choice. I will call this the non-episodic model since this approach denies that there are discrete episodes of weighting or re-weighting reasons prior to the weighting that immediately precedes choice.

It is worth noting that the non-episodic model fits amicably with Lemos's claim in *A Pragmatic Approach to Free Will* (chapter 5) that he prefers to see deliberation not as a battle between competing efforts as Kane does, but rather as the keeping alive of the options for the agent. When Jane thinks about her fear of sharks this clearly counts against choosing Hawaii as her holiday destination, but until she decides how much it counts it serves only to keep the option of choosing Colorado open for her. Prior to choosing, Jane will settle how much weight her fear of sharks will have (along with the other considerations that occurred to her to that point) and the balance of her reasons will dictate her choice. While this is closer to Nozick's theory than the episodic model considered above, this does maintain a distinction between the agent's weighting reasons and the agent's choosing. Since this non-episodic model appears most recently in Lemos's writings, I will assume that this is his preferred interpretation. Now that we have some clarity on my first question, I want to raise a second.

How Are Weights Assigned to Reasons?

As far as I can see, Lemos does not broach this question directly. However, there is a partial answer in the way he deals with Haji's criticism mentioned above. Recall that Haji raises a version of the luck objection that is directed at the indeterministic weighting of a particular reason. To set the stage for Lemos's response, I need to sketch out Haji's criticism in more detail.

Haji (2022) claims that if the weight an agent assigns to a reason is undetermined, this suggests the following possibility: identical agents Jane and Jane* are deliberating about their holiday destinations in two contrast worlds that are the same up until a certain point, say t_1. At t_2 in world 1, Jane assigns a certain weight to the snorkeling opportunities afforded by Hawaii, while at t_2 in world 2, Jane* assigns less weight to the snorkeling opportunities. Since both agents have the same past and character to that point, Haji claims there is nothing to account for the different weights assigned by the agents, and so it appears to be a matter of luck that Jane and Jane* assigned the weights they did to that reason. If so, their deliberations are too luck-infected to support a free and responsible choice.

Lemos combats this objection in a way that sheds some light on the question of how agents assign weights to reasons. He responds to Haji by

saying that his model is not consistent with the problematic possibility. The reason for this is that Jane and Jane* cannot have the same pasts if they weight their reasons differently:

> For on my view, if the options are weighted differently whether at the final stage of deliberation just prior to choice or at some intermediate stage of deliberation, then there must have been some differences in the paths that the indeterministic deliberative processes of Jane and Jane* went during deliberation—different ideas or reasons for the options must have come to mind and/or how they get weighted must have been different, etc. (Lemos, 2023, pp. 109–110).

Here Lemos incorporates a Valerian element into his own theory by claiming that Jane and Jane* cannot be the same at some intermediate stage of deliberation because if the way they weight a particular reason diverges, this can only be because different thoughts indeterministically occurred to each of them prior to that point. So, Lemos assumes not only that it is undetermined how an agent weights a reason in deliberation, but that some of the thoughts that occur to an agent prior to any weighting are also undetermined. This is clearly a Valerian addition since Jane and Jane* can only differ in their flow of thoughts if we assume it is undetermined what thoughts occur to them. Most significantly, this Valerian element seems to provide the explanation for why an agent assigns a certain weight to a reason. Since Jane and Jane* assign different weights to the same reason because different thoughts occurred to each of them before that point, it seems the prior thoughts are, at least in part, what explain their weightings.

By constructing his example in the way he does, Haji clearly interprets Lemos's theory as an episodic model. The claim that Jane and Jane* could be identical in a cross-world comparison and yet weight a reason differently is only possible on such an interpretation. I have suggested, however, that Lemos actually prefers a non-episodic model, according to which Jane and Jane* will weight a reason only at the conclusion of deliberation, and given that it is undetermined what thoughts occur to each of them prior to that point, it is wildly implausible to suggest that Jane and Jane* could have identical histories by the time they assign weights to their reasons. Given this, Lemos is surely correct that Haji's criticism misfires. However, Haji raises another important point about this way of avoiding the luck objection that takes us back to my question about how agents assign weights to their reasons.

Haji (2023) has complained that Lemos's way of avoiding the luck objection described above is a "non-action centered" approach that is not congenial to Lemos's own emphasis on the idea that by weighting reasons actively and intentionally, the resulting choice reflects the agent's will. I am

sympathetic with Haji on this point. After all, the reason Lemos does not embrace a wholly Valerian approach to libertarian free will is, as I observed earlier, that he thinks it does not give the agent enough control over the weighting (and choice) to see these as expressions of the agent's will or character. If the only thing to which Lemos can appeal to explain why Jane and Jane* make their respective weightings is the undetermined thoughts that came to their minds, this appears to erode the kind of control Lemos wants agents to have over the process of deliberation.[1] So, while I think Haji's criticism targets an episodic rather than non-episodic model and that Lemos advocates the latter rather than the former, there is still a problem about how to explain the agent's weighting of a reason. Appealing to Valerian non-actional processes, such as what different thoughts popped into Jane and Jane*'s minds, threatens to render the non-episodic version of Lemos's theory vulnerable to the very criticism he raises against Valerian theories.

Of course, it may be that the Valerian element described above is only part of the story, and perhaps not the main part. After all, Lemos also emphasizes the claim that agents exercise a compatibilist form of control over the process of weighting reasons. I will return to this point in the next section. First, I would like to raise a possibility that might be helpful to Lemos's non-episodic model. As Haji points out, what is needed in order to provide an explanation for how an agent weights a reason in a way that helps us to see the weighting (and the resulting choice) as an expression of the agent's will is something more agent-centered than the thoughts or considerations that happened to occur, indeterministically, to her. I suggest that Lemos might look to Patricia Greenspan for help here.

Greenspan (2012) has also proposed an indeterministic weightings model of libertarian free will and appeals to an agential element that might help Lemos avoid the identified problem. According to Greenspan's model of "active deliberation," the way an agent weights her reasons is a matter of a hierarchical setting of priorities. Her example involves trying to decide whether to vacation in Rome or on the Italian Riviera. Let us assume that she has reasons that rationally support each option equally. Greenspan claims that she can make one set of reasons prevail by prioritizing her values. If she prioritizes relaxation over cultural enrichment, she will weight the reasons for choosing the Riviera

1. A further problem with Lemos's response to Haji's criticism is that he arguably plays fast and loose with the very meaning of "indeterminism" itself. As Kane has pointed out, "If my choice is really undetermined, that means I could have made a different choice given exactly the same past right up to the moment when I did choose. That is what indeterminism and probability mean: exactly the same past, different possible outcomes" (Kane, 2002, 226). So, if Lemos claims that how an agent assigns weight to a reason is undetermined, that would seem to imply the possibility he denies but that Haji insists on.

over her reasons for going to Rome and so will choose to vacation on the Riviera. Alternatively, if she prioritizes cultural enrichment over relaxation, her reasons for going to Rome will be assigned more weight and that is what she will choose. Greenspan proposes that the setting of priorities by the agent is undetermined, meaning that which of the agent's values are prioritized is arbitrarily decided by the agent. Since Greenspan thinks there is nothing rationally deficient or puzzling about an agent arbitrarily deciding to prioritize one of her values over another, she proposes that her model allows for the kind of "rational swerves" required for the libertarian ability to choose otherwise.

It seems Lemos's model might benefit from an appeal to something similar to ensure that he has a sufficiently agent-centered account of how agents weight their reasons. To see how, let us reconsider the example appealed to in his disagreement with Haji. Jane and Jane* are two exactly similar agents in two contrast worlds. They begin to deliberate about whether to vacation in Hawaii or Colorado. While it may be that different ideas, images, and considerations indeterministically rise to consciousness in their respective minds during this process, perhaps it is also possible that Jane indeterministically prioritizes the value of excitement and so weights white water rafting very heavily, while Jane* prioritizes the value of peace and tranquility and so weights the activity of snorkeling with colorful species of fish very heavily instead. Since Jane has prioritized excitement, she weights the reasons for vacationing in Colorado more heavily than her reasons for vacationing in Hawaii and chooses the Colorado trip. Since Jane* prioritizes tranquility, she weights the reasons for vacationing in Hawaii more heavily and chooses to go there. As with Lemos's original model, we preserve a rational and explanatory connection between the agent's reasons and her choices, but now we can say more about why Jane and Jane* weighted their reasons differently and went on to make different choices. Furthermore, by appealing to the agent's prioritization of one of her values, Lemos can appeal to something about the agent that accounts for the difference between Jane and Jane*. Since their weightings differ because of what they decide to value more, we can see their weightings and subsequent choices as expressions of their character—of who they are as persons and what they value—rather than as the product of processes over which they have no control. Although I doubt that this friendly amendment to Lemos's theory would render it immune to worries about luck, it might provide part of a more satisfying agent-centered explanation for the assigning of weights to reasons.

How Is the Indeterminism in Deliberation and Choice Being Conceptualized?

Robert Kane has offered what is probably the most detailed and elaborate

account not only of the role that indeterminism might play in libertarian free will, but also of how we should conceptualize this indeterminism in the context of deliberation and choice. A weakness of his account is that it depends on a conjecture—albeit a scientifically informed one—about the magnification of small-scale indeterminacies at the synaptic level to the higher-level information processing of the brain, and this conjecture might be mistaken. One of the great strengths of Kane's approach, however, is his proposal that we conceptualize the indeterminism at work in deliberation and choice as a hindrance or obstacle to the attainment of a goal.

As far as I can tell, Lemos is agnostic about the underlying indeterministic physical processes, preferring instead to motivate the belief in libertarianism on pragmatic grounds. But on the question of how we should conceptualize the role of indeterminism in deliberation and choice, he follows Kane's lead:

> Recall Kane's example of the angry husband that makes the effort to break the glass table and succeeds in breaking it. Even if the table's breaking is not a determined consequence of his making the effort, he is still in sufficient control over what happens to make him fully responsible for it. So, too if a choice is the undetermined result of agential efforts or the weightings of reasons made in deliberation, we can be fully responsible for the choice (Lemos, 2025, p. 982).

This passage suggests that Lemos, like Kane, thinks of indeterminism as a hindrance or obstacle to be overcome via a purposeful activity of the agent. Unlike Kane, though (at least until the recent shift in Kane's thinking on this issue; see Kane, 2021, 2023, 2024), Lemos prefers to avoid the idea that an agent makes dual efforts to assign competing weights to a reason. This is because Lemos (2011) has long found the dual efforts component of Kane's theory problematic. Instead, he appeals to the variety of compatibilist control that Kane claims we have over efforts of will. Lemos proposes that this variety of control is sufficient to ensure that even though how much weight an agent assigns to a reason in deliberation is undetermined, the agent has enough control over the weighting for us to agree that it is the agent (not luck) that assigns that weight and, hence, is responsible for the resulting choice.

But here there seems to be a problem. Although the angry husband might succeed or fail in his attempt, he is not trying to fail, so he can only fail by accident. Since a non-derivatively free choice is the product of an indeterministic process and that process can lead to either of two possible outcomes, Kane's use of examples like the angry husband can only work if the agent is simultaneously trying to secure both results. This is why Kane insisted for years that agents engage in dual efforts of will: it ensures that whichever

way the choice goes, the agent is responsible for it. The challenge for Lemos appears to be as follows: how can the compatibilist style of control over the weighting of a reason convince us that it is the agent and not luck that gives that reason the weight it does since the reason might have been weighted differently? In the absence of something like simultaneous efforts to assign distinct weights to the reason, the answer is not obvious.

A slightly different way to frame this important issue is in terms of the concept of plural voluntary control (or "PVC"). Since the agent might assign different weights to a reason, she needs to have PVC over the weighting if we are to avoid the intuition that how she weights a reason is a product of luck. Kane at one time understood PVC as follows:

> [It is] the power to make either choice be or not be at the time, voluntarily (without being coerced or compelled in doing so), intentionally (on purpose, rather than merely accidentally or by mistake or unintentionally), and for the reasons one had for making that choice rather than the competing choice (Kane, 2019, p. 150).

Lemos also embraces PVC:

> To act with PVC is to do something, like making the choice of A instead of B, when in the moments leading up to the choice you had the ability to do otherwise such that you could have chosen A or B and been in control of either choice. But we can only exert PVC over an undetermined choice by having compatibilist control over events that transpire in the deliberation process which leads to the choice—whether the efforts of will (Kane's view) or the assigning of weights to reasons (my view) (Lemos, 2023, p. 106).

Under Kane's dual efforts model, the voluntariness condition of PVC is satisfied by compatibilist standards of control, but these standards need to apply to both efforts simultaneously. In the absence of dual efforts, the agent can only choose otherwise by accident. What appears to be missing in Lemos's treatment of PVC is an account of how the agent can exercise compatibilist-style control over (at least) two different weightings without appealing to something like Kanean dual efforts.

Lemos thinks that such a move is unnecessary because of his claim that which weight is assigned will be a product of the thoughts that occurred, indeterministically, to the agent prior to the weighting. If we compare Jane and Jane* in their respective worlds and accept the idea that it is undetermined what thoughts come to their respective states of consciousness, it might appear to be enough for them to take ownership of their respective weightings if they

weight the reasons in question voluntarily (i.e., they exercise compatibilist control over their weightings). However, we already saw that appealing to this non-actional Valerian element is insufficient since it does not give the agent enough control to be the author of the weighting (or the resulting choice) since the agent has no control over what thoughts come to mind. Lemos needs plural voluntary control if the assignment of weight to a reason can go more than one way rationally and intentionally. I am at a loss to see how compatibilist freedom from "the controlling will of another through force, manipulation, or coercion, and … foreign emotions that do not reflect [the agent's] higher-order desires" alone can secure plural voluntary control over the weighting of a reason.

In a discussion of Kane's most recent model of libertarian free will, where he moves away from simultaneous dual efforts of will toward sequential singular efforts, Dwayne Moore (2025) draws a helpful distinction between different ways of thinking about PVC that can shed some additional light on this issue. He distinguishes between synchronous PVC where "the agent had the power and opportunity to make either choice be or not be at the time …" (Kane, 2019, p. 150) and asynchronous PVC, "according to which agents must merely have the power and opportunity to make either choice be in the course of deliberation" (Moore, 2025, p. 9). Kane's dual efforts model embraced synchronous PVC, but his most recent model adopts asynchronous PVC instead. The fundamental difference between them is the way that the ability to choose otherwise is understood against a temporal component. To have synchronous PVC I must be able to choose and choose otherwise right now, with the same past and deliberation. For asynchronous PVC I do not need to be able to choose and choose otherwise right now, at the moment of choice, but it must have been possible, due to indeterministic processes that happened during deliberation, for my deliberation to have turned out differently than it did, and if it had run a different course, I would have made a different choice. Lemos's non-episodic indeterministic weightings model clearly embraces asynchronous PVC since the agent's choice will be dictated by the weights she assigns to her reasons, but those weights (prior to choice) might have been different because they are assigned by the agent indeterministically. But for Lemos's non-episodic indeterministic weightings model to secure asynchronous PVC over the choice that the agent makes, the agent also needs to have PVC over the weighting of her reasons. I have proposed that the agent can only have synchronous PVC over how she weights a reason if Lemos appeals to something like dual efforts to assign two different weights simultaneously—something Lemos wants to avoid.

Lemos's strategy appears to be to rely on asynchronous PVC over the weighting of reasons. As he points out, Jane and Jane* will only diverge in the

weight they assign to a particular reason (or to the overall balance of their reasons) if different thoughts or considerations occurred, indeterministically, to each of them. But as Lemos himself observes in the quotation above, we "can only exert PVC over an undetermined choice by having compatibilist control over events that transpire in the deliberation process." By parity of reasoning, it seems we can only have asynchronous PVC over the weighting of a reason by having compatibilist control over indeterministic processes that precede the assignment of weights to reasons. The problem is that it is reasonably clear that we lack any control (compatibilist or otherwise) over which thoughts occur, indeterministically, to us. Unless Lemos can secure a stronger form of plural voluntary control over the indeterministic weighting by an agent of her reasons, there will always be a danger that the agent's choice will appear to be too luck-infected to be a free and responsible choice.

Conclusion

Although there is much to recommend Lemos's theory, I am not optimistic that an indeterministic weightings model of free agency could work either for us or for an artificial system. I have identified some problems such a model would need to overcome. First, it would require a more agent-centered account of how agents assign weights to the reasons that occur to them in deliberation. I proposed that an appeal to a higher-order setting of priorities might provide some help to this problem. However, even with such an amendment, a daunting difficulty remains. Given the largely Kanean way that Lemos conceptualizes the indeterminism involved in the assigning of weights to reasons, it is hard to see how agents could have the kind of plural voluntary control over this process that is needed to ensure that however an agent weights a reason we can be confident that she (not luck) is responsible for that weighting.

▣ Conflict of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

References

Balaguer, M. (2004). A coherent, naturalistic, and plausible formulation of libertarian free will. *Noûs*, *38*(3), 379–406. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0029-4624.2004.00475.x

Balaguer, M. (2012). *Free will as an open scientific problem*. MIT Press.

Balaguer, M. (2014). *Free will*. MIT Press.

Dennett, D. C. (1981). *Brainstorms: Philosophical essays on mind and psychology*. MIT Press.

Franklin, C. E. (2013). How should libertarians conceive of the location and role of indeterminism? *Philosophical Explorations: An International Journal for the Philosophy of Mind and Action*, *16*(1), 44–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/13869795.2013.723036

Franklin, C. E. (2018). *A minimal libertarianism: Free will and the promise of reduction*. Oxford University Press.

Greenspan, P. (2012). Free will and rational coherency. *Nous-Supplement: Philosophical Issues*, *22*, 185–200. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-6077.2012.00224.x

Haji, I. (2000). Indeterminism, explanation, and luck. *Journal of Ethics: An International Philosophical Review*, *4*(3), 211–235. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009817905421

Haji, I. (2022). Libertarianism and luck. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, *24*(3), 115–134. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2022.8297.2723

Haji, I. (2023). Further reflections on Lemos's indeterministic weightings model of libertarian free action. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, *25*(3), 119–130. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2023.9722.2929

Kane, R. (1996). Freedom, responsibility, and will-setting. *Philosophical Topics*, *24*(2), 67–90. https://doi.org/10.5840/philtopics199624210

Kane, R. (1998). *The significance of free will*. Oxford University Press.

Kane, R. (2002). Free will: New directions for an ancient problem. In R. Kane (Ed.), *Free will* (pp. 222–248). Blackwell.

Kane, R. (2009a). Free will and the dialectic of selfhood: Can one make sense of a traditional free will requiring ultimate responsibility? *Ideas y Valores*, *58*(141), 25–43.

Kane, R. (2009b). Libertarianism. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, *144*(1), 35–44. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-009-9365-y

Kane, R. (2014). Acting 'of one's own free will': Modern reflections on an ancient philosophical problem. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society)*, *114*(1pt1), 35–55. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2014.00363.x

Kane, R. (2015). On the role of indeterminism in libertarian free will. *Philosophical Explorations*, *19*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/13869795.2016.1085594

Kane, R. (2019). The complex tapestry of free will: Striving will, indeterminism and volitional streams. *Synthese*, *196*(1), 145–160. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-016-1046-8

Kane, R. (2021). Making sense of a free will that is incompatible with determinism: A fourth way forward. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, *23*(89), 5–28. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2021.7247.2595

Kane, R. (2023). Free will, complexity, dynamical systems, and all that jazz. *Harvard Review of Philosophy*, *30*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.5840/harvardreview20245856

Kane, R. (2024). *The complex tapestry of free will: A philosophical odyssey*. Oxford University Press.

Lemos, J. (2011). Wanting, willing, trying and Kane's theory of free will. *Dialectica*, *65*(1), 31–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-8361.2010.01258.x

Lemos, J. (2018). *A pragmatic approach to libertarian free will* (Vol. 107). Routledge.

Lemos, J. (2021). The indeterministic weightings model of libertarian free will. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, *23*(3), 137–156. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2021.7187.2582

Lemos, J. (2023). Haji and the indeterministic weightings model of libertarian free will. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, *25*(3), 101–118. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2023.9648.2920

Lemos, J. (2025). Replies to Caruso, Elzein, Pereboom, Sekatskaya, and Smilansky. *Philosophia (Ramat Gan)*, *53*(3), 973–993. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-025-00904-y

Levy, N. (2008). Bad luck once again. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *77*(3), 749–754. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2008.00219.x

Levy, N. (2011). *Hard luck: How luck undermines free will and moral responsibility*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199601387.001.0001

McCall, S., & Lowe, E. J. (2005). Indeterminist free will. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *70*(3), 681–690. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2005.tb00420.x

McCall, S., & Lowe, E. J. (2008). The determinists have run out of luck—For a good reason. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *77*(3), 745–748. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2008.00218.x

Mele, A. R. (1995). *Autonomous agents: From self-control to autonomy*. Oxford University Press.

Mele, A. R. (2006). *Free will and luck*. Oxford University Press.

Moore, D. (2021). Libertarian free will and the physical indeterminism luck objection. *Philosophia*, *50*(1), 159–182. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-021-00370-2

Moore, D. (2025). Agent-causal, event-causal, libertarian free will. *Inquiry*, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2576137

Nozick, R. (1981). *Philosophical explanations*. Harvard University Press.

Pitman, M. M. (2012). Freedom, indeterminism and imagination. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, *31*(2), 369–383. https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2012.10751782

Van Inwagen, P. (2000), The Eighth Philosophical Perspectives Lecture: Free Will Remains a Mystery. Noûs, 34: 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.34.s14.1