THE POSSIBILITY OF FREE WILL:

JOHN DUNS SCOTUS AND WILLIAM JAMES ON THE WILL

A Thesis

by

CATHERINE MARGARET BURKE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2005

Major Subject: Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The Possibility of Free Will: John Duns Scotus and William James on the Will. (May 2005)

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The two questions that motivate the present inquiry are: is it possible that human beings will freely, and what does free will make possible? John Duns Scotus and William James are two defenders of the possibility of free will, although each has a very different notion of the will. First, I present the accounts of the will articulated by Duns Scotus and James, with attention to the context in which the accounts were developed and the reasons each philosopher gives for the possibility of free will. Next, I briefly consider the picture of human action each account of the will makes possible. Then, I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each account. Finally, in response to a weakness of both accounts, I argue that in order to widen the possibilities of human moral agency, it is necessary to reflect not only on our strengths but also on our physical and moral frailty.

For those from whom I borrowed belief in my own possibility, and

for others in need of the same.

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during and since my education at Saint Louis University. His commitment to the dignity of the human person, preached, taught and lived, continues to inspire and challenge my own commitments, including those expressed in this thesis. His concern for and affirmation of my person is one of the sources from which I borrowed belief in my ability to pursue this endeavor.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The one philosophical question that even the most philosophically disinclined person cannot avoid is, "What should I do?" This question is the question of all moral inquiry. Yet even before the alternative actions can be considered, a prior question presents itself, that is, whether it is possible to do otherwise. The possibility of a moral universe in which the question, "What should I do?" makes sense, depends on a real distinction between what I do and what I should do. This distinction, in turn, is possible only if human beings are capable of self-determination, which since Augustine has been attributed to a free will. The present inquiry is an investigation into free will.

Free will is a deceptively short and simple term. The debate over free will, however, is neither short nor simple. Before one may discuss whether or not the will is free, one must first ask what is meant by will. This entails a whole host of questions. Is it physical or metaphysical? Is it a thing or a relation? It is distinct from the mind or not? How is it related to the intellect? What does it do? What are the preconditions for its operation? How does it operate? Each of these questions has a number of possible answers, so any inquiry into free will is complicated from the outset. Only after answering these questions about what the will is and how it works may one ask the million-dollar question: is the will free? This, too, entails another set of questions. What does it mean to say the will is free? Is the will always and in every volition free, or are there some volitions that are not free? If the latter is the case, how are free volitions distinguished from unfree ones? Is a free will wholly incompatible with determinism? Over what does the will exercise its power? If the will functions in

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human action, what actions does it make possible? Does free will effect change only in its object or also in the agent? Finally, after all these questions are put to rest, there remains one more question: why does it matter whether or not the will is free?

There are a number of different possible entries into the free will questions. My entry into the matter is through the history of thought about the will, and my points of departure are the accounts of the will given by John Duns Scotus and William James. Duns Scotus was a Franciscan monk who lived in 14th century Europe. He developed his account of the will in the context of debates with other Christian medieval philosophers; together, they were engaged in the task of reconciling Aristotle's thought with Christian revelation. This context accounts for several important features of Scotus' account. One, Scotus gives a metaphysical account of the will, which is heavily indebted to Aristotle's metaphysics. Two, as part of the larger project of reconciling science and revelation, Scotus' account of the will grounds the discussion of certain theological questions, including: whether God's creative act is free; how God's will and man's will can both be free; and how to understand the divine and human wills in Christ. Three, as a Franciscan, Scotus is the bearer of a spiritual tradition that includes Augustine, Anselm, and Bonaventure. The Christian tradition in general understands human beings as created by God in his image and likeness, also known as the *imago dei* doctrine. The particular version of the *imago dei* doctrine articulated in the Franciscan tradition emphasizes that human beings most resemble God in virtue of their will and capacity for love.

William James was a medical doctor by training, but his professional life was largely occupied by inquiry into psychology and philosophy. He lived in the United States during the 19th century. His account of the will is part of his larger inquiry into human psychology, a discipline in its infancy in James's day. While the more specific

influences on James's account of the will will be discussed in detail later, the more general features may be surmised from what little has already been said. One such feature of James's account is that it is distinctively American. American thought is characterized by the rejection of classical metaphysics and the modern self, attention to everyday experience, and the use of an experimental method and testing to arrive at the truths given in experience. All of these characteristics of American philosophy are threads in the fabric of James's account of will. One, James clearly rejects the classical and modern paradigms in favor of an experiencing subject who penetrates and is penetrated by her environment. Two, James's investigation into will and willing is empirical rather than systematic and *a priori*. Another general feature of account is its psychological description of the will; this is obviously a function of James's interest in psychology. Finally, the language James employs in describing the significance of the will is reminiscent of 19th century America. The Americans of James's generation witnessed the exponential expansion of the frontier. One is reminded of the possibility as well as the challenge the frontier represented to 19th century Americans upon reading the following from James: "What wonder if the effort demanded by them [the nature of things] be the measure of our worth as men! What wonder if the amount which we accord of it, were the one strictly underived and original contribution which we make to the world!" (2: 1182).

These two figures were chosen for three reasons. One, both account are voluntaristic; how do these two thinkers arrive at this conclusion from such different starting points? Since both Scotus and James are such ardent believers in a free, undetermined will, the second reason they were chosen was for the purpose of learn from their rejection of determinism how one might address contemporary versions of determinism. The third reason is of a more personal nature. As an inheritor of both the

medieval and American philosophical traditions, my inquiry is motivated by an interest in what these two representatives of their respective traditions have to say about willing and the possibilities for human action contained therein.

This inquiry into the will is divided into three main chapters. Chapter II is devoted to Duns Scotus, chapter III to William James, and chapter IV to my reflections on these two accounts and the possibilities for human action. In chapter II, I will begin by presenting the historical background relevant to Scotus' account of the will, followed by his argument against determinism, and finally his own account of the will, in two parts. In chapter III, I will again begin by discussing the relevant context for James's will, which in his case is biographical, in contrast to Scotus'. Following this, I will present his account of will in three parts. In chapter IV, I will begin by briefly explaining what Scotus' and James's accounts imply for human action. Then, I will consider the strengths and weaknesses of each account. Finally, I will conclude by exploring a possible response to a weakness both accounts share, in the hope of expanding the possibilities of human moral agency by considering our physical and moral frailty in addition to our strengths.

CHAPTER II

JOHN DUNS SCOTUS ON THE WILL

John Duns Scotus (b. 1266, d. 1308) was one of the philosophical giants of the 13th century, earning the name "Subtle Doctor" from his peers for his nuanced and technical reasoning (Dumont 353). A contemporary philosopher, Hannah Arendt, counts him among her philosophical heroes for his originality, which, according to her, is "'without precedent or sequel in the history of Western thought'" (Wolter, Philosophical 163). Scotus' thought merges old with new, bringing together the Augustinian-influenced Franciscan tradition with the newly reintroduced Aristotelian corpus. Scotus' thought is often noted for both its emphasis on the individual, due to his rather unique solution to the problem of individuation, and also on the will and freedom, due to his voluntaristic account of the will. In this chapter, I will discuss Duns Scotus' account of the will and his position on determinism. In the first section of this chapter, I will provide some background on the determinism Scotus addressed. In the second section, I will present the argument he gives for the contingency of the will, against the determinists' thesis. I will present in the third and final section his account of the will, divided into two parts: one on the intellect and will, the other on the will and its inclinations.

2.1 Medieval Sources of Determinism

Any discussion of late medieval philosophy must at some point mention the reintroduction of the Aristotelian corpus to the West. Beginning in the 12th and continuing through the 13th century, Aristotle's works were returned in piecemeal

fashion and translated in Latin (Wippel 65). These works were accompanied by commentaries written by Jewish and Arabic philosophers, who were also influenced by Neoplatonism. On this matter Wolter says, "In appropriating Aristotelian and even Islamic Neoplatonic philosophies, the Christian theologians encountered a trenchant necessitarianism, which was inconsistent with revelation's account of creation" (Frank and Wolter 198). The task of Christian medieval philosophers and theologians of the 12th and 13th century was to reconcile Aristotle's thought with Christian revelation, including responding to the determinism in the Aristotelian texts and commentaries.

Prior to Scotus' time at the University of Paris, there had been a reaction on the part of the Church to the real or perceived threat this new synthesis posed to Christian doctrine. It was reported to Pope John XXI that ideas contrary to Christian doctrine were being taught at the University of Paris. He ordered the bishop of Paris, Stephen Tempier, to conduct an investigation (Wippel 67-8). This was carried out rather hastily by a committee of theologians appointed by Tempier, most of whom were Franciscans and more reserved in their embrace of Aristotle. The result of this investigation was the Condemnations of 1270 and 1277. Included in the articles condemned were various versions of determinism, from astral determinism to determinism by the appetite, intellect, or intentional objects (Wippel 70).

Recent scholarship casts considerable doubt on the accuracy of the Condemnations. Efforts by Roland Hissette to identify the sources of the ideas in the articles of the Condemnations yielded the conclusion that of the 151 articles for which Hissette was able to assign a source (with varying degrees of certainty), 99 did not

accurately represent the source to which they were attributed. The misrepresentation varies between simple misinterpretation and exaggeration to stating without qualification positions the original authors had qualified. According to Wippel, "Moreover, the lack of success in identifying even likely sources for the other articles has led some scholars to assign a considerable degree of creativity to Tempier and his commission" (71). Regardless of their accuracy, the Condemnations had a significant impact on those who wrote after they were issued.

2.2 Scotus' Argument for the Contingency of the Will and Against Determinism

According to Scotus, it is an undeniable fact that contingency exists, and his account is in part an effort to explain this fact (Wolter, Philosophical 298). In addition, Scotus is a Christian theologian; as such, he is trying to explain the fact of contingency in a way that is consistent with Christian revelation, which claims that God created the world by a free act of his will. On Scotus' account, God's freedom is a necessary but insufficient explanation for the contingency in the world. Contingency also results from the action of free created causes, that is, the free acts of human beings (301-2).

Scotus explains the freedom of the will in the following way. He begins his account with a distinction Aristotle makes between rational and irrational potencies; his interpretation of the fundamental difference between the two is in the way each elicits its respective acts. The acts of irrational potencies are determined such that " . . . it [the rational potency] cannot fail to act when not impeded from without" (Wolter, Morality 139). The act of a rational potency, however, is not determined; it may elicit its act so as to produce any one of a number of opposite effects. Scotus refers to the first sort as

"nature," the second sort as "will" (139). He claims this distinction between nature and will is basic, or axiomatic. In other words, there is no other reason for the contingency of the will except that this is the sort of cause the will is. Accordingly, he says,

> Just as any immediate effect is related to its immediate cause primarily and *per se*, without benefit of any mediating cause--otherwise one could go on *ad infinitum* looking for reasons--so an active cause [as opposed to a material or other "cause"] seems to be immediately related to the action it elicits. (139)

He considers two objections to this argument. The first challenges Scotus' claim that there is no other explanation for the contingency of the will. The objection begins with the observation that according to Scotus the proposition, "The will wills," is a contingent proposition. Yet, Scotus claims that the "The will wills" is also axiomatic, insofar as the distinction between nature and will is basic. The objection is that axiomatic propositions are necessary; in other words, if Scotus claims that the proposition "The will wills" is axiomatic, then it cannot also be contingent (139). Scotus' response is that a contingent proposition cannot follow from a necessary one because this is logically impossible (140). In other words, necessary propositions can follow from necessary or contingent propositions, but contingent propositions can only follow from contingent propositions until they terminate in an axiomatic, contingent proposition. Therefore, if "The will wills" is a contingent proposition (and Scotus thinks it must be, given the fundamental distinction between the nature and will), it must either be a contingent proposition that finally terminates in a contingent axiom or the contingent axiom itself. This proposition is an example of the latter.

The second objection follows upon the first. This objection states that if

indeterminacy cannot be proved to follow *a priori* from the nature of the will, it should not be postulated at all (140). In other words, unless there is an *a priori* demonstration of the contingency of the will, there is no reason to think the will acts contingently. Scotus' response is that the freedom of the will can only be known *a posteriori*, from the experience of one who wills. He claims, "the person who wills experiences that he could have nilled or not willed what he did . . ." (140). He further supports this claim by appealing to an *a posteriori* argument Aristotle uses; there would be no need to seek advice about what to do if the possibility of doing otherwise did not exist (Frank and Wolter 200). This claim is further supported with a very dramatic argument he borrows from Avicenna.

> Therefore, it [the contingency of the will] can be proved a posteriori, because otherwise neither virtues nor precepts nor admonitions nor rewards nor punishment nor honors would be necessary; and in short, all civility and human compassion would be destroyed. And against those who would deny this, one should proceed with torments and with fire and such like, and they should be beaten until they confess that they are able not to be tormented, and thus admit they are tormented contingently and not necessarily . . ." (200).

In short, Scotus argues that the contingency of the will is evident from our experience in two ways: one, from our own experience of willing; two, from moral phenomena and the existence of a moral universe. There is no other explanation for the contingency of the will that can be given except that this is the sort of cause the will is.

2.3 Scotus' Metaphysics of the Will

As a preface to the discussion of Scotus' metaphysics of the will, I will present a general overview of Scotus' metaphysics of the person in order to explain how the will fits into the rest of his anthropology. According to Scotus, all material beings have one

thing in common: all are composed of the same stuff, which Scotus calls prime matter; this persists through all substantial change, such as generation and corruption (King 49). Prime matter is really distinct from form and exists independently of it; as such, it is in potency to all forms and not simply one form in particular (50). A substantial form, or what makes a thing what it is, also has its own existence independent of matter (51). Material beings are at once a composite and a unity consisting of a substantial form informing prime matter.[1] A human being, then, is a substantial form informing prime matter (52). Scotus, however, like many in the Franciscan tradition, thought that multiple forms existed within a single individual (Rudavsky 180). In human beings, there are at least two forms: a spiritual form, which animates the body and accounts for the rational faculties of the soul, including the intellect and will; and a corporeal form, which imparts the form of the human body to primary matter and accounts for bodily integrity (at least temporarily) after the spiritual form departs upon death (King 52-3). Although these forms are not really distinct, they are separable in thought.[2] What distinguishes the rational soul of a human being from the vegetative and sensitive souls of plants and animals, respectively, are the faculties of the intellect and the will, in virtue of which the will is a free, rational appetite. The following sections explain how Scotus

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[1] The key to understanding how a material being can be at once a composite and a unity is that even though each of the constitutive parts has its own existence, these parts are not merely aggregated. Instead, they are essentially ordered under the substantial form, which gives existence to the composite as a whole (King 54).

[2] To be distinguishable in thought but not really distinct as thing and thing is what Scotus means by formally distinct. He applies the formal distinction not only to the multiple forms within the soul but also to the faculties of intellect and will.

interprets the three terms of this definition.

2.3.1 The Will and the Intellect

As mentioned above, the will is free and rational. In this section, I will discuss one way in which the will is free: freedom as liberty of choice. I will also explain the sense in which the will is a rational faculty. Essential to both explanations is an understanding of the relation of the intellect to the will.

Scotus discusses the free agency of the will in the context of a question about whether knowledge is speculative or practical because of its end. He begins by making three claims about the will in relation to praxis, for which he subsequently argues. The first claim is that praxis is not the intellect's act, but the act of some other power, that is, the will. The second is that an act of intellection is necessary in order for the will to elicit its act. The third is that right action requires correct knowledge (Wolter, Morality 127).

According to Scotus, the will is formally responsible for praxis. Instead of giving a positive argument for why praxis is formally the act of the will, he argues that praxis only belongs to the intellect accidentally. The intellect is accidentally practical not in and of itself but insofar as its object is practical, that is, if action is the subject of the intellect's consideration (129). The argument for this claim is based upon the order of causality:

> P1 The only cause prior to the knowledge-habit is either the intellect or its object.
> P2 The intellect cannot be the reason why the knowledge-habit is practical because it itself is neither practical nor theoretical.
> C Therefore, the object is the reason why the knowledge-habit is practical. (130)

In short, Scotus' conclusion is that the intellect is practical if what it considers is practice, or action.

This conclusion is significant for understanding Scotus' metaphysics of the will because in it we begin to see how the intellect and will are related. One example of this relation is that the intellect cooperates as partial cause of the will's act. According to the conclusion of the above argument, the intellect considers the acts of the will. In what way do the acts of the will fall under the intellect's consideration? One, an act of intellection must be prior to an act of the will; two, in order for the will's act to be right, it must conform to correct knowledge (127). The intellect, in virtue of these two modes of cooperation, is partial cause of the will's act (44). Scotus explains further. In the case of a faculty that is indifferent to opposite acts, that is, the will, it is necessary for an act of the intellect to precede the act of the will because a directive habit is needed to direct the will to the right end (131). This directive habit provides knowledge about the best means to achieve the ends, given the circumstances (131). This practical knowledge, which includes right reason, is that according to which the will must conform in order to act rightly.

Another way the intellect and will are related are as the two faculties of the rational soul. Interestingly, however, Scotus argues that the will is the formally rational faculty. What reasons does Scotus give for this claim? He bases his claim on a distinction between rational and irrational potencies that Aristotle makes in Metaphysics IX. Aristotle says, "It is clear that some potencies will be nonrational but others will be with reason. Hence, all the arts or productive sciences are potencies" (136). Aristotle

makes this distinction between the rational and irrational in the context of a discussion about the arts and productive sciences, which have to do with doing and making, in contrast to the theoretical sciences. Given this context, Scotus interprets the rational versus irrational distinction as distinguishing between agents whose acts are determined and necessary, or irrational, and those whose acts are free, undetermined and creative, or rational (Wolter, Philosophical 173). In other words, the difference between active rational potencies and active irrational potencies turns out to be the way in which each elicits its respective acts. According to Scotus, nature and will are distinguished in the same way:

> For either the potency is of itself determined to act so that so far as itself is concerned it cannot fail to act when not impeded from without; or it is not of itself determined, but can act by this act or its opposite, or even act or not act. The first potency is commonly called "nature," the second is called "will." (174)

In the case of the former, the natural form can only produce one effect, and it will do so unless something external prevents it. In the case of the latter, the opposites the will can produce fall into three categories: acts, effects or intentional objects (Frank 77). With respect to opposite acts, the will can act or not act; for example, one may either run or not run. Regarding opposite effects, in choosing to act, the will may produce one effect or another; for instance, one may either write a script or an essay (77). Further, the will may produce opposites with respect to intentional objects.[3] In other words, the will may direct the intellect to consider one possible alternative or another. For example, one may

[3] An intentional object is that to which to which the intellect tends in an act of cognition (Pasnau 288).

consider loving this person or that person (77). Common to all three is the will's potentiality for opposites; the way Scotus understands the term rational is as having the potential for opposites or eliciting opposite acts.

This definition of the term "rational" saves the will as a rational faculty, but it has a strange, paradoxical consequence when one considers the intellect. Since what it means to be rational is to have the capacity for opposites, the will is more properly considered rational than the intellect. On the one hand, the intellect has a capacity for opposites insofar as it can understand a thing and its privation (Wolter, Philosophical 172). On the other hand, despite this, its act is not free; the intellect is not free to understand or not understand a true proposition; it must assent to it (179). One may recall here the point made earlier that what distinguishes active potencies is the way in which they elicit acts. Wolter explains that rational potencies are able to cause both of a pair of contraries (180). As such, the will is more properly considered the rational faculty; it can determine itself and the acts of subordinate powers. The intellect, on the other hand, does not have the power of self-determination; it cannot determine itself and consequently cannot determine others or otherwise produce opposite effects (179-80). Says Wolter,

> That is why, Scotus concludes, if we take seriously what Aristotle says about nonrational potencies (*irrationales potentiae*) and potencies that act with reason (*cum ratione*)--namely "that every potency with reason is capable of causing both contraries, but every nonrational potency can cause only one"--then "the will is properly rational, and has to do with opposites, both as to its own act as well as the acts of subordinate powers, and it does not act towards these after the manner of nature, like the intellect but does so freely, and is able to determine itself, and therefore it is a potency, because it is able to do something, for it can determine itself." But the intellect, he goes on to say, properly speaking, is not a

> potency with regard to external things: for if it is concerned with opposites, of itself it cannot determine others; and unless it be determined, nothing outside can come about. (180)

In short, the will is considered a rational potency because it has the capacity to elicit its act in opposite ways and thus produce opposite effects. The intellect, however, is rational only in a qualified sense, in virtue of the fact that it is required for an act of the rational potency, that is, the will (179).

In the passage above, Wolter quotes Scotus as saying that the will has to do with opposites, not only with regard to its own act but also with regard to the acts of subordinate powers. Included among the powers subordinate to the will is the intellect. Scotus' argument that the will is able to determine thought is given in three premises, each of which he argues for independently.

> P1 For every single and perfect and distinct intellection existing in the intellect, there can be many indistinct and imperfect intellections existing there.
> P2 If an intellection is present to the intellect, though yet indistinct, the will can will and take pleasure in the intellection or the object of the intellection.
> P3 What the will takes pleasure in is strengthened and intended; what it does not is nilled or dismissed.
> C Thus the will commands thought, either by turning the intellect towards or away from some particular intellection. (Wolter, Morality 150-1)

The third premise is the linchpin of the argument, for it asserts that the will can have a causal effect on the intellect. Scotus argues for this premise in the following way: "An agent with many different operations and actions, if it acts upon one and the same object, acts more vigorously and perfectly than if it is engaged at the same time with many diverse things (for unified power is stronger and more perfect) . . . . hence, if the will

turns towards the same thing as the intellect, it confirms the intellect in its action" (151). According to Scotus, the ability of the will to retain or dismiss some thought is obvious; one need only pay attention to one's experience to discover this power of the will (151).

As we have seen, Scotus argues for a strong notion of the will. The two main features of Scotus' picture of the will discussed so far are as follows. One, the will is a self-determining power, able to cause many different kinds of effects. Two, although the will needs an act of the intellect for its own operation, the objects of the intellect do not determine the will's act because the will has the power to focus the attention of the intellect by retaining some thoughts and dismissing others. So, it is not surprising that when Scotus answers the question, "How can consent be forced?," his initial response is, " . . . where man is concerned, no human act, properly speaking, can be coerced, for it is a contradiction for the will to be simply forced to will" (151). In support of this claim, he appeals to Aristotle, who says in Book III of the Ethics, "Violence occurs where the moving principle is outside and the person himself contributes nothing [as if he were carried along with the wind or by men who overpowered him]" (151-2). In such a situation, the victim's will, and thus power of self-determination, is overridden by some outside force. Scotus interprets "the person himself contributes nothing" specifically; not only does the victim not contribute to the action by not willing it, but also the action is contrary to her own inclination, or what she would will of her own accord. Scotus qualifies his claim by saying that the will may be in a sense coerced to will something one would not otherwise through fear of a greater evil, but it does so according to right reason (152). Even in the face of two evils, Scotus still argues for the freedom of the

will on the grounds that the will can choose the lesser of the two evils, which would be according to right reason, even if one would not will such an act under other circumstances (152).

2.3.2 The Will and Its Inclinations

In the introduction to this section on Scotus' metaphysics of the will, the will was defined as a free, rational appetite. In the preceding section, I discussed the will as an agent of free choice, with freedom understood as the liberty to determine itself in opposite ways; I also explained that Scotus considers the will to be the only fully rational faculty, in virtue of its power of self-determination and ability to determine lesser powers. In this section, I will discuss the will as appetitive, or in terms of its inclinations towards the good. I will also explain the second and more basic freedom of the will, which it has in virtue of its inclination for justice.

As mentioned above, the third term of the will's definition is appetite. As an appetite, it desires, or has an inclination for, the good. Scotus argues that there are two such inclinations in the will: the *affectio commodi* and the *affectio iustitae*[4] (153). These inclinations are not themselves acts of the will, but when the will acts, it chooses according to one of these two inclinations. The *affectio commodi*, or the inclination for the advantageous, is the inclination towards some good insofar as it is good for the agent. The *affectio iustitae*, or the inclination for justice, is inclined towards some good in accord with the good's intrinsic value; it is willed for its own sake, not for the sake of

[4] In fact, these two inclinations are not original to Scotus. He borrows them from Anselm, who discusses them in *The Fall of the Devil* and *The Harmony of God's*

the agent (153). Scotus ranks these inclinations, with the *affectio iustitae* ranking above the *affectio commodi*. He argues "to love something in itself [or for its own sake] is more an act of giving or sharing and is a freer act than is desiring that object for oneself" (153). Since the will is the properly free faculty, and the *affectio iustitae* is freer than the *affectio commodi*, the former is superior to the latter (153). The freedom implicit here, however, is in some ways similar but also importantly different from the freedom as liberty described earlier. On the one hand, the inclination for justice provides the will with an alternative inclination according to which it can act, and in this sense freedom as liberty is operative. On the other hand, in the aforementioned words of Scotus, an act is freer if it is "more an act of giving or sharing," or less self-interested. Freedom here has to do with choosing some good disinterestedly, in accord with some value not relative to the agent. This freedom may be described as a freedom for values.

In the previous section, the will was discussed in terms of its free agency. Another aspect under which the will can be considered is as a faculty with a particular kind of nature (Wolter, Philosophical 143). The inclinations mentioned above belong to the will in virtue of its two aspects: natural and free. Considered under its natural aspect, the will is the passive recipient of its own actions; this is in contrast to its free aspect, according to which the will actively elicits its own acts (143). Scotus contrasts these two aspects saying,

> Hence the natural will does not tend, but is the tendency itself by which the will as an absolute or nonrelative entity tends, and this it does passively, being a tendency to receive something. But there is another

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Foreknowledge, Grace, and Predestination (Scotus, Morality 153).

> tendency in this same power inasmuch as it tends freely and actively to elicit an act. (Wolter, Morality 155)

Scotus also speaks about this natural tendency of the will to receive its own actions as an ontological relationship to that which perfects it (Wolter, Philosophical 140). The relationship between the natural will and that which perfects it is a necessary one, since all natures necessarily seek their own perfection (142). Of course, the natural will only seeks its perfection in a metaphorical sense; as natural, it does not elicit acts. After considering a few other possible interpretations of "natural will," Scotus concludes by saying, "Therefore, . . . I say that "natural will" according to its formal meaning is neither a power nor a will, but rather an inclination of the will, being a tendency by which it tends passively to receive what perfects it" (Wolter, Morality 155). Returning to the two inclinations of the will mentioned in the previous paragraph, the *affectio commodi* and the *affectio iustitae*, the former corresponds to the natural will and its inclination for what perfects it, or for what is to its advantage. The *affectio iustitae* and its relation to the will's free aspect will be discussed in the following paragraph.

Earlier it was noted that Scotus borrows these two inclinations from Anselm, who discusses them in the context of the fall of Lucifer. Scotus, following Anselm, discusses the *affectio iustitae* in the same context. In contrast to the *affectio commodi*, the *affectio iustitae* belongs to the will insofar as it is free. Further, Scotus claims that "this affection for what is just, I say, is the liberty innate to the will, since it represents the first checkrein on this affection for the advantageous" (298-9). What he means is this: the will, in virtue of its nature, necessarily seeks the advantageous good. As aforementioned, however, this natural will does not have the power to elicit acts. If it

did, Scotus says, " . . . nature is so inclined towards its object by this affection for the advantageous that if it had of itself an elicited act, it could not help eliciting it with no moderation in the most forceful way possible" (300). However, the will has this second inclination for the good-in-itself; therefore, it is not determined by its natural inclination for the advantageous. In virtue of this capacity to incline the will to will otherwise than according to the *affectio commodi*, the *affectio iustitae* is a moderating influence on the natural inclination for the advantageous (299). Its guidance in this effort is " . . . the rule of justice it has received from a higher will," that is, God's will and commands (299). The upshot of the will's *affectio iustitae* is threefold. One, it is the source of the will's liberty. Two, in absence of the liberty made possible by the *affectio iustitae*, it would not be possible to sin, since there would be no possibility of doing otherwise than acting according to nature, and without the possibility of choosing otherwise, the acts of a natural agent cannot be considered sinful. Three, this same inclination that makes sin possible also makes possible love of the other for his or her own sake, in virtue of its inclination towards the good-in-itself.

Understanding the way in which the *affectio commodi* and the *affectio iustitae* operate is essential to understanding how Scotus answers the question, "Must happiness be desired above everything, and is it the rationale behind all willing?"[5] (155). He divides his response into two parts: one which deals with the will as nature and the *affectio commodi*, the other which treats the will as free and the *affectio iustitae*.

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[5] One particularly interesting feature of Scotus' answer to this question is that it reveals the range of the various traditions Scotus is attempting to synthesize. Within the text of

According to the will considered as nature, Scotus claims the will seeks happiness necessarily, in the highest measure, and in particular (157). As was explained in the above discussion on natural will, however, the will does not strictly seek or elicit an act necessarily, since the natural will has no power to act. Before he explains why it is that the natural will wills happiness necessarily, he gives three arguments against the thesis that the natural will elicits acts; presumably, he does this to emphasize the qualified sense in which happiness is willed necessarily. One of these arguments is an *a posteriori* argument in which he calls attention to the moral agent's experience, as he does in his arguments against determinism and for the will's control over the intellect. It may be reconstructed as follows:

> P1 If the natural appetite were an elicited act, then there would be some elicited act that is perpetually in the will.
> P2 There is no perpetual act in the will because we have not experienced such an act.
> C Therefore, the natural appetite is not an elicited act. (156)

In other words, since agents do not experience themselves as always willing, as would necessarily be the case if the natural will elicited acts, Scotus concludes that natural will is not a power that elicits acts.

This qualification aside, Scotus commences his arguments for each of the three parts of his claim that the will seeks happiness necessarily, in the highest degree, and in particular. First, that the will seeks happiness necessarily is so because insofar as the will is a nature, it necessarily wills its own perfection, which consists above all in happiness (156). Next, that the will seeks happiness in the highest measure also follows

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his response are references to Aristotle, Augustine, and St. Paul.

from the natural will's necessary inclination towards its own perfection. Since it is not within the power of the natural will to elicit opposite acts, it can only act one way, and the cat that it is determined to its perfection means that it cannot act in a remiss fashion. If it were determined to act remissly, then it would not achieve its perfection. Therefore, the will must seek happiness in the highest degree[6] (157). Finally, he gives two arguments for why the will seeks happiness in particular. One, since the will's perfection is happiness (as established by the first argument), and real perfection is something singular, not general, then the will seeks happiness in the singular, or in particular (157). Two, since the activity of the intellect produces universals by abstraction from particulars, and the natural will does not require a prior act of intellection,[7] then the happiness the natural will seeks cannot be general or universal, but must be singular and particular (157). In summary, the sense in which happiness is sought above everything and in all willing is insofar as the will, considered under its natural aspect, necessarily wills its perfection, which is happiness in the highest degree and in particular.

On the other hand, the will considered as free does not will happiness necessarily, only contingently. With respect to this claim, Scotus refers specifically to the natural condition of will, as opposed to the condition of the will in the hereafter.[8]

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[6] Incidentally, the intellect, which is also a natural faculty, desires knowledge of the highest science, i.e., metaphysics, in the same way, according to Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, Book I (Scotus, Morality 157).

[7] If the natural will did require a prior act of intellection it would not be acting from its nature, and consequently it would not be the natural will. Only the will as a free agent requires a prior act of intellection for its own act.

[8] Scotus limits his claim to the natural, as opposed to the supernatural, condition of the

Scotus claims that the will desires happiness, either in general or in particular, though it in no way wills happiness necessarily. His argument may be reconstructed as follows:

> P1 Lesser causes cannot determine the act or mode of action of a superior cause.
> P2 Necessity is a mode of action.
> C1 Therefore, an inferior cause cannot cause necessity in a superior cause. (Corollary: If the superior cause acts of necessity, then it does so because of something stemming from the nature of such a cause.
> P4 If the superior cause acts necessarily, then the inferior causes subordinate to it act necessarily.
> P5 The intellect, as a cause, is inferior to the will.
> P6 If the will necessarily wills happiness, then it necessarily forces the intellect to continually consider happiness.
> P7 P6 is false.
> C2 Therefore, the will does not will happiness necessarily. (158)

Given this conclusion, one possibility is that since the will does not will happiness necessarily, it does not will happiness at all. This, however, would be at odds with the strong position Scotus takes on the liberty of the will. Rather, his claim is that the will desires happiness in general and in particular and contingently wills acts in accord with this desire. The reason he gives for why the will desires happiness for the most part (since it does not do so necessarily) is because "the will for the most part follows the inclination of its natural appetite" (159). This is because the natural inclination of the will is the will's strongest inclination towards the good (159). Since, as was made clear previously, the natural will wills happiness necessarily, if the will largely elicits its acts according to the *affectio commodi*, it follows that the will for the most part wills to be happy (159). He briefly considers the objection that such an act is natural. Though he concedes that such an act may be called natural insofar as it conforms to the natural inclination of the will, or in contrast to supernatural, he concludes that it is not properly

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will. See Allan Wolter's article, "Duns Scotus on the Natural Desire for the Supernatural" in The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus for an illuminating discussion of the will's inclinations and beatitude.

natural, since it entails an elicited act of the will (159).

2.4 Conclusions

In summary, Scotus' account of the human will as a radically free rational appetite is an attempt to give a partial explanation of the contingency in the world. The context in which he formulates this account was marked by the following two events: one, the introduction of Aristotle's works with Jewish and Arabic commentaries; two, the Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277, which were largely a reaction to certain tensions between Aristotle's philosophy and Christian revelation. Scotus defends vigorously the contingency in the world by emphasizing the freedom of the will. The root of the will's freedom is its inclination for justice, which frees it from only acting according to its natural inclination. Consequently, not only is the will free to elicit opposite acts, but it is also free to pursue the good disinterestedly. Although it cannot act without the cooperation of the intellect, the intellect and its objects in no way determine the will; rather, Scotus' will is superior to the intellectual power and exerts control over its objects. In contrast to the intellect, the will is the formally rational power, in virtue of its capacity for self-determination and ability to determine in opposite ways that which is inferior to it. The remarkable independence of the will leads Scotus to conclude, on the one hand, that the will can only be coerced in a qualified sense, and on the other hand, that it wills happiness for the most part, but only contingently.

The will Scotus argues for is very powerful and very free. It is, however, locked in the language of Aristotelian metaphysics, which carves up the world in terms of natures and essence, act and potency, efficient and material causality--categories that are foreign to a contemporary audience familiar with the language of modern science. William James, physician-turned-philosopher, was familiar with a world closer to the one of a contemporary audience. He too argues for a voluntaristic notion of the will.

The next chapter will discuss James' psychology of the will.

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM JAMES ON WILL

If we may speak of the stream of American thought, then William James is one of this stream's originating springs. William James (b. 1862, d. 1910) belonged to a remarkable family. He was the son Henry James, Sr. and Mary Robertson Walsh. Henry Sr., was an original mind in his own right, with respect to religious thought in particular. William's older brother, Henry Jr., was one of the great American novelists of the 19th century, noted especially as one of the first to introduce the stream-of-thought to literature. William himself was a medical doctor by training, an artist by avocation, and a seminal thinker in psychology, philosophy and religion. One popular stereotype of America and American thought is the focus on individualism and (stereotypically) the self-made man, who creates himself through his work. This stereotype, like all others, has a grain of truth in it. One source to which this grain can be traced is to William James and his voluntaristic notion of the will. This chapter will present James's account of will. In the first section, I will discuss the influences on James's thought about the will. In the second section, I will present his account in two parts: the first will focus on his psychological analysis of the will, the second on the significance of the will for meaning, morality, and possibility.

3.1 Biographical Background to William James's Will

In order to understand the what and the why of James's account of will, one should be familiar with a few details of James's life and times. Three such details are of particular relevance: one, in James's day, there was great confidence in the power and

promise of scientific explanation; two, James's father, who was especially concerned with matters of religion, society, and morality, had a great influence on James; three, although James suffered for most of his life from depression, a significant turning point for him in this regard occurred during the spring of 1870. In this section, I will describe in greater detail these facts of James's personal history and point to the influence each had on James's account of the will.

One relevant detail of James's personal history is that he came of age during a time characterized by great confidence in science as a tool to unlock the mysteries of, among other things, the human mind and evolution. James began his formal education in the sciences in 1861 at Lawrence Scientific School, only two years after the publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species (McDermott, Introduction *li*). On the one hand, James was very interested in science and was influenced significantly by Darwin's theory of evolution, incorporating elements of it into his own thought on emotion, knowledge and neuroanatomy (Myers, James 217, 282). On the other hand, James's education in the sciences showed him its limits; according to Ralph Barton Perry, his education provided him the "means of delivering him from the spell of scientific authority" (Matthiessen 114). James rejected the deterministic applications of Darwin's theory that proposed a mechanistic view of the mind, which James saw as incompatible with free will and the value of the individual (Myers, James 409). These mechanistic and materialistic explanations were also incompatible with a universe that contained real possibility, one of the hallmarks of James's thought. In addition to Darwin's influence, James was also influenced by his exposure to early lectures in the

newly-developing field of experimental psychology. James had the opportunity to attend these lectures while continuing his education in Europe (McDermott, lecture). Originally educated in the biological sciences for the purpose of becoming a medical doctor, James eventually committed himself to investigating the mysteries of the mind through the study of psychology. His work, The Principles of Psychology, in which the essay, "Will," appears, would later be called by Sidney Hook, "the greatest and most influential treatise on psychology in modern times" (Myers, James 484).

A second relevant detail of James's life is his father, Henry James, Sr. Henry Sr. influenced his son, William, in the way that a parent often does--by cultivating in him certain sensitivities and sensibilities during childhood. Henry Sr. was a deeply religious and well-educated man, having studied at the Union and Princeton theological seminaries. An original thinker in his own right, he aligned himself with Emerson and the transcendentalist movement in reaction to Calvinism and his father's strict and sober practice of Presbyterianism (Matthiessen 6-7). According to John McDermott, Henry Sr.'s influence on William " . . . was to be found in his persistent encouragement of a genuine religious sensitivity and concern (McDermott, Introduction *xxv*). According to Gardner Murphy, such sensitivities and curiosity was educated into the young James son in the following manner:

> He [Henry Sr.] created in the home atmosphere an exhilarating sense of the worthwhileness of pursuing problems of cosmic dimensions, of asking forever one more question as to the place of man in this world and as to the real basis for ethics and religion; everybody in the family was apparently always ready for a debate which wound up with humor and with agreement to live and let live. (*xxv*)

Despite the general "live and let live" atmosphere of the James family home, William

and his father occasionally clashed over matters of science and religion. In one letter to his father, William wrote, "I cannot logically understand *your* theory [of creation]" (Lewis 191). As William's thought developed, however, he became more sympathetic to his father's perspective. In a letter to his sister, Alice, he writes:

> These inhibitions, these split-up selves, all these new facts that are gradually coming to light about our organization, these enlargements of the self in trance, etc., are bringing me to turn for light in the direction of all sorts of despised spiritualistic and unscientific ideas. Father would find in me today a much more receptive listener--all *that* philosophy has got to be brought in. (McDermott, Introduction *xxvi*)

James's concern for maintaining the possibility of belief and morality motivates his response to determinism throughout his ethical works. This sensitivity for matters of belief, morality, and the meaning of life is evident in the last sections of "Will." Having concluded that the limit of science is evident in its inability to settle the free-will debate, James offers his audience moral reasons for supposing human beings have the possibility of doing otherwise.

A third detail relevant to understanding James' will is his lifelong struggle with depression and incredulity. His depression manifested as doubt, worthlessness, meaninglessness, and the experience of the lack of possibility. According to Edward Madden, James's depression had a "conceptual dimension," related to the deterministic implications of Darwinism mentioned above. The suggestion of the impossibility of moral responsibility and of self-determined action deeply troubled James and left him with a sense of moral impotence and insignificance (Madden *xxvi*). James suffered a particularly acute period of depression from 1869-1870 (McDermott, Introduction *xxvii*). Although depression was a constant feature of his mental horizon, he reached a turning

point in the spring of 1870, during which he rejected suicide as a live option. He made this decision after reading an essay by Charles Renouvier. The idea in Renouvier's essay that broke through the clouds of James's depression was the definition of free will as "the sustaining of a thought *because I choose to* when I might have other thoughts" (McDermott, Writings 7). After reading this way of conceiving of free will, he was moved to make the following commitment:

> I will assume for the present--until next year--that it is no illusion. My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will . . . . Hitherto, when I have felt like taking a free initiative, like daring to act originally, without carefully waiting for contemplation of the external world to determine all for me, suicide seemed the most manly form to put my daring into; now, I will go a step further with my will, not only act with it, but believe as well; believe in my individual reality and creative power. (McDermott, Writings 7-8)

The significance of Renouvier's words for James was that the claim that the one has the ability to choose one's own thoughts opened up the possibility of self-determination and freedom, in what would otherwise be a deterministic universe in which individuals are pawns of material forces beyond their control.

3.2 William James on Will

James's essay "Will" may be divided thematically into two parts. First, James discusses at length the psychology of volition; he concludes with the claim that volition is effort of attention. Second, James considers the question of whether or not the will is free. His conclusion is that science does not provide sufficient evidence for deciding this question one way or the other. In absence of decisive scientific evidence, James offers an alternative reason for supposing that the will is free: the moral import of the will. In this section, I will present James's account of the will. First, however, I will give a brief

introduction to the relevant features of his psychology in order to provide the necessary explanatory context for the discussion of "Will."

3.2.1 Context of Will: James's Psychology of Consciousness and Attention

James's will cannot be properly understood without considering his psychology of consciousness and attention. One way to get a sense of James's view of consciousness is to contrast it with two accounts he rejects: Kant's and the British empiricists'. James is a nativist with regard to sensation and perception; it is from this position that he critiques Kant and the British empiricists. According to the nativist, sensation, or what my mind registers, and perception, or what my body detects in the environment, are continuous and differ only in degree: " . . . the real world 'out there' is *natively* or originally discovered and encountered *in sensation*" (Myers, Introduction *xxii-xxiii*). For Kant, on the other hand, the perceptions of the sense organs are unfinished, so to speak, until the mind organizes them in terms of time, space and causality. In contrast, according to James, the information delivered by the senses comes rich, ordered and true of the world; the mind does have to do anything additional to it (*xxiv*). The other view James rejects is British empiricism, a tradition that spans from Thomas Hobbes to Herbert Spencer. According to this view, sensations are atomic and strung together by association. In contrast, according to James, sensations are continuous and merge into one another, and transitions are felt (*xxvi-xxvii*). In summary, James's view of consciousness is a continuous stream of rich sensations and mental states, a world that comes to us as an undistinguished whole.

According to James, attention is that by which we have a detailed and

distinguished world out of the undistinguished stream of consciousness. The purpose of attention is to allow us to control, and therefore survive, our environment. Since its purpose is survival, attention operates by interest. Interest may be either involuntary, and of proximate and immediate objects or ends, or voluntary, and of remote and derived objects or ends. The ideas present to the mind may exist in the foreground or background of consciousness; whatever ideas have interest are fixed by attention and remain in the foreground; the others fall back to the fringe of consciousness. Attention does not create new ideas, but it is qualifiedly creative in the sense of selectively attending to consciousness (Myers, James 186-7).

3.2.2 James's Psychological Account of Will

James claims that the range of human action is a continuum from the involuntary to the voluntary. The basis for this claim is that in order for an action to be voluntarily willed, its effects must be desired; in order for the effects to be desired, they must first be known, and this happens only by experiencing movement (James 2:1099). Says James, "We learn all our possibilities by the way of experience" (2:1099). On the one hand, if the idea of the movement is of the sensation in the performing part, then the idea is called resident. On the other hand, if the idea of the movement is of the sensation in the effected part, then the idea is called remote (2:1100). In both cases, the memory of the sensorial consequences of the movement is retained. These ideas may be later recalled and intended in future voluntary actions. According to James, the mere idea is enough; no further idea of the amount of "outgoing current" or energy is required to effect the action. The degree of strength needed for the effect is already present in the memory of

the felt movement (2:1111-1112).

From the fact that either a remote or a resident idea is enough to effect an action, James claims that consciousness itself is impulsive. He writes, "We do not first have a sensation or thought, and then have to *add* something dynamic to it to get a movement. Every pulse of feeling which we have is the correlate of some neural activity that is already on its way to instigate a movement" (2:1134). Given the impulsive nature of ideas, there are two possibilities: a movement may or may not follow immediately from the idea. The former case, in which a movement follows immediately from the idea, is referred to as ideo-motor action; its distinguishing feature is that there are no conflicting ideas that arise to impede its effect (2:1132). The latter case, in which movement does not immediately follow upon the idea, is referred to as indecision. The characteristic feature of indecision is the presence of conflicting ideas, which inhibit the original idea and suspend its efficacy. In this situation, the conflicting ideas must be considered, and one must be consented to over the others in order for the action to issue forth. This consideration of conflicting ideas, also called reasons or motives, is deliberation (2:1136-1137).

Deliberative action resolves in decision, of which there are five types. Generally speaking, decision is when the original idea either triumphs over or is squashed by conflicting reasons, one of which prevails over the rest (2:1137). This, however, is a rather simplified picture of the deliberative process; a richer and more accurate picture must take into consideration certain features of James's notion of consciousness. Consciousness is a complex field of motives and their conflict. In this complex field,

certain ideas stand out more than others, as a result of their relative interest. Those ideas that are the objects of interest, brought into focus by one's attention, make up the foreground; the rest remain in the background, on the fringe of consciousness. As long as the reasons in the background remain, they check the impulse of the original idea, because they retain the potential to come into the foreground (2:1136). This state of deliberation resolves in decision in one of five ways. Of the first four types, let it suffice to say that the decision is made easily, either by preponderance of evidence, accidental determination from within or without, or a change of heart resulting from some inner or outer event (2:1138-1140). Common to these four is, ". . . in those cases the mind at the moment of deciding on the triumphant alternative dropped the other one wholly or nearly out of sight . . ." (2:1141). In other words, indecision is resolved with no sense of effort or regret for the loss of the other alternative. The fifth type of decision differs from the others with respect to this sense of effort; thus, it is unique and merits separate discussion.

The fifth type of decision is the one that is most significant for James's account of will. Its distinguishing feature is the feeling of effort that accompanies the decision. What accounts for this feeling of effort, according to James, is that instead of one alternative dropping out of sight, both remain present before the mind. At the moment one alternative is chosen, one also has in mind what is lost by sacrificing the other alternative. James says of this type of decision, in his characteristically vivid style, "It is deliberately driving a thorn into one's flesh" (2:1141). Reason and evidence play a secondary role in this decision-type; it may or may not be the case that all the evidence is

in and has been considered thoroughly. What is the case in this type of decision, however, is the feeling,

> . . . as if we ourselves by our own wilful act inclined the beam: in the former case by adding our living effort to the weight of the logical reason which, taken alone, seems powerless to make the act discharge; in the latter by a kind of creative contribution of something instead of a reason which does a reason's work. (2:1141)

In other words, in this type of decision one has the feeling that, "*I* made the decision, by my own choice and with my own effort." In short, this fifth decision-type serves to illustrate that the impulsive power of ideas is not always sufficient to effect an action. The decision is subjectively considered an act of self-determination, by which one contributes something original and not already contained within the idea. In such cases, additional effort may be needed. Although this fifth type accounts for relatively small number our actual decisions, this phenomenon is important because it is the basis for James's discussion of the free-will question. According to James, the issue on which the free-will debate turns is whether this original effort is only felt subjectively or is also objectively quantifiable.

So far, I have been referring to James's account of *the will* without specifying what he means by the term will. The way in which I have previously used the term will is somewhat misleading. Upon reading the phrase, "James's account of the will," one might think James means by will some thing or object. On the contrary, he defines will as a relation between the mind and its ideas (2:1164). In what follows, I will explain in greater detail how James conceives of this relation.

As mentioned above, the phenomenon of effort is the key element of a certain

decision-type. The feeling of effort arises when a hard choice must be made between two or more conflicting motives. According to James, there is a proper ratio of conflicting ideas and way in which they issue forth in action. The proper ratio and process of these ideas is distinguished from its opposite as healthiness versus unhealthiness of will (2:1143). In the former case, ideas that prevail without effort in the healthy will are intentional objects of instinctive reaction, that is, passion, appetite, and emotion, habit, or ones that are nearer in space and/or time (2:1143). Conversely, ideas that prevail with effort in the healthy will are distant considerations, abstract ideas, unaccustomed reasons and non-instinctive motives (2:1143). In the latter case, the unhealthy will, ideas that normally do not require effort now do, and vice versa. In other words, the difference between healthiness and unhealthiness of will is in the ratio of impulsive to inhibitory ideas; the healthy ration of ideas James calls right vision (2:1143). Further, in the healthy will an idea must precede action, so that "*the action must obey the vision's lead*" (2:1143).

James describes in greater detail the dysfunction of unhealthiness of will. In such condition, either normal actions are impossible or abnormal actions are irrepressible; the former is referred to as the obstructed will, the latter as the explosive will (2:1143-1144). One possible cause of the explosive will is a lack of inhibiting ideas. In absence of inhibition, an idea may discharge into movement immediately (2:1144). James describes someone with such a will in the following way:

> It is the absence of scruples, of consequences, of considerations, the extraordinary simplification of each moment's mental outlook, that gives to the explosive individual such motor energy and ease; it need not be the greater intensity of any of his passions, motives, or thoughts. (2:1145)

Although such a will may belong to a person by temperament, it may also belong in virtue of some accidental situation, including infancy, addiction, or bad habit (2:1145, 1147-1148). The other possible cause of the explosive will is exaggerated impulse. In contrast to the previously mentioned cause, inhibition might be present but idea's impulse is abnormally strong. In this case, the mere possibility of some idea becomes instantly an urgent matter (2:1148). The examples he gives of persons with such a will include hard-core addicts and people who today we would diagnose as obsessive-compulsive (2:1149-1152).

The other unhealthy variety of will is the obstructed will. As in the case of the explosive will, the ratio of inhibition to impulse is disproportionate in one of two ways. The ratios themselves, however, are the opposite of what is the case in the explosive will, as one might expect: there is either too little impulse or too much inhibition. In either case, ideas fail to discharge into action. Unlike his description of the explosive will, James provides much less detail about the obstructed will.[9] On the one hand, James says the ineffectiveness of some ideas is the case with everyone; one may recall that he says that some ideas only prevail with effort, including abstract ideas and unfamiliar

[9] One wonders if the reason why James gave comparatively less attention to the obstructed will was because he was already intimately familiar with it. His highly sympathetic account of the character of someone with an explosive will, which is still an unhealthy will, may also be a function of his own condition. Having an obstructed will, he might have been inclined to think favorably of its opposite. Regardless, the amount of attention given to each is consistent with the decision he made in April 1870: "For the remainder of the year, I will abstain from the mere speculation and contemplative *Grublei* in which my nature takes most delight, and voluntarily cultivate the feeling of moral freedom, by reading books favorable to it, as well as by acting (McDermott,

reasons (2:1143, 1152). On the other hand, an obstructed will bay be the consequence of certain situations, such as extreme exhaustion (2:1152). The pathological version of the obstructed will, however, is abnormal and persists. What distinguishes the pathology of the explosive will from the obstructed will is that in the latter, the action does not follow from the idea for no apparent reason. Speaking as both diagnostician and patient, James says of this condition of the will, “But in the morbid condition in question the vision may be wholly unaffected, and the intellect clear, and yet the act either fails to follow or follows in some other way” (2:1152-1153). According to James, the real tragedy of this condition is that although one sees clearly the possibilities and what one should do, one is helpless with regard to realizing these ideas. In his usual, vivid way, James captures the feeling and the frustration of one with an obstructed will: the ideal motives “ . . . never get switched on, and the man’s conduct is no more influenced by them than an express train is influenced by a wayfarer standing by the roadside and calling to be taken aboard” (2:1154). The inability to act in a way in which one is able to realize one's possibilities yields a sense of worthlessness, which James expresses in the following words: “ . . . the consciousness of inward hollowness that accrues from habitually seeing the better only to do the worse, is one of the saddest feelings one can bear with him through this vale of tears” (2:1154).

James steps back from this introspective analysis of will to draw a few conclusions. The first among these is that effort feels like original force, regardless of whether it is checking some tendency or overcoming another in order to fix a more ideal

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Writings 7-8).

motive (2:1154). Second, more ideal motives must be reinforced by effort in order to prevail over more immediate ones (2:1155). The magnitude of the resistance determines the amount of effort required to overcome it. Third, he defines moral action in terms of the effort required to reinforce more ideal and less immediate motives: "It [moral action] is action in the line of the greatest resistance," where the line of greatest resistance is in fixing abstract ideas, unfamiliar reasons, and non-instinctual motives (2:1155). Fourth, this is possible because the mind can attend voluntarily to ideas and thus effect one or another. According to James, what holds attention determines action (2:1164). Fifth and finally, will *is* the relation between the mind and its ideas, and it is most itself, that is, most voluntary when it demonstrates its potential for effort by attending to a difficult object (2:1164, 1166). Strictly speaking, whether or not the movement follows from the prevailing idea is a matter of physiology; the volition itself is complete once one idea has silenced the clamor of the others (2:1165).

3.2.3 The Ethical Significance of Will

As has just been explained, the voluntariness of the will is in its effort of attention. Up until this point, the most James has claimed is that effort *feels* like original force. By referring only to the subjective feeling of effort, James skirts the question of whether or not effort actually is the original contribution of the one who wills or determined by the object of attention. To clarify this tension: it seems to me, at least in some decisions, that I am the independent variable, and the amount of attention I am capable of putting forth is determined by me. If, however, the effort I am able to make is determined by something other than me, then I am in fact not free. In other words,

James is worried that this felt effort might just be determinism in disguise. The free-will question hangs on whether or not the effort is a fixed or free variable. To further complicate matters, James thinks effortless volitions *are* mechanically determined by the brain (2:1175). Even with respect to these effortless volitions one thinks one has the possibility of doing otherwise. In such cases, the sense of an alternative possibility is false; doing otherwise is not possible (2:1175-1176). What, then, can serve as grounds for the claim that volitions made with effort are in fact original and free? As impossible as this sounds, James thinks it at least equally impossible to give up the moral universe, which would be the consequence of conceding the impossibility of free volitions. He appeals to the following common moral experience in support of his claim:

> When a man has let his thoughts go for days and weeks until at last they culminate in some particularly dirty or cowardly or cruel act, it is hard to persuade him, in the midst of his remorse, that he might not have reined them in; hard to make him believe that this whole goodly universe (which his act so jars upon) required and exacted it of him at that fatal moment, and from eternity made aught else impossible. (2:1175)

In other words, denying that we experience remorse for our misdeeds is equally problematic as trying to figure out how free volitions are possible.

According to James, the question of free will cannot be settled by psychology. For one thing, in order to prove that effort is a fixed variable, that is, that the will is not free, it would be necessary to make a quantitative or deductive determination that the effort given to some idea was the exact amount, no more and no less, needed to make it prevail. Even if such a determination was theoretically possible, James thought it impossible in practice (2:1176). More to the point, since science seeks only deterministic explanations, it is not neutral with respect to the possibility of free will and

is thus an ill-suited arbiter of the free will debate. Science, however, is not the only source of knowledge or truth, according to James. "Science, however, must be constantly reminded that her purposes are not the only purposes, and that the order of uniform causation which she has use for, and is therefore right in postulating, may be enveloped in a wider order, on which she has no claims at all" (2:1179).

In absence of some resolution to this debate on the basis of science or psychology, James turns to ethics and morality. James claims true ideas have an effect discovered in experience; this is the fundamental thesis of pragmatism. One may recall the aforementioned example in which James appeals to the moral experience of one who feels regret over some past misdeed. According to James, this difference in the moral universe needs to be explained, and the only plausible explanation for regret is that it must have been possible to do otherwise. In other words, effort must be a free variable, something the agent herself is able to determine. If so, then free will is possible.

For James, the significance of self-determined effort is more than merely justifying free will. Original effort has moral import for the individual. The significance of effort for the individual is that one's effort is the one thing that is one's own, and it is that by which one is able to make an original contribution to the world. As such, it is the basis of one's individuality and the means by which one uniquely determines the unfinished universe. The ability to do this is extremely important for one's sense of self-worth. James expresses these sentiments to his childhood friend, Tom Ward, in a letter written towards the end of his crisis period.

> Well, neither of us wishes to be a mere loafer; each wishes a work which shall by its mere *exercise* interest him and at the same time allow him to

> feel that through it he takes hold of the reality of things--whatever that may be--in some measure . . . . And if we have to give up all hope of seeing into the purposes of God, or to give up theoretically the idea of final causes, and of God anyhow as vain and leading to nothing for us, we can, by our will, make the enjoyment of our brothers stand us in the stead of a final cause; and through a knowledge of the fact that that enjoyment on the whole depends on what individuals accomplish, lead a life so active, and so sustained by a clean conscience as not to need to fret much. Individuals can add to the welfare of the race in a variety of ways . . . . At least, when you have added to the property of the race, even if no one knows your name, yet it is certain that, without what you have done, some individuals must needs be acting now in a somewhat different manner. You have modified their life; you are in *real* relation with them; you have in so far forth entered into their being. And is that such an unworthy stake to set up for our good, after all? . . . . I confess that, in the lonesome gloom which beset me for a couple of months last summer, the only feeling that kept me from giving up was that by waiting and living, by hook or crook, long enough, I might make my *nick*, however small a one, in the raw stuff the race has got to shape, and so assert my reality. (Matthiessen 213-15)

This letter captures in its rich detail the personal significance of will for James. Incredulous by nature, James was not able to take comfort in a worldview in which God was the source and author of meaning of the universe in general and the individual in particular. Unable to sustain himself without some source of meaning, he finds in the possibility of original human effort a way to endow his life and his world with meaning. Contrary to the popular stereotype of American life and thought, this meaning is not singularly individualistic; the individual's original contribution places her within a network of real relations, in virtue of which her history and contribution are now part of the lives of other people. These real relations, for James, endow his life with meaning and purpose, lending reality to his personal existence.

Returning to "Will," James casts the significance of effort in a slightly different light by emphasizing the role of effort in resisting life's "dark abysses" (James 2:1181).

When the world appears to be closing in on oneself, whether one survives the trial or not depends on the mental effort one is able to summon in one's defense. The battle is fought and decided according to whether the dark and terrible ideas are resisted or not. James distinguishes heroes from worthless men by their capacity for effort.

> When a dreadful object is presented, or when life as a whole turns up its dark abysses to our view, then the worthless ones among us lose their hold on the situation altogether, and either escape from its difficulties by averting their attention, or if they cannot do that, collapse into yielding masses of plaintiveness and fear. The effort required for facing and consenting to such objects is beyond their power to make. But the heroic mind does differently. To it, too, the objects are sinister and dreadful, unwelcome, incompatible with wished-for things. But it can face them if necessary, without for that losing its hold upon the rest of life. (2:1181)

In short, the difference between the heroic person and the worthless one is solely according to the effort of attention the former is able to make. The heroic person, in virtue of her ability to summon forth the effort to resist capitulation to fear of the dark and terrible, proves her own mettle and worth (2:1181).

Not only does the hero assert her own worth and existence, but her example becomes a source of inspiration for others during their moments of trial. In James's words, "We draw new life from the heroic example. The prophet has drunk more deeply than anyone of the cup of bitterness, but his countenance is so unshaken and he speaks such mighty words of cheer that his will becomes our will, and our life is kindled at his own" (2:1182). In "Will," the contribution made by effort is not some anonymous product that changes how others live, but instead is one's personal example. The hero enables others to conceive of their own potential and possibility, by representing that possibility realized in the life of one concrete, historical individual.

Finally, James's hero is not simply a role model or the stereotypical self-made man. The hero is one with the courage to listen to the quiet voice of reason spoken by

one's conscience. When in the grip of passion, the hero "hears the still small voice unflinchingly, and who, when the death-bringing consideration comes, looks at its face, consents to its presence, clings to it, affirms it, and holds it fast, in spite of the host of exciting mental images which rise in revolt against it . . ." (2:1168). For James, the essence of morality is in effort of will to resist lesser motives and instead strive to realize more ideal motives.

3.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, in "Will," James presents a psychological account of will, which is different in many ways from the metaphysical account Scotus gives. One important difference is that James's will is not a faculty but a relation between the mind and its ideas. Its voluntariness is in direct proportion to its ability to attend with effort to difficult objects. This capacity for original effort is significant for both the individual and for others. For the individual, effort grounds identity and self-worth both because it is original and also the source of originality, the expression of which places one in real relations with others; these relations themselves are a source of meaning. For others, one's effort in the face of difficulty becomes a sources of possibility for others in their times of trial. James's formulation of will in this particular way is indebted to details of his own life, including the influence that his father, his lifelong struggle with depression and poor health, and the scientific materialism of his day. Despite the different starting points of Scotus' and James's accounts, they have a common claim, namely that will is self-determining and able to control thought. In the next chapter, I will consider what these two accounts do and do not make possible and then what more needs to be said to have an account of the will that is faithful to experience and increases the horizon of human possibility.

CHAPTER IV

THOUGHTS ON THE WILL

In the previous two chapters, I discussed the will according to Duns Scotus and William James. Some of the questions answered by this inquiry include: what is the will; what does it do, why do human beings have a will? Although these two thinkers have very different starting points and answer the aforementioned questions differently, both insist that the will's control over thought is an undeniable fact of experience. In this chapter, I will consider what lessons can be learned from Scotus and James. First, I will explain the upshot of the will for Scotus and James for the purpose of spelling out what picture of human action their accounts make possible. Then, I will contrast their accounts with each other for the purpose of illustrating the limits of each account, or what is not possible for each. Finally, after identifying a weakness common to both, I will present my own strategy for expanding the possibilities of human action.

4.1 Upshot of the Will for Duns Scotus

Having discussed Scotus' account of the will in chapter II, we turn now in chapter IV to examine what picture of human action his will purchases. It is relevant to the following discussion to note the significance of Scotus' account of the will for his anthropology in general. As discussed previously, the will is superior to the intellect insofar as the will is able to determine the intellect, but not vice versa. Also discussed earlier is Scotus' view that perfection of human nature consists in loving union with God. The point here is that since for Scotus the will is a human-making faculty, what he thinks about the will is what he thinks about human beings, to a large extent. This said, Scotus views the will as a chooser, a doer, and a lover. These three aspects of the will's activity will be fleshed out in what follows.

One, the will chooses goods, and every choice the will makes is on behalf of

some good. As discussed earlier, the will may choose a good in one of two ways: one, according to what is good for the agent, or according to self-interest; two, according to the object's intrinsic value, or disinterestedly. One upshot of this capacity to choose according to a non-relative value is that it grounds the possibility of a moral universe, in which altruism, love, and justice are real possibilities for moral agents.

Two, the will chooses freely. This is another upshot of the will's dual inclination towards the good; because the will has two inclinations according to which it can choose, it is not determined to one possibility. The good in no way necessitates the will, either in regards to which good is chosen or the inclination according to which it is chosen. This liberty of the will means that the will is free to cause many different effects. In other words, as an instrument of free action, the will is a source of creativity.

Three, the will is a lover. For Scotus, as for Aristotle, all beings have a nature according to which they are a certain kind of being. All created natures are in potency to their proper perfection; this means simply that they have not yet become fully the kind of being they are according to their nature. In the case of human beings, the perfection of human nature consists in loving union with God, where God is loved as the agent's greatest good and for his own sake. Both the will and the intellect cooperate in this act that perfects human nature. In the last analysis, Scotus' will is a lover.

Finally, the general picture these three make possible is as follows. One, since it is in virtue of the will that human beings are most like God, the realm of human activity is going to be of special importance to Scotus. Human activity in general and in particular should reflect God, in whose image human beings were created. As a result of our two inclinations toward the good, in the sphere of human relations we may expect to find love, friendship and altruism, as well as relationships characterized by use and abuse. Since, however, Scotus thinks the natural inclination is good and needs only to

be moderated, not eliminated, the sphere of human activity necessarily needs to include the variety of goods needed for the realization of one's nature. This sphere of human activity, if it is properly human and reflects the divine, will be textured by justice and love.

4.2 Upshot of Will for William James

For James, will is both a problem and a solution. On the one hand, the psychological account James gives of will is materialistic and a hair's breadth away from the determinism he is determined to avoid. On the other hand, James is able to elude the snares of determinism by introducing radical empiricism as a way of deciding whether or not the will is free. Since belief in a free will makes a difference, James concludes that, in fact, we do will freely. Having rescued the will, James also rescues a universe of meaning and morality. In short, for James, the will is a knower, a resister, and the origin of the possibility of meaning and morality.

One, the will knows. Knowing, however, is not the same for James and Scotus. For Scotus, to know is to arrive at universal concepts through abstraction from particulars, which are delivered by the senses. To know, on James's account, is to have a belief tested by experience, and the way one tests beliefs is by acting on them. It is through our doings and our willings that we come to find out if our beliefs make a difference, and beliefs that make a difference felt in experience are true. James rescues free will by this very method: "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will" (McDermott, Writings 7).

Two, will is resistance. One may recall from the discussion in chapter III that ideas themselves are impulsive. Action is the physiological effect of a mental event, that is, the prevalence of one idea over others in the mind. An idea may prevail with or without effort; voluntary action is the result of the latter. Consequently, voluntary action

begins in the mind and is directly related to how much effort one is capable of making on behalf of the idea one wishes to prevail. Making one idea prevail necessarily involves resisting the conflicting ideas that arise. Voluntary action, then, is the result of mental effort that sustains one idea by resisting others. In other words, will is a matter of mental resistance.

Three, will makes possible a moral and meaningful universe. According to James, moral choice consists in the following. When inflamed by a strong emotional state, the most difficult thing is to fix the wise course of action before one's mind. The difficulty is that " . . . passion's cue accordingly is always and everywhere to prevent their [reasonable ideas'] still small voice from being heard at all" (James 2:1168). For the still small voice to prevail against the passionate motives requires great mental effort. The possibility of moral action, then, depends upon the ability to make great mental effort. Such effort also becomes that out of which my life's meaning is constituted. One, since I am the only cause of the effort I am able to muster, such effort counts as my original contribution to humanity. Two, what I am able to accomplish in virtue of my effort places me in real relation to others; this real relation to others is what endows my life with meaning and significance. Thus, effort of attention, which is the essential phenomenon of will, is the key to all moral action and meaning.

Finally, the general picture these three make possible is as follows. James's will creates the possibility of testing our beliefs against the world. True beliefs allow the one the possibility of living authentic lives, in which one has one's experiences firsthand, not according to the way someone else has experienced the world. Will is also that by which the human race has the possibility of making the world they inhabit, according to their purposes and potential. Finally, in virtue of one's effort, each person has the possibility of willing one's own meaning and way of being in the world.

4.3 Evaluations

In chapters II and III, I explained Scotus' and James's accounts of the will. In chapter IV, thus far I have briefly sketched what these two accounts imply for human action. In the final section of this chapter, I will first contrast these two accounts, in order to point out the limits of each, and then I will conclude with a weakness both share. If correct, this common weakness may suggest a direction for further inquiry into human possibility.

James's account of the will has two advantages over Scotus' account. One, James's psychological description of will provides a framework for diagnosing problems in willing. Since willing is a fundamental feature of human experience, and since all people mis-will at one time or another, James's account has great instrumental value for helping people identify and solve their own difficulties in willing. Conversely, one limit of Scotus' metaphysical account is that in trying to capture the general characteristics of the will, it fails to capture anything particular about the will, including particular problems. Further, since often these problems are experienced as the inability to will freely, the fact that Scotus' account says nothing about such details makes his account seem at least unhelpful, if not implausible.

Two, James's account, in contrast to Scotus', links individuality with the will. James's will is instrumental in grounding the significance of the individual. This seems more in tune with experience than Scotus' one-size-fits-all description of the will. Scotus' explanation of what makes someone individual is divorced from his account of human action. Intuitively, this seems mistaken, because how the act is performed and what is effected depends on who the actor is. Two people will perform the same act differently. This is because our individuality extends to our action. These two advantages are related insofar as one's mis-willings are usually intimately related to

some particular feature of one's personality. This is illustrated in James's account of the will; in describing the varieties of the unhealthy will, he refers to certain types of characters, such as the explosive Italian, the obstructed Yankee, the sluggard, drunkard and the coward (2:1144, 1155).

On the other hand, Scotus' account has one advantage over James. James's introspective method leads him to a somewhat lopsided account; this creates a problem Scotus' account is better able to handle. As pointed out at the beginning of chapter III, James's own difficulties in willing are part of what motivate his account; this plus the inherent limitations of introspection yield a unbalanced picture of will. This is evident when notices the difference in James's descriptions of the explosive will in contrast to the obstructed will. He writes sympathetically of the explosive character, saying, "He will be the king of his company, sing the songs and make the speeches, lead the parties, carry out the practical jokes, kiss the girls, fight the men . . ." (2:1144). In contrast, he describes the obstructed character as, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," who "with full command of theory, never get to holding their limp characters erect" (2:1145, 1153). Further, since difficulties with respect to willing vary, certain distortions may manifest if the account is generalized. For example, according to James effort is the "substantive thing which we are" (2:1181). If, however, native capacity for effort is diminished by mental disability, it seems unfair to say that such a person is worth less than one whose native capacity is greater. Even if one were to grant this, to call "weaker brethren" both the person with the diminished mental capacity and the average person who failed to exercise her capacity seems to overlook an important difference between the two.

While Scotus' account may be lopsided in certain ways, like focusing on the general aspects to the exclusion of particular difference, as mentioned earlier, his

account is better able to handle the case of the disabled person. According to Scotus, the will's natural inclination is precognitive, yet it still directs the agent towards its greatest good, that is, God. All human beings have this inclination and to the same degree: "It is present to the same degree in a newborn babe or a Cretin idiot as in a normal adult" (Wolter, Philosophical 144).

In defense of James, he does not neglect the wounded part of our humanity; indeed, he gives it far more attention that most philosophers. In addition, other remarks of his nuance his earlier statement about our worth. For example, James says, "To sustain a representation is . . . the only moral act, for the impulsive and the obstructed, for sane and lunatics alike" (James 2:1170). Here he attributes the capacity for moral action to lunatics as well as the sane. The example that follows suggests that the dark abysses of life are somewhat relative. For the lunatic, the chief difficulty is how to act sanely, where as this is not a difficulty for the sane person. Nonetheless, James does not back down from his claim that effort is constitutive of our worth, and this is going to exclude the weakest among us, and indeed all of us at the weakest moment in our lifespan.

The strength of both accounts is an optimistic view of human ability and possibility. In addition, both are better able than most philosophers to talk about the other dimension of the human experience, that is, the experience of impossibility. However, it is also true of both accounts that disability is treated solely as a limit on possibility. That disability limits possibility is unquestionable, but I want to argue that it also makes possible other things, such that even our impossibilities carry within them the seeds of possibility. I want to suggest that there are possibilities for human action that we have in virtue of our frailty and disability.

The purchase of this claim, however, depends on showing that neither Scotus nor

James recognizes this possibility. On the one hand, Scotus' account is not specific enough to discuss what happens in the marginal cases or other cases in which the will does not work, as mentioned earlier. Due to this lack of attention to weakness in the will, there is no room on his account to explore the possibilities latent in our disabilities. If one objects on the basis of the natural inclination example mentioned above, I respond that Scotus does not develop this point to show where new possibilities are created by the disability; the possibilities the idiot has in virtue of the natural inclination are the same as the ones available to the normal adult. The disability is accommodated, but the horizon of possibilities is not expanded. On the other hand, although James takes into consideration our miswillings, he misleads us by overlooking a possible response to life's dark abysses. The result of this oversight is that the horizon of possibilities for human action is narrowed.

First, one must clarify what responses are available to us according to James. For this one must consider James's description of the heroic person. According to his description, the hero is one who, when facing the sinister and dreadful in human experience, is able resist the force of the ideas by his mental effort. This resistance has the character of the overcoming of something difficult; effort exerted on behalf of overcoming a "deterrent object" makes him "one of the masters and the lords of life" (2:1181). James contrasts the hero with his "weaker brethren." When faced with the same sinister and dreadful objects, such people either avoid attending to the idea altogether or collapse into "yielding masses of plaintiveness and fear" (2:1181). These are the only two (or formally three) responses to the dark and terrible aspects of human existence presented by James. I want to suggest a third possible response: in the face of natural and moral evil, one may also allow the presence of that evil to remind one of one's own physical and moral frailty. This experience of suffering with introduces

solidarity and reconciliation into the possibilities for human action. I will discuss this in greater detail by looking at two cases of evil: one natural, one moral.

Let us take someone with mental and physical disabilities as our example of natural evil. According to James, the weak-minded among us will likely ignore the disabled person. The inappropriateness of this response is generally uncontroversial, and a justification of this evaluation need not be defended here. The second possible response, which James favors, is to resist that evil, to overcome it with something good. For example, one might do something to try to alleviate the suffering of this person, to be helpful in some way. The appropriateness of this response is also uncontroversial. In addition, there is a third possible response that ought to precede this resisting response, which is to identify with the sufferer in her suffering, out of one's own experience of suffering and physical frailty. If one responds in this way, one is said to be in solidarity with the sufferer. Solidarity with the one who suffers will shape the resisting response. For example, having identified with the suffering of the other, I am more committed to ameliorating that suffering than I would be if I considered it to be only the problem of the other. Consequently, I might be more willing to assume more cost or risk to myself if it would benefit the other. Further, this third response may guide the alternative solutions I consider. I take Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche communities, to be an example of someone who has made this type of response. The prototype of these communities was Vanier's offer to share his home with two mentally disabled and a priest. Part of what moved Vanier to make such a commitment was seeing how the mentally disabled were treated in the institutions and his friendship with the priest and one of the disabled men.

Let us take an attempted murder as our case of an example of moral evil. As in the previous case, not only would it be weak-minded but also wrong to ignore the

attempted murder. James's response would be to overcome that evil with some good, which is also uncontroversial. In this situation, the obvious good is that the act be punished, a requirement of justice. Suppose the suspect is tried, found guilty and sentenced. If the third possible response is allowed to surface in this case, with whom should one suffer? The obvious choice is the victim; all of us have suffered some wrong done to us by which we can identify with the victim. Consider the less obvious choice of suffering with the perpetrator in addition to the victim. This possibility involves not only identifying with the victim's distress, but also with the criminal's moral frailty. Identifying with the criminal requires recognizing one's own moral weakness and instances of failure. This identification may affect the resisting response in several ways. For instance, as a practical matter, one might be concerned with the criminal's rehabilitation as well as punishment. Instead of considering the criminal solely in term of her action, the criminal is also considered as a human being with the capacity to choose otherwise. This possibility of doing otherwise grounds justice--for the criminal should have done otherwise--but also rehabilitation, insofar as the criminal is also a person with the In addition, reconciliation becomes a possibility. If the sufferer is able to identify with moral frailty of the perpetrator, she can recognize in the other the possibility for acting otherwise, which demands both justice and the opportunity for a second chance. Genuine reconciliation does not excuse the wrongness of the act, for to do so would compromise justice. It is important that these possibilities not come at the expense of justice. Unless the requirements of justice are fulfilled, then the possibilities of human action are not increased but narrowed by compassion for the perpetrator, precisely because the possibility of justice is eclipsed.

One objection to my general claim that we learn our possibilities through our weakness in addition to our strengths, is that all of the extra possibilities for human

action can come in on James's account under more ideal motives. Thus, the proposed third response is superfluous. One response to this objection is that the importance of distinguishing the intermediate response from the resisting response is that in order to determine what idea ought to prevail, and therefore which others should be resisted, this deliberate act of reflection is necessary. In absence of appropriate reflection about with whom one can identify and in virtue of what, one is likely to make two mistakes. One, that one will resist the evil in the wrong way, for example at the expense of justice for either the victim or the perpetrator. Two, one will certainly miss facing one's own physical and moral weakness. Attending to our experience of frailty is just as important for morality and the meaning of one's life as attending to one's strengths and capabilities. To his credit, James more than almost any other philosopher does face his frailty; his "Will to Believe" is direct evidence of this. If however, one's frailty is only an obstacle to be overcome and not also an opportunity for forgiveness, solidarity, and expanding the possibilities of the suffering, then the possibilities of moral action are prematurely narrowed.

Another objection, this time to my particular claim that one should not only identify with the victim but also the perpetrator, goes as follows. It is unjust to identify with the victim as well as the perpetrator of some moral evil. To extend compassion to both is to imply that there is no difference between the victim and the perpetrator, when in fact one is innocent and the other is guilty. One possible response to this objection is that the compassion for both is the result of one's reflection on one's own moral experience, in which one recognizes oneself as both perpetrator and victim of harm; to deny that one is both seems to me to be an equally obvious mistake. The follow up objection is that even if one acknowledges oneself as both victim and perpetrator, if one has never committed a grave misdeed, there is no basis for one's identification with the

perpetrator. A possible response to this objection is that if one may unproblematically identify with the physical frailty of the mentally and physically disabled person, even though one has not experienced that kind of disability, why may one not unproblematically identify with the moral frailty of the criminal?

A second objection to the particular claim regarding identification with the perpetrator is that since identifying with the perpetrator is predicated on a prior justice for the victim, this suggestion does not provide helpful guidance in difficult situations where justice for the victim is excluded by the existing legal system. Examples of those for whom the possibility of justice is or has been excluded under a legal system include a range of difficult cases, including aborted children, former foreign counterintelligence agents, slaves, and black South Africans under apartheid. My response to this objection is that it is a good one. One possible solution is to appeal to a justice beyond national borders and national legal systems; one such attempt to articulate this is the international declaration of human rights. Another possibility for grounding such claims is to appeal to the natural law. The difficulty common to both of these possibilities is that the laws or rights they claim have no means of being enforced outside of a legal system in which they are embodied. In other words, even though a person whose claim is unrecognized by a legal system can make their claim to justice on these other grounds, it remains just a claim until it is enforced by a legal system.

Why discuss at such length victims and perpetrators, legal systems, solidarity, justice and forgiveness? It is my hope that by paying attention to the way in which we can identify with others in virtue of our weaknesses as well as our strengths, the possibilities of human action widen. Hopefully, James and Scotus would find this attempt to expand the horizon of possible choices, with respect to moral action, in keeping with the spirit of their own efforts.

Conclusions

I began this chapter by articulating what the possibilities for human action are on the accounts of the will given by Scotus and James. Then, I contrasted their accounts with each other to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally, finding a weakness common to both, I offered my own attempt to expand the possibilities for human action by focusing on common experiences of physical and moral frailty.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

At the end of any inquiry, it is generally a good idea to see if the motivations for the inquiry were successfully addressed, whether they changed along the way, and whether there are any new reasons for further inquiry. So, at the beginning of this conclusion, let us recall that there were three original reasons for this inquiry and for choosing John Duns Scotus and William James in particular. One was a curiosity about how two people with such different starting points arrived at the same conclusion about the will's ability to control thought. Another was to learn possible responses to determinism; who better to ask than two people who insist on the freedom of the will? Finally, the last motive was to understand how the will is understood by the two traditions to which I belong, and perhaps how these disparate understandings come together in my own experience of willing.

Regarding the first motive: Both Scotus and James have voluntaristic accounts of the will, despite their manifold differences in almost every other respect. Interestingly, both arrive at this conclusion by reflecting on experience. Even though the general starting points of their accounts are very different, the fact that they both appeal to their experience of willing an conclude that the mind has the power to control thoughts is interesting. At least this much is worth thinking about: perhaps our experiences of the world is not as fragmented and subjective as commonly thought, if these two who are so different in many respects arrive at the same conclusion.

Regarding the second motive: Both Scotus and James reject determinism with arguments that appeal to moral experience. For example, Scotus takes a hard line on insisting contingency exists from the experience of willing. His last trick is to assert that if someone denies contingency, he should be tortured until he admits that the situation

could be otherwise. If one takes this seriously and not just for its shock value, one can see that he is insisting that moral responsibility is real. James makes a similar move; he appeals to the moral significance of effort to find a reason to posit free will. A less explicit argument that both make against determinism is that appeal to the capacity for acts that are other than our natural inclination. Of course, the determinist will to try to reduce everything act to a causal explanation, but the question is whether that can be done in every case and still be true to the experience. It is perhaps odd enough that James and Scotus are again making similar arguments against determinism. Further, not only do such arguments against determinism seem convincing today, but the possibility acting freely may be even more clear after the violence of the 20th century, especially in the lives of those who resisted violence with nonviolent efforts. Classic examples are Ghandi and the Indian freedom movement; Martin Luther King, Jr., and the American civil rights movement; Europeans who hid Jews in Nazi-occupied countries; Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, and Jean Vanier, who spent their lives bringing dignity to the marginalized. The value in what I take to be James's empirical starting point becomes clear: the question to ask is not, "Is morality possible? If so, how?", but "Moral actions are possible. How?"

Regarding the third motive: What does each have to say about willing and the possibilities contained therein? According to James, one may will freely; the difficulty is mental. The message we get from James is, "You are able!" You are able to will according to more ideal motives; able to make a contribution to the world that is uniquely yours and thus make a difference felt in the lives of all who come after you; able to test your own beliefs against the world; able to mean something to yourself and to others because of the possibility you already contain within yourself. It is through will that each generation performs the task left to it. According to Scotus, too, the will is

free; the difficulty is our natural inclination. The message we get from Scotus is that we were created by a free act of love for free acts of love. The fulfillment of who you are is in acts of love, and it is you who are capable of loving, if you will it. The possibility of your happiness is within your own reach. Further, though others may cause you to suffer, they cannot take away your freedom. Your will is your own, and you are free to affirm, confirm, negate, create, make and do. While the world of free action is different for James and Scotus, it is at least the case that the two worlds are *prima facia* not deeply incompatible. However, this bears more thought and reflection.

To a great degree the questions which provokes the inquiry in the first place were answered. Are there any new questions at the end of the present inquiry that merit further consideration? I think so, and they have to do with the limits of our possibility and freedom. The possibility James and Scotus forecast does not always and in every person become fully realized. Our willings may be miswillings of various sorts. Even if the possibility of free choice is there, we may also experience impossibility and disability. So is this experience of impossibility genuine impossibility? Are there cases in which a will that would otherwise be free finds it impossible to do otherwise? If so, how does our will get that way? How can it get fixed? Can we do it ourselves or do we need the help of others? Does the experience of impossibility have a physical dimension?

How should we proceed in answering these questions? One place to start is to look at the ways in which people experience impossibility and how they are able to overcome it. The first time I spent any extended time with someone whose life experiences were vastly different from my own was the summer between my junior and senior years of high school. I spent a week working at St. Patrick's Center, a homeless shelter with an alcohol and drug rehabilitation program. For most of the week, I sorted

donated clothes with a man who formerly had been one of the program's clients. During that week, Kevin told me about his journey from addiction through rehabilitation. The main lesson of that experience for me was that human beings, while incredibly fragile, are also capable of great come-backs and have enormous potential. How did he fall into addiction and the experience of impossibility? How did he manage to find his way out? To what extent did he need other people to help him, and to what extent did the possibility lie in him alone?

Another important experience of encountering impossibility was a week I spent at Casa Juan Diego, the Houston Catholic Worker house. At the time I was there, there were many people who had left El Salvador after a hurricane had devastated their villages. Many of the women had worked in the maquiladores, and I heard from the Catholic Workers about the inhumane labor practices the women reported. These people had left in search of the possibility of a new start and a better life. To what extent is this something they can will and not just wish, to borrow a distinction from James? Is it all up to one's own effort? To what extent do the choices of some create impossibilities for others? What is the extent of our responsibility to do something about it?

At the end of this inquiry, it must be concluded that there are more questions than answers left on the table. Whether the answers be deferred until a later date, another world, or permanently, due to the openness of the universe, it is one of the limitations of being human to have to deal with incomplete information and provisional answers. Fortunately, the present inquiry has articulated one possible way of proceeding in such a situation: use your will!

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