

Libertarian freedom in an eternalist world?¹

Abstract

My students sometimes worry that if eternalism is true then they can't have libertarian freedom. They aren't alone, as this sentiment is also expressed, albeit typically briefly, by various philosophers. However, somewhat surprisingly, those working within the free will literature have largely had nothing to say about libertarianism's relationship to time, with this also being similar in the case of those working in the philosophy of time, apart from some work which has mainly focused on non-libertarian views of freedom. In this short paper I note why I'm currently unconvinced that there's an incompatibility between eternalism and libertarianism, and in doing so one will see why I think they are compatible.

In order to do this I will first outline what I take to be the central tenets of both eternalism and libertarianism. I then begin to explore potential avenues of incompatibility, discussing firstly whether an eternalist can make sense of the principle of alternative possibilities, and then if fixity, the fact that how I act in the future is fixed, is an issue for libertarians. After arguing that the libertarian need not be too concerned by these difficulties, I turn to two further potential issues, namely that eternalism cannot allow for a type of causation that libertarianism requires, and also that it fails to allow for a view of change libertarians may favour. Once more, I find both of these supposed difficulties wanting.

Given my discussion of the issues, I conclude that there are some plausible reasons to think that libertarian views of freedom are compatible with eternalism, or at the very least some variants of libertarianism are. As such, I take it that my students, and those like them who worry that there is such an incompatibility, are wrong to do so.

Key Words: Eternalism, Libertarianism, Free Will, Time

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My students sometimes worry that if eternalism is true then they can't have libertarian freedom. They aren't alone, as this sentiment is also expressed, albeit typically briefly, by various philosophers (Koperski, 2015, 112-117; Lockwood, 2005, 69; Levin, 2007; Petkov, 2005, 152).² Surprisingly, those working within the free will literature have largely had nothing to say about libertarianism's relationship to time,³ with this also being similar in the case of those working in the philosophy of time, apart from some work which has mainly focused on non-libertarian views of freedom (Oaklander, 1995; 1998; Le Poidevin, 2013; Hoefer, 2002; Brennan, 2007; Rychter, 2015; Buckareff,

¹ My thanks to James Read, Robin Le Poidevin, Tim Mawson, Damiano Costa, and an anonymous referee for comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I also wish to acknowledge my students for interesting discussions on this topic, which provided inspiration for writing something on this subject.

² For additional references, see Oaklander (1998).

³ Apparently, some have no interest in the matter either, with Koperski writing that 'Timpe [who specialises in the philosophy of free will] has said that he is not terribly concerned about the metaphysics of time (private conversation).' (2015, 115)

2019). In this short paper I note why I'm currently unconvinced that there's an incompatibility between eternalism and libertarianism, and in doing so one will see why I take them to be compatible.

Eternalism and Libertarianism

To begin, it will be useful to clarify the central tenets of both eternalism and libertarianism. Eternalism claims that all events, time-slices or entities that ever were, ever are, or ever will be, exist.⁴ Eternalism therefore affirms what Baron and Miller call ENTITY EVERYWHENISM: entities that exist now, exist in the past, and exist in the future, exist *simpliciter* (2019, 15). This contrasts other views, such as presentism, in which only the present moment exists, ENTITY NOWISM, and the growing block view, where only the present and past exist, ENTITY NOW AND THENISM. Eternalism, as I'm thinking about it, comes in two main varieties, one which is combined with the A-theory of time, namely the moving-spotlight, and the other which is partnered with the B-theory.⁵ For my purposes, most of what I say will be applicable to both types of eternalism.

Turn now to libertarianism. Chiefly libertarians are incompatibilists who think that agents *can* act freely.⁶ As such they think causal determinism doesn't allow for free will, contra compatibilists, and that when agents act freely they are not causally determined. We can understand causal determinism here as Kane characterises it when he says, 'an event (such as a choice or action) is determined when there are conditions obtaining earlier (such as the decrees of fate or the foreordaining acts of God or antecedent causes plus laws of nature) whose occurrence is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of the event. In other words, it must be the case that, if these earlier determining conditions obtain, then the determined event will occur.' (Kane, 2005, 5-6) As such the libertarian claims that when an agent acts freely by doing X, it is false to say that X is determined by any conditions obtaining prior to X.

Given this characterisation of the two views, one way to see if eternalism rules out libertarian freedom is by seeing if it implies causal determinism about agential actions, since if it does then libertarianism will turn out to be false.⁷ However, eternalism, at least as I have characterised it, has nothing

⁴ Note that throughout the paper I will speak of time-slices. I do this since I find it easier to think and speak about the block being 'sliced' up in this way. One big slice after another. I take it that nothing substantial rests on this, and one can translate my talk into events or entities if one prefers. It may even be that translating this talk into events may be preferable since, as my colleague James Read informs me, 'the Gödel universe isn't foliable into hypersurfaces of constant time --- but we can still (the thought typically goes) be eternalists about it through thinking about it in terms of events.' (in personal Correspondence) I let the reader do so if they wish.

⁵ There might be some slightly harder varieties of eternalism to classify, such as Maudlin's (2007, ch.4), and perhaps Koons's (this volume, pp. tbc.), but I take it that the vast majority will fit comfortably into my classification. In any case, what I will largely be concerned with is the claim of ENTITY EVERYWHENISM, and this is one all eternalists seem to embrace.

⁶ Rather than the other type of incompatibilists, hard determinists, who think agents can't act freely.

⁷ One *could* read Petkov as thinking this, as he writes that four-dimensionalism, by which I take him to mean eternalism, implies that our actions are 'predetermined' (2005, 152). Similarly Rietdijk (1966), who seems to think that all time-slices exist, claims that because of this there is no indeterminism, a view Putnam (243-247) also seems to hold. There is a little ambiguity, however, in what both mean when they speak of determinism, with Rietdijk saying that 'we may conclude that there is determinism (which is, of course, not the same thing as causality)' (1966, 343). Perhaps then what is meant is not causal determinism, but that events in the future are 'set' or what I will call later 'fixed', and it is for this reason that they call them determined. However, if this is all

whatsoever to say about whether causal determinism is true. All eternalism says is that *all* time-slices exist. Eternalism says nothing about the relationship between these time-slices, nor the relationship between those entities contained within, or if you prefer, parts of the time-slices.⁸ For it seems at least *prima facie* conceivable that the relationship between time-slice t1 and time-slice t2 or the entities contained in t1 and t2 be indeterministically related.⁹ Why think that eternalism entails that a fundamental particle in t1 must be *causally determined* to do what it does in t2? Or that my existing in t1 implies that I'm *causally determined* to do Y in t2? If eternalism were to imply this, then eternalism alone would imply that any possible world with the same initial time-slice and laws of nature would always bring about the same future.¹⁰ But eternalism doesn't entail this. What would make this the case is if the laws of nature implied that everything is causally determined.¹¹ But if that's right, then unless one can point out why eternalism *requires* causal determinism it seems the libertarian can claim that eternalism is compatible with the falsity of causal determinism, which at least starts to give the libertarian what they need.

Alternative Possibilities and Fixity

What I've said so far seems fairly obvious, so it must be another aspect of libertarianism that is at odds with eternalism. Here is an obvious candidate. Libertarians often claim that in order to be free one must have the ability to have done otherwise, with this being known as the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP).¹² Those libertarians who take this to be *the key* feature of libertarianism have become known as 'leeway incompatibilists'. The worry then may be that eternalism rules out PAP, since my acting in time-slice t500, which is in my future, currently exists given that eternalism implies ENTITY EVERYWHENISM, and hence at t500 I cannot act otherwise. As such, I cannot be libertarianly free (Levin, 2007, 452; Petkov, 2005, 152; Koperski, 2015, 115).

I will say something about this shortly, but first let me mention that even if eternalism does rule out PAP, this need not mean that it rules out every type of libertarianism. The reason for this is that a leeway conception of libertarianism is not the only type of libertarianism there is. Another type is known as 'sourcehood incompatibilism', which holds that *the key* feature of libertarian action is that the agent is the ultimate source or originator of their action.¹³ There are several forms of this type of libertarianism (Tognazzini, 2011), but for our purposes we need only distinguish between two. First is 'wide-sourcehood libertarianism' which says that whilst sourcehood is *the key* feature for libertarian action, being able to act otherwise, PAP, is an essential secondary component (Kane, 1996; Timpe,

they mean I see no reason why this would imply that there couldn't be an indeterministic link between two time-slices, even though it is set or fixed what will occur in our future.

⁸ For instance, my actions, since I take it that my actions do not exhaust the time-slice. There are, after all, your actions as well.

⁹ Instead of entities you could read this as parts of the time slices.

¹⁰ Defining determinism in terms of possible worlds makes this clear. Such as Clarke's definition, where 'one event is taken to deterministically cause another just in case, in every possible world in which the actual laws of nature obtain and in which the first event occurs, it causes the second.' (2003, 4)

¹¹ Assuming that the laws of nature were the only determining factor.

¹² PAP sometimes includes a claim about moral responsibility, however here I just mean it to refer to having alternative possibilities.

¹³ Note that there are also sourcehood versions of compatibilism (Timpe, 2017), but I focus on libertarianism here.

2013, 155-161; Pereboom, 2001). The second is 'narrow-sourcehood libertarianism', which claims that being the source is *the key* feature of libertarian action and that alternative possibilities, PAP, are not required for an act to be free (Zagzebski, 2000; Stump, 1999; 2003; Hunt, 2003; Shabo, 2010).¹⁴ Suppose that narrow-sourcehood libertarianism is a viable option. Then at least one form of libertarianism is compatible with eternalism, supposing that eternalism does not bring with it any other concerns for libertarianism.¹⁵ For this form of libertarianism does not require PAP, but only indeterminism, which as I have already suggested, is compatible with eternalism, and sourcehood, which I shall comment on further later in this article. Given this, if PAP is the reason why eternalism and libertarianism are incompatible, one must show that narrow-sourcehood libertarianism isn't in fact a viable option. Whether it is or isn't is not something I shall comment on here.¹⁶

Nevertheless, it's fair to say that many, perhaps most, libertarians do hold PAP and it would therefore be beneficial if eternalism was open to them as well. So is PAP incompatible with eternalism? I think not. To see why note that one way a libertarian might understand PAP is as follows:

An agent *S* has the ability to choose or do otherwise than ϕ at time *t* if and only if it was possible, holding fixed everything up to *t*, that *S* choose or do otherwise than ϕ at *t*. (O'Connor & Franklin, 2020)¹⁷

Key here is that what is required is that it is *possible* for an agent to perform an action different from the one she does.¹⁸ This is a modal clause. One way to see if this condition is met is to think about whether an agent has access to some possible worlds beside our actual one (van Inwagen, 1983, 91).¹⁹ To do this think of all the closest possible worlds which have the same worldly history and the same laws of nature up until the moment of choice and then see if the agent acts differently in any of them. If the agent does act differently in some then we can say that PAP is met. Given what has been said above about eternalism and indeterminism I cannot see why eternalism would rule it out that there are possible worlds in which I act differently. After all, eternalism is not a modal thesis.²⁰

¹⁴ This position is also attributed to Clarke in (Fischer, 1999, 129, footnote 66).

¹⁵ In fairness, and unlike others, Koperski (2015, 115) does mention this, although he moves past it fairly promptly.

¹⁶ Timpe (2013, 155-161), for instance, has suggested that narrow-sourcehood does require PAP. If he is correct, then it isn't a viable option and this way to make eternalism and libertarianism compatible fails. By contrast Shabo thinks all sourcehood accounts should reject PAP (2010, 350, n.4). Who is in fact right about this, I leave undiscussed here.

¹⁷ This is what O'Connor and Franklin call the categorical analysis of PAP.

¹⁸ Another way PAP is sometimes put is in terms of having the *power* of agents to act otherwise than they in fact do. Since I take it that powers are inherently modal, with reductive analyses failing, this will also make PAP inherently modal.

¹⁹ I understand 'access' talk, the way van Inwagen does, as providing 'a way of organizing our talk about unexercised abilities by reference to unrealized possibilities: an unexercised ability is treated as an ability to realize some unrealized possibility.' (1983, 87)

²⁰ I have spoken here, and will speak elsewhere in this paper, of possible worlds. I take it that whilst modal realism might be seen as a natural analogue to eternalism, eternalism by no means requires it. In fact I see no reason why eternalism would require any specific view on the metaphysical status of possible worlds. Given this, and since I want eternalism and libertarianism to be compatible with as many views as possible, I take no particular view on the ontology of possible worlds and therefore one can understand them as they wish.

Perhaps the worry instead isn't PAP but what I'll call *fixity*, with this being the concern that because eternalism implies ENTITY EVERYWHENISM how I act in my future is fixed and in virtue of this I cannot be free. One might therefore think that in order to be free fixity must be rejected (Kane, 2011, 105). My reply here is that fixity doesn't seem to me to rule out free action. Before seeing why let me note that fixity differs importantly from PAP, for fixity is concerned with my *actual* future being fixed. By contrast PAP allows that what I do in the actual world is fixed, even though I still have access to some possible worlds besides my own, and as such it is possible that I acted differently.

Let me first suggest then that fixity doesn't seem to rule out libertarian freedom, since something in my future can be fixed, and yet I suggest a libertarian should still claim that it is free. To see this note that the special theory of relativity (STR) implies that I can be in a reference frame that allows me to see how Eran freely acts earlier than you do in your reference frame. Now consider a presentist who to overcome worries about STR implying that there is no absolute privileged present, holds that presentness is frame dependent (Hawley, 2009, 510; Baron & Miller, 2019, 108-110; Leftow, 1991, 232-234; 2018).²¹ Having assumed this theory, think about a world in which there are only two frames of reference, one which Eran and I share, Rf1, and a different one you are in Rf2. Consider what we should say about a case where Eran freely does X as opposed to Y. In this story, given Rf1, which is the reference frame Eran and I share, we can say that relative to Rf1, I see Eran make his free choice before you do in Rf2, as Rf1 and Rf2 are not simultaneous. If we relativise actuality to reference frames, this will mean that in Rf1 it is actual that Eran does X, even though Eran doing X is not currently actual in Rf2. Nevertheless, Eran freely doing X will become actual in Rf2, and it is fixed that he will do so because of what is actual in Rf1. We could also add that Eran's future was open in Rf1, despite his future being fixed, and therefore closed, in Rf2. This being the case, it seems strange to say that whilst Eran acted freely in Rf1 he didn't act freely in Rf2. After all, Eran performs the same action in both reference frames. Again, the story allows that there are other possible worlds that Eran could access in Rf2, even though if he had accessed them he would have acted differently in Rf1. But nothing determines that Eran acts as he does other than himself in both frames of reference.

Given that fixity by itself doesn't seem to rule out free action, I suggest that if one can still affirm PAP and incompatibilism then even given fixity, a libertarian should think of an agent as libertarianly free.²² Let me try to show that one can through a thought experiment.²³

Suppose that God exists and is timeless, that is, He exists outside of time, and so all worldly time-slices are timelessly laid out all at once before God.²⁴ Given this God knows what occurs in *our* future, as well as what has occurred in *our* past and is occurring in *our* present, despite none of this being past

²¹ Hinchliff (2000) also seems to give some views of presentism's relationship to relativity which would also allow me to tell a similar story.

²² I would also add sourcehood which I will turn to shortly.

²³ This is also *related* to the problem of logical fatalism, which I don't intend to contribute to here. The argument I'm responding to is sometimes purposefully distinguished from fatalism and as such is taken to be distinct (Koperski, 2015, 113-116). Nevertheless, let me say that some of the moves I make here, also speak against fatalism (Merricks, 2009; 2011) and that some have argued that eternalism grants additional resources for responding to fatalism (Finch & Rea, 2008).

²⁴ Some might think that this requires eternalism, but it doesn't and is compatible with presentism. See Leftow (2018; 1991, esp. 230-245)

or future to Him. As such, we can say that what occurs in our future is fixed.²⁵ How then does God know a person's, such as Tahira's, future? On this story, it's because God sees what Tahira does in her future.²⁶ Tahira's acting at t500, which is future to her, is present to God. God knows what Tahira does at t500 because He sees her do it. God's knowledge about what Tahira does at t500 depends upon what she does in t500. How Tahira acts at t500, which is future to her, is therefore fixed. But it still seems to me to make sense to say that Tahira could have acted differently at t500, even though it's true that she doesn't. That is, there are different possible worlds Tahira could access where she does something different at t500. Had Tahira acted differently God would have known that timelessly, but again this is because God would have seen Tahira acting in a different way. It seems to me then, that despite fixity we can still think Tahira is free.

Now return to the eternalist who is also a libertarian. They think that acts which are in your future are free even though they are fixed. What fixes them? You do. You determine what you do in each time-slice. Could you have acted differently? Sure. That is whilst you in t500 do Z, you could have done Y. Nothing makes you do Z rather than Y. But you don't do Y in t500, you freely do Z. Hence what you freely do at t500 is fixed, due to what you do in this time-slice. Whilst the future is therefore closed, the eternalist can still embrace PAP, and so intuitively it seems to me that freedom is maintained. One of the key points here is a form of what Merricks calls Origen's insight (2009, 52; 2011, 583-584), which for our purposes would say that what occurs in the eternalist block depends on what you do. It is your choice that determines what takes place in the slices of the block that you are in. The eternalist block could have been different, since there is nothing that determines what you do at each time-slice. Hence the block is fixed in the way it is only because at every time-slice you freely chose to do X rather than something else.

Causation and Change

Here's a different type of worry that one might have about eternalism and libertarianism, namely that libertarianism requires a view of causation which eternalism cannot allow for. Perhaps the thought is that libertarianism requires that an agent brings about in a strong sense what occurs, which is at odds with eternalism.²⁷ What should one say about this?

Once again it will be important to distinguish between different types of libertarianism. We saw previously that there was a distinction between leeway and sourcehood libertarianism, but there is also a distinction between non-causal and causal libertarianism. This is important because non-causal accounts 'require neither that a free action have any internal causal structure nor that it be caused by anything at all.' (Clarke, 2003, 17) I suggest then that if there are any viable non-causal libertarian

²⁵ Anselm, for instance seems to say just this in his *De Concordia (The Compatibility of God's Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace with Human Freedom)*, whilst also thinking that our actions are still free (Davies & Evans, 1998, 435-474).

²⁶ This relation might be causal, with Tahira's acts having a causal effect on what God believes. Some theists might worry about this. However, my purpose here isn't to provide an orthodox theism but rather just to show that a closed future is compatible with free action. Nevertheless, a suggestion which may make what I say here non-causal is found in Merricks (2009, 41, 54-55; 2011, 574-579, 584, n.11) and Leftow (1991, 243-244, 255-265).

²⁷ Le Poidevin (2013, 540-542) also provides a response to this worry.

theories then these theories will bypass this type of objection. Nevertheless, many libertarians are causal libertarians, so how would they respond to this challenge?

Causal libertarianism typically comes in two varieties. Event-causal and agent-causal libertarianism. One distinction here between the two views concerns the type of relata that is involved when an agent freely acts. Event-causalists say the cause is an event,²⁸ whilst agent-causalists say the cause is an agent. Let's first think about one option which would allow event-causalism to be compatible with eternalism. We could adopt a reductive view of event causation, such as a counterfactual analysis of causation. Since this type of causation seems possible in an eternalist world,²⁹ then so too will be event-causal libertarianism. Furthermore, at least one event-causalist, Ekstrom (1998), has suggested that incompatibilists have extra reason to endorse a counterfactual analysis of causation, since it allows them to block a powerful reply that compatibilists can give to the consequence argument. As such it seems event-causal accounts of libertarianism are *prima facie* possible given an eternalist world.

Turn now to agent-causalist accounts. These are typically taken to adopt non-reductive accounts of causation (Clarke, 2003, 187), and therefore the move I made previously is ruled out for them.³⁰ As such they sometimes claim to embrace a stronger view of 'bringing about' than reductive theories do. Is this type of causation compatible with eternalism? Here's a quick appeal to authority to give one *prima facie* reason that they are. Skow defends an eternalist view of the world (2015) and also that the most basic use of cause relates 'things' rather than events, resulting in what he calls agent causation (2018, 137-179). I suppose that Skow wouldn't defend this view of causation if he thought it incompatible with his view of time. Hence, if Skow is right, agent causation is compatible with eternalism. One can argue against this by showing why Skow is wrong, or by demonstrating why his theory is not enough for agent-causal libertarianism. Yet until one has done so we have *prima facie* reason to think they are compatible.³¹

Let's turn to a more substantial response on behalf of the agent-causalist. Many who opt for this view of freedom are what I call 'power' theorists.³² They hold that agents are related to powers in some way, and that powers are irreducibly causal entities, which when brought together with other powers bring about their manifestations, what we can think of as effects. Whilst there are many different accounts of the metaphysics of powers, many who work on power ontologies think that powers manifestations are simultaneous with their causes. For example, Marmodoro writes, that all there is to 'causal 'interaction' [between powers] is their *mutual and simultaneous manifestation* (e.g. heating and being heated).' (2017, 70; Martin, 2008, 48-51; Heil 2012, 118-126; Mumford & Anjum, 2011, 106-129) Suppose this is right. Then an eternalist can adopt a powers view of causation, since causal

²⁸ See Clarke (2003, 34). Or we could perhaps say is reducible to events (O'Connor & Franklin, 2020).

²⁹ As it's been argued this type of causation is compatible with timeless worlds (Baron and Miller, 2014; 2015; Tallant, 2019) it would seem it ought to be compatible in eternalist worlds.

³⁰ This is not to say that event-causal accounts *must be* reductive. If they are not, then another response will need to be given.

³¹ I can also produce an argument from authority for the claim libertarianism is compatible with eternalism. Van Inwagen is a contemporary defender of libertarianism, and yet he also doesn't seem to be at all a fan of dynamic theories of passage (2015, ch.4). Yet never, as far as I'm aware, has he suggested that the negation of dynamic theories rules out libertarianism.

³² I do not mean to imply here that those who adopt a powers view must be agent-causalists.

interaction, can occur in individual time-slices.³³ It is true that the manifestation of the powers might be spread out over a number of time-slices, but in each of those time slices the manifestation will be simultaneous with the continual causal interaction. It seems to me an agent-causalist about free will could say much the same, that is that one's willing X is simultaneous with X occurring. Obviously if simultaneous causation is not possible, then neither is this reply, and I note here that some power theorists think it is not possible (Williams, 2019, 169-172), although I remain unconvinced. Nevertheless, even if it is impossible, I suspect there will be other avenues open for the power theorist to make eternalism compatible with a powers view of causation, such as those explored in Roselli (this volume, pp. tbc); Koons (this volume, pp. tbc); Giannini (2021), and with that in hand I suspect they will be able to translate this work into the free will discussion.³⁴ For now, I'm fairly confident this objection can be overcome.

Let me finish with a final concern that one might have with libertarianism and eternalism, namely a problem to do with change. The idea here stems from the thought that libertarianism requires that an agent exists through the different stages of their free actions and eternalism cannot allow for this. Lockwood might be thought to raise this concern when he implies that eternalism 'rules out any conception of free will that pictures human agents, through their choices, as selectively conferring actuality on what are initially only potentialities.' (2005, 69)³⁵ Perhaps the eternalist is forced to say that an agent doesn't *really* exist through their actions,³⁶ if we suppose that these actions take place across multiple-time slices, but rather they are merely distinct temporal parts of an agent existing at each time-slice which jointly together constitute the agent.³⁷ What is therefore being asked for is endurance, rather than perdurance, such that an agent is wholly present at each time they exist. Suppose then, that this is right, and that libertarianism does require endurance rather than perdurance,³⁸ is this a problem for eternalist libertarianism? I think not, since it seems to me that eternalism is compatible with endurantism, with this being something that has been argued for by numerous metaphysicians (Costa, 2020; Hansson Wahlberg, 2009; Sider, 2001, 68-70; Haslanger, 2003, 320-326; Rea, 1998; Sattig, 2006, 47-65). Yet if that's right then eternalism does allow that an agent can be wholly present, and therefore *really*, exist through their free actions. Suppose then that this time we adopt another view of powers, in which the very same power can be in a state of potentiality when it isn't manifesting, and a state of actuality when it is (Marmodoro, 2017).³⁹ We can

³³ I assume here that STR is compatible with simultaneous causation, but for some pushback on this see (Hansson Wahlberg, 2017).

³⁴ At present there has been little published on how powers relate to time. Of what has been published, Vetter (2015, 290-299) thinks a powers theorist should prefer eternalism over presentism, whilst Backmann (2019) thinks the opposite.

³⁵ Lockwood's comment is also related to a powers theory of causation noted above and will be addressed further below. It is therefore also worth pointing out that many power theorists will deny that powers turn from being potentially X to being actually X. Instead they think of a power manifesting as jumping from being actually X to being actually Y (Mumford & Anjum, 2011; Bird, 2007). Whether they should do so, however, is another matter, since it might be that this theory denies change since it gives rise to the notorious always packing never travelling worry (Armstrong, 1997, 80).

³⁶ Or in other words they do not 'persist'.

³⁷ This is 'worm theory' or standard perdurance. One could also adjust what I say here for 'stage-theory' if they wished. For more on this distinction see Hawley (2020).

³⁸ This isn't to say that I think this is in fact the case.

³⁹ This view of powers isn't prey to the always-packing-never-travelling worry (Marmodoro, 2017, 60-62).

then say that an agent can be wholly present in one time-slice when willing Y is in potentiality, and also wholly present in the next time-slice when willing Y is in actuality. The agent themselves, given what I've said above, is the one that determines that Y will become actual in the second time-slice, since the contents of the time-slices depends on what they do, not the other way around.⁴⁰ As such, this worry can also be overcome.⁴¹

Conclusion

Given this discussion, it seems to me that there are some plausible reasons to think that libertarian views of freedom are compatible with eternalism, or at the very least some variants of libertarianism are. As such, I take it that my students, and those like them who worry that there is such an incompatibility, are wrong to do so.

⁴⁰ Of course, the whole time-slice doesn't depend on what they do, since it contains much besides the agent. But I take it you get the picture.

⁴¹ Obviously if libertarianism does not require endurantism and is compatible with other theories of persistence, then this objection will be overcome more easily.

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