In *Zhuangzi: the Essential Writings,* Brook Ziporyn states that "death and life, survival and perishing, success and failure, poverty and wealth, superiority and inferiority, disgrace and honor, hunger and thirst, cold and heat – these are the transformations of events, the proceedings of fate…So there is no need to let them disrupt our harmony" In this essay, I will try to achieve the following goals in the following order. Firstly, I believe it is necessary to analyze and understand the content of this statement. Then, I will present the context of determinism under which this statement falls and I will examine both the supporting and the more skeptical arguments about this context itself and its effect on society and on the individual agent. Eventually, I will try to pick my own place amidst this causal and moral clash.

A.   What this statement means

To begin with, before presenting anything about this statement, we should first try to understand what it means and make sure we are on the same page. In the first sentence of this extract, Brook Ziporyn presents a series of polar opposites concerning important issues of mankind. On the issue of life, he mentions life and death. On the issue of property, he mentions poverty and wealth. Then, he proceeds to label all these situations as "proceedings of the fate" and, after linking them with fate, a higher power than ours whose role is determining the course of our lives, he uses this link and this label to conclude to the fact that, according to his point of view, our harmony should not be disrupted by these transformations of events. In other words, he believes that the transformations of events in human life and, thus, human life itself as a course of situations, are controlled and determined by fate, leaving human beings as powerless agents whose only choice is how they will react to these events and, concerning that choice, they should not disrupt their harmony by getting anyhow involved with matters over which they have no power.

B.   General moral theory under which this statement falls

Now that we have clarified the statement on which this essay is based on, we should extend it to a general moral theory and, thus, induct this statement in the large sphere of moral theories clashing with each other and examine it from a broader point of view. I believe that the views expressed in this extract are derived from a deterministic moral theory. This is because, as we saw, Brook Ziporyn labels the transformations of events in human life as "proceedings of fate". This view falls under the premises of determinism, according to which the course of our lives is predetermined. Therefore, we could safely argue that this extract is a reflection of deterministic views over the affairs of life, property, hierarchy, honor and survival.

At this point, it would be useful for the continuation of this essay to examine determinism as a moral theory – see what it argues about and present some modified versions of this moral theory.

Determinism, as a broader moral theory, argues that our lives and, thus, the actions we proceed to during those lives, are determined by another power. The obvious inability to combine deterministic views with libertarian views, according to which human beings are free and have power and control over themselves, led to a polarization in the moral world. Some philosophers sided with hard determinism and eliminated self-control as a factor which affects human activity. Others sided with libertarianism and eliminated any deterministic view from their interpretations of human action. Others tried to adopt a more conciliatory view, arguing that human activity is a result of agreement between the higher power which determines our actions and us, as agents who give our consent to proceed to such activity.

After examining determinism in a theoretical level and clarifying what it argues and how it has impacted the moral sphere, we should take a pause to remind ourselves about how determinism has affected, as a moral theory, the everyday life of many people, as well as how it has impacted political philosophy. In religion, Divine Command Theory labels God as the higher power which determines our actions and thereby accepts a deterministic approach of action. In Ancient Greece, the Stoics argued for the existence of *eimarmeni*, the deterministic power of Reason on human activity. In the meantime, deterministic views were widespread amongst Ancient Greeks, mainly linked with religious entities which have control over human beings. In literature, many writers have depicted their characters as bound by a higher power which drives them to their actions (usually crimes) from within themselves – an example would be the "Murderess" by Greek writer Alexandros Papadiamantis. In political philosophy, determinism was heavily utilized by Karl Marx. Marx, through his materialistic approach of history, argued that communism was bound to follow as a form of governance and that there were causes which would eventually lead to a communist-ruled world, over which human beings, as agents, would have no power. After these Marxist views were not applied as they were expected to, many Western Marxists, such as Marcuse, proceeded to reject the deterministic part of Marxist theory, seen as it did not come to fruition.

C.   Supporting deterministic views

In order to examine how someone could support a deterministic approach of life, we should not forget that, after its clash with the notion of freedom and self-determination of human beings, determinism has been divided in two forms: hard determinism, which is a radical deterministic view, and conciliatory determinism, which tries to combine determinism with the notion of human consent over actions.

Hard determinism, as the most pure and unedited form of determinism, functions under the general notion of causes being the sole decisive factors for any action and, therefore, eliminates any agent as a complementary factor of action. In my view, the need for determinism becomes more apparent after we stop examining human activity as a cause for some effects and proceed to examine the cause for human activity itself. For example, we have this sequence of events:

1.   Paul Walker was running at 300km/h.

2. His car crashed and he was killed.

The question which leads to determinism is this: Paul Walker has found himself running at 300km/h, thereby doing the same thing as an agent, many times – his contribution to the causal sphere had been the same many times before. Why did he have a car crash and get killed in one occasion and not in all others? Albert Einstein himself has been quoted (we can question the validity of Einstein saying this quote, but it will not affect the course of this essay) as saying that "it is insane to do the same thing and expect different results". However, the example of Paul Walker points out that, apparently and, in his case, unfortunately, a human being as an agent can do the same thing and lead to different outcomes.

To explain those different outcomes, we need to concede to the fact that human action itself is not the sole cause which has an impact in human-involving activity. For two different outcomes to happen, there needs to be a difference in the causal sphere. Using David Hume's approach to causality, for A to be the cause of B, A needs to happen before B and this sequence of A, then B, must appear multiple times (if not always). For Paul Walker running at 300km/h to be named as the sole cause of his car crash, we should be seeing the action of Paul Walker speeding always leading to the same effect afterwards– a car crash. However, we know that, as an agent, he has proceeded to the same action (hitting the pedestal until the car has a speed of 300km/h) multiple times without any car crash happening afterwards. We have seen the exact same action happening from the agent's part and, while in one occasion it led to a result of a car crash, in all other occasions, it repeatedly did not lead to any car crashes.

After understanding the notion of this philosophical question, it might be time to put it in more abstract and impersonal terms and, therefore, to examine it without getting distracted by the personal identity of our agent, allow me to rephrase the example as follows: Agent A proceeds to do the same action B multiple times. In one occasion, it leads to a result C. In all other occasions, it leads to a result D which cannot co-exist in reality with result C (you can't have a car crash AND not have a car crash!). This leads to the following conclusions:

i. Action B, as a cause, cannot simultaneously have C and D as effects, since they cannot simultaneously co-exist because they contradict each other.

ii. Action B has led to result D in all occasions but one, repeatedly.

iii. For action B to be the sole factor partaking in human activity and, therefore, the only potential cause for anything happening during this human activity, it should always lead to the same result, which could be either only C or only D or C and D. We have seen that C and D cannot happen together, we have seen that C did not happen in all but one occasion and we have seen that D did not happen in one occasion.

These conclusions can safely lead us to realizing that, since the examination of the results, which happened under sound logical (in order to prove that C and D is not a possible outcome) and empirical premises (observing a car crash happening or a car crash not happening), does not verify a radical libertarian view of human action being the sole cause of anything happening in human-

involving activity, we should consider the possibility of human action not being the sole cause of anything happening during that activity. To quote the fictional television character, Dr Gregory House, "symptoms don't lie", so our only option is that our causal theory to interpret these "symptoms" is the liar here.

This realization leads us to understanding that, since a fully libertarian and human-centered causal theory cannot properly interpret reality, we should either stick with our theory, doubt our senses and simply state that we live in an illusion (in which case, the essay stops here) or we should stick to believing in our senses and we should try to find out the elements of the causal sphere – I will proceed with the second option.

So far, we have seen that non-human causes not only partake in non-human activity, but also in human activity. From a terminological standpoint, we have tackled radical libertarianism and we are starting to swim in the waters of determinism. The next question is: how deep are we going to swim? Are we going to accept a co-existence of human and non-human causes which affect our lives or are we going to reject any human cause? This is where hard determinism clashes with conciliatory determinism.

Conciliatory determinists could argue the following: to examine if an action A is causally bound to an action B happening afterwards (in other words, to examine if A is the cause of B), we could try to imagine what would happen without A. If B does not happen, then we have a causal link between A and B which is a necessary prerequisite for B. If it still happens, then A is causally unrelated to B and it is no prerequisite for B – in other words, A does not cause B. In the Paul Walker example, let's imagine what would happen if we had the same car in the same place at the same time but without Paul Walker inside it. Obviously, with the same example but nobody in the driver's seat, nothing would happen since nobody would be stepping on the pedestal. This shows that, even though human action is not the sole cause for any effects during human-involving activities, it is still a cause for the derived effects and, in many occasions, its part can be indispensable. Therefore, in the causal sphere, we have a combination and an agreement of non-human causes (such as, let's say, the location of the tree on which Paul Walker crashed his car) and human causes (such as Paul Walker affecting the speed of the car by stepping on the pedestal). This concept of consent amongst causes is the notion of conciliatory determinism and it seems pretty solid.

A hard deterministic approach, in order to be smart and have a shot at properly shifting determinism to a more radical version, could accept all conclusions which conciliatory determinism has reached so far. However, it could try to present human action not only as a cause of some effects but, also, as an effect which is itself bound to non-human causes – therefore trapping human actions as mere outcomes of non-human causal actions and totally, instead of partially, denying the notion of autonomous human effect even on human-involving activity.

To illustrate this approach, we could go back to the Paul Walker example and say this: sure, Paul Walker's actions affected the eventual outcome, but what was the cause of Paul Walker's actions? Any attempt to respond to this question with a human-related answer would be a mere attempt to shift the question. For example, if we answer "because he chose to", the question becomes "why did he choose to?". If we answer "because he wanted to", the question becomes "why did he want to?". The reason for this trap is the fact that these questions, by viewing all actions as effects which are bound to causes, completely denounce any autonomous action which derives from the agent himself – thus, the questions will never stop if the answers keep pointing back to the agent himself.

This is the part where hard determinists take the upper hand. After having proven that human action, when viewed as an effect, cannot be tracked back to the agent himself (humans), they have managed to disprove any kind of human autonomy. Since the cause of human action is non-human, then it must be some power (obviously other than human power) which causes human action. To rephrase, there must be some other power to which human beings and their actions, regardless of whether they move on to cause something else or not, are bound to. This syllogism leads to a hardly deterministic approach of life, where human action in itself, regardless of whether it functions as the cause of another action, is an effect bound to some external, non-human cause. This external cause is usually presented as a powerful one (fate) or even as an omnipotent one (God)

Therefore, we have seen how determinism constructs itself, after rejecting total libertarianism, in a conciliatory and in a radical version.

D.   Tackling deterministic views

In an attempt to tackle these deterministic views, I shall proceed in two levels: a theoretical level, where I point out some flaws in the theory behind conciliatory and hard determinism, and a practical level, where I point out some moral problems which are caused by the implementation of determinism.

To begin with, let's examine some problems in the conciliatory deterministic view. The basic issue is its perception of human action as something solitary which does not adapt to the circumstances and, instead, co-exists with them. In other words, Paul Walker driving 300km/h in a race and driving 300km/h in the streets, even though they describe the same physiological activity from Paul Walker (stepping on a pedestal), they can be classified as different because of Paul Walker proceeding to them after realizing the difference in the setting of these two actions (it's safe to run 300km/h in an organized race, but it isn't safe to do so amongst innocent civilians). To further illustrate the conciliatory deterministic flaw, let's compare a man shooting an armed criminal in self-defense and a man shooting a newborn baby. Their physiological action is precisely the same (pushing a trigger), so, under conciliatory deterministic views, their actions themselves would be classified as the same and treated as the same in our universe. This not only points out one of many practical issues of

determinism, which I will analyze further in my essay, but also illustrates the inability of conciliatory determinism, as a moral and causal theory, to induct the existence of human cognitive skill inside it – a flaw which renders this moral theory as a quite insufficient and selective one when approaching the issues of human causality and, therefore, moral accountability. The example with the shooting is a clear illustration of this flaw and its effects.

Moving on to the hard deterministic view, apart from the fact that it functions as a radical extension of conciliatory determinism (thereby inheriting its logical inadequacies), it is based on two basic flaws. Firstly, it assumes that every action must be an effect bound to a cause and, specifically, an external one. On this, we can adopt a more materialistic view, in which we eventually link every human action to brain processes. As for what controls brain activity, the lack of substantial evidence to prove autonomy and to put an end to the series of questions which try to tackle it cannot function as evidence for the lack of human autonomy. This syllogism is based on the difference between open questions and questions which have conclusively and sufficiently received a negative response and is reminiscent to the well-known argument to defend the possibility of the existence of God: the lack of evidence about the existence of God does not conclusively prove that there is no God. Therefore, we see that hard determinism itself has some logical flaws in its premises and in its grounds to totally attack the notion of human autonomy.

Also, we should examine the practical issues which derive from determinism and render it an insufficient and problematic moral theory. If we assume that determinism is theoretically valid and thereby proceed to examine its practical implications, we see that, by rendering human beings as agents who have no choice over their own actions and, therefore, their circumstances, it removes the notion of moral accountability. When, for example, we try to combat crime, we usually punish the agent who caused it, the agent whose existence and action was necessary for this crime to follow as a result and, therefore, the agent without whom this criminal result would not have happened. From a deterministic standpoint, that agent is a higher, non-human agent and, therefore, human beings are rendered as causal slaves of this agent and they are not the agents who should be held as morally accountable for causing that crime. A great example of determinism in full effect in the criminal justice system comes from an episode of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit,* where a defendant's lawyer tries to blame his client's violent crimes on the power of a video game in an attempt to prove that his client was not morally accountable for his crimes. This example illustrates how, through determinism, since autonomy and self-determination are either partially questioned by a conciliatory approach or totally rejected by a radical one, moral accountability suffers from the same results, respectively, and the function of foundations designed to ensure human co-existence suffers a major or even a total blow.

E.   The effect of determinism on the human agent

The extract of Brook Ziporyn does not only consist of the deterministic part where fate is responsible for human good and suffering. It also presents, in the end, a view about the effect of such a

deterministic view on humans as agents. It says that, as a result of this deterministic view, "there is no need to let them disrupt our harmony". We have already seen how a libertarian view of moral accountability can affect a human being by rendering him an agent with responsibility over his own actions, but we have yet to examine the effect of determinism on human beings who believe in it. After all, the mere existence of determinism as a basic concept in religion is a good enough reason to make us curious about its potentially purifying effect on human agents.

The main fear that a human being has to suffer from if he accepts a libertarian view of causality and moral responsibility is the fear of being morally accountable for his actions – this fear leads to human beings thinking carefully about what course of action to follow and to them blaming themselves for anything unpleasant that happens to them. Martin Heidegger approached this issue carefully by introducing *Angst* as the suffering of human beings when they realize their autonomy and, thus, their moral accountability for their actions. He claims that this emotion disappears only when our *Ich* reaches the point of death and we realize that we are, apparently, not limitless beings, since the course of our lives is limited. Jean-Paul Sartre claimed that the fear of moral accountability is the reason for human beings fearing freedom.

A deterministic point of view may eliminate all pride for personal accomplishments, since they are also part of a higher power's accomplishments, but it leads agents to a Stoic form of *eudaimonia* (happiness) – the form of calmness, a state where they feel no noteworthy pleasure, but they also feel no noteworthy fear or pain. This happens since determinism, by eliminating the notion of autonomy and, thus, accountability, saves people from their *Angst* of calculating their actions, fearing their consequences and blaming themselves for their shortcomings.

Indeed, for many people, we have seen this psychological function of determinism – one of the main reasons why religion functions as an "opiate of the masses". However, after having seen the problems stemming from determinism on a social level (the notion of having no moral accountability), it is time to examine the detrimental effects of determinism on the human agent himself. I believe determinism, when functioning as a means for Brook Ziporyn's "harmony", faces two fundamental flaws: focusing on a hedonistic approach of life which functions as a painkiller instead of a solid moral theory and putting a limit to the agent's pursuit of happiness.

As for the theoretical issue with determinism not functioning as a moral theory, I believe its core flaw is portraying "harmony" (at least in the extract on which the essay is based) as an end and a criterion to uphold determinism instead of virtue, which has been thought to lead to happiness by Ancient Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle. Instead of providing us with an accurate description of a good outcome and, then, of a right action and a virtuous agent, determinism focuses on promoting personal harmony as a desired outcome and, thus, promote hedonistic action and approach of life (by essentially labeling itself as one) and portray a happy agent as a virtuous one. Ironically enough, its causal link of rejection of moral accountability and, generally, determinism as a path to full-blown

hedonism (in a pain-killing, calm mode) is one of the most sound reasons to denounce any hedonistic moral theory which portrays happiness as the ultimate end – just think of the fact that a sadistic serial killer who avoids imprisonment and accepts that he cannot change his criminal lifestyle because "some external power controls his actions" would be perfectly happy with freely continuing his killing sprees and, under any hedonistic moral theory (such as Ziporyn's approach of determinism) which makes happiness equivalent to virtue, his lifestyle of inflicting pain would be perfectly good (since he is happy and happiness is an end for hedonistic moral theories), his criminal activity would be completely right (since it leads to the ultimate end of happiness by, well, making him happy) and he would be considered a virtuous agent (since he functions by the notions of hedonism and makes himself happy). This shows how, when determinism labeled itself as a hedonistic moral theory which, when accepted by someone, leads him to ensuring his "harmony, it opened itself up for even more criticism on moral grounds.

Also, even if this criticism did not exist on a theoretical level, determinism faces practical issues with leading to happiness. To prove that, I will use the division of hedonism as designed in Ancient Greece by Epicurus and Aristippos. Epicurus believed in a form of hedonism which does not portray happiness as an ultimate end, leaves space for virtue to be a decisive criterion in morality and simply focuses on avoiding pain, whereas Aristippos, the mastermind behind full-blown hedonism, portrayed happiness as an ultimate goal and proposed volume and duration as its two criteria of evaluation. A deterministic lifestyle, as we have seen, mainly functions to remove the pain of accountability from the agent. However, it can still function, under specific circumstances, as a restriction to someone's happiness. As I stated in the beginning of this part of my essay, determinism, by removing all human accountability from human action, makes human beings not accountable not only for their shortcomings, but also for their success. For example, I will not be disappointed and mad at myself if I fail an examination, but I should also not be proud if I get a perfect score, since both outcomes were not determined by my actions and effort. In other words, determinism's function as a mere immunity to pain happens by upholding a passive view of life which also denounces credit as equally pointless as blame. The problems deriving from following a deterministic lifestyle became apparent during the Middle Ages, when the Catholic Church, after using deterministic views with God in the part of the higher power in order to relieve people from their suffering, also led to many people giving up on active life and active pursuit of happiness – a reaction ver y reminiscent of Friedrich Nietzsche's view that, when people realize how powerless they are when facing the complete truth, their activity will be forever stunned and they will be led to inactivity because of feeling totally powerless – under a consequentialist approach, Nietzsche then accepted lying to oneself as a means to avoid such a passive state and to find the courage to live. In the case of determinism, this undesirable consequence is not only avoided, but encouraged in the name of avoiding responsibility. By eliminating the entire spectrum of emotions deriving from self-evaluation, determinism not only eliminates blaming oneself, but also believing in oneself and investing in oneself.

F.   A personal approach of moral accountability

After evaluating determinism as a moral theory and reviewing its effect on society and on the individual human agent, I will try to portray my personal view of moral accountability, which relies on many subjects that have been examined so far in this essay.

As for moral accountability and, on a more general scale, the part of human beings in the sphere of causality, I believe that a middle ground between radical determinism and radical libertarianism would have a better shot at more properly interpreting reality. We should definitely consider the effect of external circumstances and factors on the agent himself (such as nurture) and on his particular course of action (such as avoiding a sleeping dog in the middle of the road when driving). However, I believe it would be more accurate to depict them either as causes which affect the agent himself or as stimuli which are cognitively processed and taken into consideration by the agent, respectively. For example, the sleeping dog in the middle of the road is not a cause for my decision, but it is just a stimulus which affects the cognitive processes that I make – these processes of mine are, essentially, the cause of my own actions and initiatives. Such as approach combines the factor of non-human elements, which is introduced in determinism, but does not give them a special (and definitely not a solitary) place in the sphere of causality. Also, it accepts the notion of human autonomy, as portrayed in libertarian theories, but it does not eliminate the impact of external experiences on the cognitive skill of human agents. Overall, I feel that David Hume's approach of human action as a combination of his beliefs (which stem from his cognitive skill) and his desires is still a pretty solid way to interpret the cause of human action and, thus, define the extent of human moral accountability – in this case, we consider external stimuli as a factor which affects an agent's beliefs and, thus, should be considered in a causal debate but without freeing an agent from the responsibility of his initiatives.

As for harmony, my views mostly fall under the Ancient Greek perception of harmony being the result of virtue – a moral perception which promotes virtue while also recognizing the important factor of happiness in a man's life. Epicurus' idea of drawing a line between happiness and virtue was also an interesting idea, even though the practical implementation of it faced many difficulties. A view of ourselves as entities which are in constant interdependence with our external world, such as the one that Ludwig Wittgenstein argued for about our language and its use, could lead to us understanding the considerable effect of this world on us but, also, to rejecting any radical views under which, instead of a constant interdependence, we are bound to our exterior world to a causal link of a priori, predetermined dependence.

Such a general perception of human beings as autonomous, but not immune and dependent contributors to a causal and moral sphere is my own way of conceiving the mechanism of co-existence of our internal and external environment under which stems human action.

G. Closing remarks

In this essay, I tried to analyze the extract given by Brook Ziporyn and examine the general premise of determinism, both conciliatory and radical, that underlies beneath it, from a theoretical, societal

and individual standpoint. Then, I examined the notion of happiness under determinism. Finally, after viewing both determinism and libertarianism as two polar opposite approaches of the causal relations between a human agent and external factors, I attempted to present a theory, under which both internal and external effects co-exist and causally contribute to results in human-involving activity.

In conclusion, I believe that the general approach to this co-existence should be one which acknowledges the causal contribution of both autonomous and external/heteronomous elements regarding human action in a way that recognizes the impact of both of them. Probably my approach, as any approach in philosophy, is not the one that will entirely and decisively provide us with a solid answer, but trying to find the fundamental flaws in the polar opposites of determinism and libertarianism could function as a reliable way to identify more about where the desired middle ground precisely lies.

H.   References

My main sources of information while preparing for this competition were: *A Companion to Ethics*, *History of Western Philosophy* and educational material used by the *Greek Ministry of Education*.