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Free will and the problem of evil

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Abstract: **According to the free-will defence, the exercise of free will by creatures is of such value that God is willing to allow the existence of evil which comes from the misuse of free will. A well-known objection holds that the exercise of free will is compatible with determinism and thus, if God exists, God could have predetermined exactly how the will would be exercised; God could even have predetermined that free will would be exercised sinlessly. Thus, it is held, the free-will defence cannot be used as a partial account of why God should have allowed evil to exist. I investigate this objection using Kripke's apparatus for treating modalities and natural kinds to explore the nature of the incompatibilism required by the free-will defence. I show why the objection fails even if the standard arguments for compatibilism are acceptable. This is because the modality involved in the incompatibilism needed by the free-will defence differs from the modality involved in the compatibilism that is supported by standard compatibilist arguments. Finally, an argument is sketched for a variety of incompatibilism of the kind needed by the free-will defence.**

The topic of free will along with the attendant problem of compatibilism looms large in the philosophy of religion, as it does in metaphysics in general. Yet there are special features of the compatibilist question that must be properly understood to obtain a clear view of the issues when addressing the problem of evil and the free-will defence. These special features arise because there are closely related, but logically distinct, notions of compatibility, and the notion of compatibility that is especially pertinent with regard to the free-will defence is largely ignored in the general literature on the free-will question. As we shall see, standard philosophical arguments that have some force regarding one form of compatibilism may have little bearing on another. Consequently, certain considerations concerning compatibilism that are standardly discussed outside the philosophy of religion cannot simply be imported into discussions of the problem of evil.

For example, one motivation for developing a compatibilist position is to address a sceptical worry that if science were to show that determinism is true, that might require us to give up the claim that we have free will and moral

responsibility. Some philosophers attempt to use the same arguments that are held to establish that free will and responsibility are compatible with the discovery of determinism to show that, if God exists, then free will and responsibility are compatible with divine predetermination in a way that implies that God could predetermine exactly how creatures exercise their freedom in ways for which they are responsible. This claim is then used to support the conclusion that a free-will defence cannot provide a satisfactory (partial) account of the existence of evil. As we shall see, this move from the sceptical problem to the metaphysical issue concerning divine power fails, due to a shift in the forms of compatibilism needed to handle the two cases.

First, I will define several distinct kinds of compatibilism and explain the logical relationship between them. Next, I will explain which notion of compatibilism is relevant to the free-will defence. After that, I will explain why the standard arguments for compatibilism do not establish that the relevant form of compatibilism holds. Finally, I will sketch out an argument for incompatibilism in regard to the form of compatibilism most relevant to the free-will defence.

The logic of compatibility claims

It will be convenient when discussing the notion of compatibility to take as our focus the compatibility of statements. So, for example, if one asks whether determinism is compatible with free will, I will understand this in terms of the question of whether the statement that the world is deterministic is compatible with the statement that there exists freedom of the will. To say that statement S_1 is compatible with statement S_2 is to say that it is *possible* for S_1 and S_2 to hold true together. As there are various notions of possibility, so there are various notions of compatibility. Three notions of possibility which are of particular importance here are metaphysical, conceptual, and epistemic possibility. In terms of these, three notions of compatibility can be defined. Following standard practice, I will say that it is *metaphysically necessary* that S ($\Box_M S$) just in case S is true with respect to every metaphysically possible world.[1] It is *conceptually necessary* that S ($\Box_C S$) if and only if S is an analytic truth, i.e. with respect to each possible world, S is true in virtue of its meaning. The corresponding notions of possibility can be set out as follows: it is *metaphysically possible* that S ($\Diamond_M S$) if and only if it is not the case that the negation of S is true with respect to every possible world ($\sim \Box_M \sim S$). It is *conceptually possible* that S ($\Diamond_C S$) if and only if it is not the case that the negation of S is an analytic truth ($\sim \Box_C \sim S$). We may now define the notions of metaphysical and conceptual compatibility:

S_1 and S_2 are *metaphysically compatible* if and only if $\Diamond_M(S_1 \,\&\, S_2)$.[2]
S_1 and S_2 are *conceptually compatible* if and only if $\Diamond_C(S_1 \,\&\, S_2)$.

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Before turning to epistemic compatibility, let us consider the logical relationship between conceptual and metaphysical compatibilism. Following Saul Kripke's treatment in *Naming and Necessity*, S may state a metaphysical necessity without stating an analytic truth (i.e. a conceptual necessity). Examples of such statements include:

> Lightning is an electrical discharge.
> Gold is an element with atomic number 79.

Neither statement can be known by conceptual analysis and yet both are metaphysically necessary. Since these statements are metaphysically necessary but not conceptually necessary, their negations will be conceptually possible but not metaphysically possible.[3] And just as we can have statements that are conceptually possible but not metaphysically possible, so we can have pairs of statements whose conjunctions are conceptually possible but not metaphysically possible; that is we can have pairs of statements that are conceptually compatible but not metaphysically compatible. For example, each of the pairs below are conceptually compatible (their conjunction is not analytically false) and yet they are metaphysically incompatible.

(1a) That is lightning.
(1b) That is not an electrical discharge.[4]

(2a) My wedding ring contains gold.
(2b) My wedding ring does not contain an element with atomic number 79.

On the other hand, for any statement S, if it is metaphysically possible that S, then it follows that it is conceptually possible that S.[5] It follows that if S_1 and S_2 are metaphysically compatible then they must be conceptually compatible. Summing up then: *metaphysical compatibility implies conceptual compatibility, but not vice versa.*

Now let us consider epistemic compatibility. For a person p at time t, it is *epistemically possible* that S ($\Diamond_{E,p,t}S$) if and only if nothing in p's epistemic body of evidence at t rules out its being the case that S. S_1 and S_2 are *epistemically compatible* (for a given person at a given time), provided their conjunction states an epistemic possibility (for that person at that time).[6] *Epistemic compatibility does not entail metaphysical compatibility.* A person could be in a situation in which (2a) and (2b) are epistemically compatible even though, as we saw, they are not metaphysically compatible. Nor does metaphysical compatibility entail epistemic compatibility. There is a possible world in which I died yesterday and I was buried yesterday, but the conjunction of these statements is not for me now an epistemic possibility. This example also shows that conceptual compatibility does not entail epistemic compatibility; (it is not analytically false that I died and I was buried yesterday). Whether epistemic compatibility implies conceptual

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compatibility is a more difficult question, but it is one we do not need to address here.[7]

Compatibilism and the problem of evil

The free-will defence has been propounded as a partial account of the existence of evil in a world created by an all perfect God.[8] A simple version of the defence holds that the mere existence of free will in creatures brings with it the possibility of its sinful misuse. A more sophisticated version holds that the existence of free will of the kind that is found in typical adult humans brings with it the possibility of sin. According to the free-will defence, the exercise of free will by creatures (or the exercise of the kind of free will found in typical adult humans)[9] is of such value that God is willing to allow the existence of evil which comes from the misuse of free will.[10] A well-known objection to the free-will defence holds that the exercise of free will is compatible with determinism. Therefore, it is argued, if God exists, God could have allowed the exercise of free will by creatures, and yet predetermined exactly how the will would be exercised. Thus, God could have prevented the existence of evil that arises through the misuse of the will without having to exclude the existence of free will in creatures. Thus, it is held, the free-will defence cannot be used as a partial account of why God should have allowed evil to exist.[11]

This objection to the free-will defence raises a lot of issues. The point that I wish to address deals with the sort of compatibilism that must hold if the objection is to have any chance of working. It will help to spell out the objection rather formally in order to locate precisely the area on which I will focus.[12] First some abbreviations:

G	'God exists'.
P(A)	'God had the power to ensure that it would be the case that A'. (Here, A stands in for an arbitrary statement.)[13]
FW	A free-will thesis, e.g. 'There are non-divine beings that exercise free will'; 'There are non-divine beings who exercise the sort of free will found in typical adult humans in the course of a full life that regularly involves morally significant choices under conditions of temptation, competing loves, incomplete knowledge, etc.'.
NS	A no-sin thesis: 'There is no sinful misuse of free will'.
DET	A deterministic thesis, e.g. 'The state of the universe at any given time together with the laws of nature fully determine the state of the universe at any future time'.

Depending on the details of the free-will defence, FW and NS may be spelled out differently, and depending on the details of the objection there may be variations in the way DET is to be understood.

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I take it to be a major claim of the free-will defence that God did not have the power to ensure that it would be the case that FW and NS both held true. Of course the free-will defence also holds that God exists. Thus the free-will defence holds both of the following:

G
$\sim$ P(FW & NS)

I will take the conclusion of the objection to the free-will defence to be the following contradictory claim (in which $\rightarrow$ represents the material conditional):

$G \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, NS)$

Initially I will state the argument for the objection without specifying which form of compatibilism is being used, and so I will abbreviate 'S_1 is compatible with S_2' simply as '$\Diamond(S_1 \,\&\, S_2)$'. The formalized argument runs as follows:

(3) $\Diamond(FW \,\&\, DET)$
(4) $\Diamond(FW \,\&\, DET) \rightarrow \Diamond(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS)$
(5) $\Diamond(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS) \rightarrow (G \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS))$

Thus,

(6) $G \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS)$

Thus,

(7) $G \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, NS)$

The argument is valid. (3) is, of course, a highly contentious premise, and as we saw that it is also ambiguous without a specification of the modality of its main operator. (Is it metaphysical, conceptual, or epistemic?)[14] If the argument is to be convincing, the modality must be such that (5) can be sustained. So I will focus on (5), and consider what sort of modality is needed in order for (5) to be acceptable. I will not be concerned to challenge (4).

Note that (5) is equivalent to:

(5′) $G \rightarrow (\Diamond(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS) \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS))$

In order to assess (5) then, we will ask whether (8) is plausible given the working assumption that God exists:

(8) $\Diamond(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS) \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS)$

We will consider three versions of (8), versions involving metaphysical, conceptual, and epistemic possibility:

(8M) $\Diamond_M(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS) \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS)$
(8C) $\Diamond_C(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS) \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS)$
(8E) $\Diamond_E(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS) \rightarrow P(FW \,\&\, DET \,\&\, NS)$

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Let us begin with (8M), the version that interprets compatibilism metaphysically. It is, I believe, the most plausible of the three. Of course (8M) would be true if the following schema held for every reading of S as a statement:

(9M) $\Diamond_M(S) \rightarrow P(S)$

But there are a number of potential difficulties with (9M).[15] Difficulties would arise in any of the following cases (or a combination of them): (a) If S states a metaphysical necessity, then, though $\Diamond_M(S)$ is true, it might seem incorrect to hold that God could have brought it about that S, e.g. it seems problematic to say that God could have brought it about that $2+2=4$. (b) Suppose that there are possible worlds in which creatures have the opportunity to exercise power in one of two or more mutually exclusive ways, and suppose that (once God gives them this opportunity) it is not up to God to determine fully how they will exercise their power. Let w_t be the history of a possible world up to a time t at which a creature is given an opportunity to exercise such a power; let us say the power can be exercised in one of the two mutually exclusive manners, X or Y. Suppose that S comes out true just in worlds that are extensions of w_t in which the power is exercised in manner X. Then it is not clear that it would have been within God's power to bring it about that S, since it would not have been up to God that the creature exercise its power in manner X. (c) It might be thought that there are readings of S that state a metaphysical possibility but one that is morally repugnant or carries some other disvalue, which is such that it does not lie within God's power to bring it about that S (e.g. it might go against God's nature to bring it about that S). (d) If God is not a metaphysically necessary being, then for any S that holds true only in possible worlds in which God does not exist, God cannot bring it about that S.

Let us begin with (a) and (b). Though these may be difficulties for (9M), they do not raise problems for (8M), where FW & DET & NS replaces S. (a) raises no difficulty since it is actually false that NS and thus not metaphysically necessary that (FW & DET & NS).[16] Problem (b) does not arise in worlds in which DET holds, for in such worlds there are no two-way powers in operation of the sort envisaged by (b). It is difficult to think of how one could *prove* that (8M) avoids difficulties (c) and (d). On the other hand, if metaphysical compatibilism were really true, and agents could, under conditions of determinism, exercise free will rather fully in a way that was morally significant and involved no sin, it might be hard to see why this would have such a disvalue as to put it beyond God's power to bring about, or why its being the case would be metaphysically incompatible with the existence of God. Perhaps some other telling objection could be raised against (8M). For present purposes, I am willing to admit that (8M) has at least some initial plausibility, and thus that if the objection to the free-will defence laid out above is interpreted in terms of metaphysical compatibility *and* if premise (3) could be established, the argument would provide an objection that would need

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to be taken quite seriously. But, as we shall see later, there are special problems involved in trying to establish (3) on the metaphysical reading. As we shall see in the next section, the standard arguments for compatibilism, at most, support a conceptual or epistemic compatibilism.

So now let us turn to (8C), the reading of (8) as expressing conceptual compatibility. We must consider the relationship between what is conceptually possible and God's power. First, note that *whatever is within God's power to bring about is metaphysically possible*, for if God could make it be the case that S holds true, then S describes one way that things could be, i.e. S describes a metaphysical possibility.[17] Let us see what follows from this claim. Earlier, it was noted that for some statement S, it is conceptually possible that S and yet not metaphysically possible that S. For such an S, it follows that it is conceptually possible that S and yet not within God's power to make it be the case that S. Consider a special case, one pertaining to conceptual compatibilism. The conjunction of statements (2a) and (2b) (i.e. 'My wedding ring contains gold and my wedding ring does not contain an element with atomic number 79') states a conceptual possibility, and yet, since it is not metaphysically possible for something to contain gold but not an element with atomic number 79, it is beyond the power of God to bring it about that the conjunction of (2a) and (2b) is true. That is, (2a) and (2b) are conceptually compatible yet it is not within God's power to bring it about that (2a) and (2b) hold true together. Since S_1 and S_2 may be conceptually compatible but it may be beyond God's power to bring it about that (S_1 & S_2) holds, the mere conceptual compatibility of free will and predetermination does not by itself give us grounds to think that God has the power to predetermine how creatures will freely act. A necessary condition for its being within God's power to bring about a given state of affairs is that the state of affairs be metaphysically possible. Thus, if we are to reason from the compatibility of S_1 and S_2 to God's power to bring it about that (S_1 & S_2) we need the metaphysical compatibility of S_1 and S_2.

Finally, let us consider (8E), the reading of (8) as an assertion of epistemic compatibilism. The difficulties that we just looked at for conceptual compatibilism arise here as well. We can imagine an early chemist who has evidence that gold is an element with an atomic number. The chemist is in the process of trying to discover the atomic number, but as yet is without evidence that the atomic number is 79. It may be an epistemic possibility for the chemist at that point in time that his wedding ring is gold but his ring does not contain an element of atomic number 79. The chemist could have good evidence that his ring is gold but lack empirical evidence that would rule out gold's not having atomic number 79; furthermore, a conceptual analysis of the term 'gold' would not reveal that it refers to an element with atomic number 79. But, as a matter of fact, it is part of the nature of gold to have atomic number 79, and so it is not metaphysically possible for there to be a sample of gold that contains no

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element with atomic number 79. And God could not bring it about that such a sample exists.[18]

To summarize: what is within God's power is metaphysically possible. Whether God's power encompasses all that is metaphysically possible has been left an open question. However, if metaphysical compatibilism is true and there exist possible worlds in which determinism holds and creatures exercise free will, then at least a prima facie case can be made that it was within God's power to have brought it about that determinism holds and creatures exercise free will. Neither the conceptual nor the epistemic compatibility of free will and determinism implies their metaphysical compatibility. So, whereas it might be the case that establishing epistemic or conceptual compatibilism would be adequate to solve some philosophical problems, it is not by itself (i.e. without also establishing metaphysical compatibilism) enough to ground the above objection to the free-will defence. The next question we must deal with is whether there is good evidence for metaphysical compatibilism.

Difficulties for establishing metaphysical compatibilism

Since metaphysical compatibilism entails conceptual compatibilism, any objection to the latter will serve as an objection to the former. But putting aside such objections, there are special difficulties that face advocates of many forms of metaphysical compatibilism. I believe that these are best brought out in the course of showing why it is that typical arguments for compatibilism generally do not provide support for metaphysical compatibilism. I will consider examples employing three methods of arguing for compatibilism: paradigm case arguments, arguments which proceed via conceptual analysis, and arguments that proceed through a series of thought-experiments that rely heavily on Frankfurt-style examples. I can only provide a narrow range of examples but I think the reader should be able to see how my considerations apply to other cases. I will not argue here that it is impossible to establish a form of metaphysical compatibilism, rather I only want to show some difficulties that need to be considered in typical cases.

Let us begin with paradigm-case arguments for compatibilism. Typically such an argument points out actual paradigm cases of some kind of phenomena – say, choice or free choice – and then claims that, since such cases actually exist, it follows that even if we discover that, say, determinism is true, there still are instances of the phenomena in question. Thus, it concludes, the existence of the phenomena is compatible with determinism.[19] I will not be concerned with whether the paradigm-case argument can be used to establish epistemic or conceptual compatibilism. In any case, it does not establish metaphysical compatibilism. An example should show why. Imagine that someone points to some samples of dogs and says: 'Those things are dogs. Thus dogs exist. Thus, even if

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we discover that there are no multi-cellular organisms there are still dogs. Thus, the existence of dogs is compatible with there being no multi-cellular organisms.' Clearly this argument is not sufficient to establish the metaphysical compatibility of 'dogs exist' and 'no multi-cellular organisms exist'. Note that one who knew that dogs exist, but did not know that they are multi-cellular, could still be prepared to recognize that, for all he or she knows, it might turn out that it is part of a thing's nature as a dog to be multi-cellular, and thus it is metaphysically impossible that dogs exist but not multi-cellular organisms. Similarly, one could know that there are choices but not know whether determinism holds and yet recognize that it might turn out to be the case that there are essential indeterministic features of choice, and thus that the existence of choice might turn out to be metaphysically incompatible with determinism.[20]

Now let us turn to a second kind of argument for compatibilism, one that proceeds by conceptual analysis. Consider the typical structure of such an argument. Suppose one wishes to show that, say, free choice is compatible with determinism. One might analyse 'Person P chooses freely' as 'Person P chooses under condition C', where 'condition C' is replaced, for example, by a specification of how the choice arises and properly expresses the character of P.[21] It is then asserted that there is no contradiction in claiming both that determinism holds and that a person chooses under condition C, and thus free choice and determinism are compatible. As an argument for *conceptual compatibilism* this may be spelled out in terms of the apparatus set out earlier as follows: there is no contradiction in saying that determinism holds and a person chooses under condition C; thus, it is not analytically false that determinism holds and a person choose under condition C; thus, by definition, determinism is conceptually compatible with a person's choosing under condition C; thus, (assuming the correctness of the proposed analysis of 'free choice') it follows that determinism is conceptually compatible with free choice. This appears to be a valid argument; that is, the conclusion must hold so long as the premises are true (i.e. (a) there is no contradiction in saying that determinism holds and a person chooses under condition C, and (b) the proposed analysis of 'free choice' is correct).

It must be noted, however, that this argument for compatibilism is not a valid argument if the conclusion is understood to involve metaphysical compatibilism. A parallel argument that is manifestly invalid may help to make this clear. We may offer an analysis of 'bachelor' as 'unmarried man', and hold that there is no *contradiction* in claiming that an unmarried man exists but no multi-cellular organism exists, and (running through an argument parallel to the one just given) conclude that the existence of a bachelor is conceptually compatible with the nonexistence of multi-cellular organisms. This argument is unproblematic. But it does nothing to establish that the existence of bachelors is metaphysically compatible with there being no multi-cellular organisms. In the same way an

argument from a conceptual analysis of free choice of the form that was just considered does not establish the conclusion that free choice is metaphysically compatible with determinism.

Of course, in the example dealing with bachelors there is an obvious reason to suspect that the claim of metaphysical compatibility (the claim that the existence of bachelors is metaphysically compatible with the nonexistence of multi-cellular organisms) is false, even though the corresponding claim of conceptual compatibility is true; namely, it may be the case that being multi-cellular is essential to being a man, and thus there is no possible world in which a man exists and there are no multi-cellular organisms, despite the fact that it is not analytically false that there are men but not multi-cellular organisms.

This example raises an interesting question: might it be the case that the apparatus of natural kinds will be fruitful in discussions of choice and the will? Here is what I have in mind. Kripke includes under the rubric of natural kind not just kinds of substances like gold and water, and kinds of animals and plants, but also kinds of natural phenomena (e.g. lightning and heat). I believe the notion of a natural kind can fruitfully be applied to the phenomena of choice and the faculty of will. Just as lightning is a natural kind of phenomena which we encounter taking place in the atmosphere, and which has its own nature which we may come to discover in more or less detail, so choice is a natural kind of phenomena which we find in humans and which has a nature of its own of which we may learn in more or less detail. And as magnetism is a power whose nature we may learn of more fully, so we may learn more of the nature of the will. If this is so, then it may well turn out that choice, the will, desire, and so on have essential features that cannot be revealed though a mere conceptual analysis. If F is such a feature of choice then there will be no possible world in which choice occurs without feature F. It might, for all we know, turn out that there are essential non-deterministic features involved in choosing. If that were the case, then even if it was not an analytic falsehood to say that choice took place in a fully deterministic world, it would be a metaphysical impossibility. In such a case, choosing would be conceptually compatible with determinism but not metaphysically compatible.

If these considerations are correct and 'will', 'choice', 'desire' etc. are natural kind terms, then there is little hope in constructing an argument from conceptual analysis for the metaphysical compatibility of determinism with either free will or moral responsibility. For example, if one analyses 'free choice' as choice made under condition C, then though the holding of condition C might be metaphysically compatible with determinism, the existence of choice might not be.[22] The same difficulty holds for the metaphysical compatibility of moral responsibility with determinism. Though I do not want to claim that 'moral responsibility' is a natural kind concept, it is clear that one's moral responsibility depends on how one exercises one's will, how one chooses, etc. And so if willing, choosing,

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etc. essentially involve indeterministic aspects, that may preclude the existence of moral responsibility in a deterministic world.

It is important at this point to avoid a possible source of confusion. One might think that we already have evidence that the exercise of the will is metaphysically compatible with determinism since (it appears that) the outcome of some exercises of the will are predetermined. If, for example, someone offered me a few pennies to maim myself, it might already be predetermined at that point in time that I would not take him up on the bargain. Note, however, that even if the *outcome* of a given process is predetermined, it does not follow that the process itself is a fully deterministic. If you drop a cat it may be 'determined' that it will hit the ground, but that does not show that the way the cat falls is fully determined. If our exercises of the will involve complex brain processes, then evidence that sometimes the outcome is predetermined does not give us much reason to think that in such cases the processes are fully deterministic, and thus there is little evidence that such processes could take place if determinism were true, i.e. if the world were fully deterministic.[23]

A third kind of argument for compatibilism is found especially in the writings of Fischer and Ravizza.[24] Here, an elaborate argument is constructed for the feasibility of a variety of compatibilism called 'semi-compatibilism', which holds that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism.[25] I will only be concerned with one aspect of the argument, the reliance on Frankfurt-style examples (FSEs). FSEs are typically constructed in an attempt to show that one's responsibility is compatible with one's being unable to do otherwise in various respects. Basically Fischer and Ravizza's strategy is to use FSEs in an attempt to overturn the view that moral responsibility for a choice or an action requires that one have the power to do otherwise – moral responsibility does not require 'regulative control' over one's choices and actions.[26] Once one sees this, Fischer and Ravizza believe, one is well on the way to the further insight that determinism is compatible with responsibility. Typically, FSEs involve a device (a Frankfurt device) which is said to have the power to control micro-level brain processes in such a way as to bring about a given choice, desire, process of deliberation, etc.[27] Depending on the needs of the example, the Frankfurt device can bring about pretty much any event or sequence of events that is part of the agent's coming to perform an action. For my purposes, I will concentrate on cases in which the Frankfurt device is to bring about a choice if it is activated, and to make the argument congenial for those who employ FSEs, I will assume that choices are processes that take place in the brain.[28]

Let us consider how a typical FSE works. Imagine that a Frankfurt device is installed in an agent's brain and the agent is then given the opportunity to choose to perform a given action. The device is constructed so that it will remain inactive if the agent makes the choice in question without any hesitation, but if the agent hesitates or shows any indication that she might not make that choice, then the

device will bring it about that the choice is made after all. As the example develops, the agent makes the choice without any hesitation and the device never becomes activated; furthermore, (aside from the presence of the Frankfurt device) there are no factors that diminish the agent's responsibility. The conclusion is then drawn that, since the Frankfurt device was inactive, the agent is fully responsible for the choice and yet, since the device was present, the agent did not have the power not to make that choice. Such examples as these (with the aid of further considerations that we will not develop here) are suppose to support the claim that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism.

My particular concern is whether such FSEs can be used to support *metaphysical* compatibilism. To do so, the FSE would have to describe a metaphysical possibility: it would have to be metaphysically possible for a device to control the occurrence of brain events in such a way as to bring about a given choice. There is, I believe, little reason to suppose that this is a genuine possibility.

To see why it would be difficult to establish such a metaphysical possibility it will help to consider an analogy. Suppose that a magnet M is about to be passed over some iron filings. Because there is concern that M might lose its magnetic power, a device is set up which will do the following: if M shows no indication that it will lose its magnetic power, then the device will not be activated; if M shows some indication that it will lose its magnetic power (unless something special is done), then the device will become activated, causing it to be the case that M and the iron filings move exactly as they would if M had its magnetic power intact. Should we say that the device ensures that M magnetically attracts the filings? Not enough information has been given to answer the question. If the device works by causing M to be magnetic, then the answer is affirmative. If the device moves the filings in some other way, the answer is negative. In order to ensure that M magnetically attracts the filings, it is not enough that the filings move in a certain way, they must move that way as a result of the magnetic attraction of M – the appropriate causal power must be exercised.

Now reconsider the device capable of controlling micro-level brain activities. Suppose it were to bring it about that the atoms in the brain move exactly as they might move if one were making a choice. Would that device be bringing about a choice? Given our assumption that a choice is a brain process, one might think that the answer would have to be in the affirmative. After all, if the device were to bring it about that the atoms in the brain move exactly as they might if one were choosing, and if a choice *is* just a processes taking place in the brain, then it might seem to follow that the device brings about a choice. But the example with the magnet shows why this reasoning is faulty. When M magnetically attracts the iron filings, causing them to be drawn to M, the process of magnetic attraction is just a physical process, one that takes place in the locale of M and the filings. But it does not logically follow that a duplication of the movements in that locale would automatically constitute a process of objects

moving under magnetic attraction. Whether that occurred would depend on what causal powers were at work in the process. The answer to the question of whether a Frankfurt device would cause there to be a choice if it caused the atoms in the brain to move just as they might move if a choice was made is as follows: it depends on what sort of causal powers (if any) are essentially active in choosing, and on whether the device brings it about that those very powers are properly exercised.[29]

There are three cases to consider in regard to the possibility that the exercise of certain causal powers are essential to the act of choosing. Case 1: suppose that an occurrence of choosing does not essentially involve the exercise of any particular causal powers, e.g. that it suffices for the occurrence of choosing simply that certain movements take place in the brain (just as it suffices for a person to go across town that he or she transverse a path through the town regardless of the causal mechanism, if any is present, by which this is done). Then the metaphysical possibility of Frankfurt devices controlling choices seems relatively unproblematic.

Case 2: there are some kinds of events, the occurrence of which essentially involve the exercise of specific causal powers, e.g. scratching is not simply an event in which a surface becomes altered so that it acquires a certain characteristic mark or marks. Part of what it is for the scratching of a surface to take place, is that the surface is caused to undergo a change through being rubbed. Sometimes it is possible to use causes instrumentally to achieve a determinate end; e.g. a design may be scratched into a surface by controlling the way a hard object is rubbed over the surface. Suppose, for case 2, that choosing essentially involves the exercise of certain causal powers, and that those causal powers can be directed by a controlling device to bring about a single determinate choice; e.g. the choice to do A. Just as the causal powers involved in scratching can be controlled from the outside to determine exactly how the scratching takes place, so the causal powers involved in choosing can be controlled by the Frankfurt device to determine what choice will be made. In this case too Frankfurt devices seem unproblematic.

Case 3: another sort of causal power we must consider is one such that, under certain circumstances in which it is exercised, it may issue in any one of two or more mutually exclusive alternatives, and which of those alternatives comes about is not fully determined by factors outside the exercise of that power. Suppose, for case 3, that a power essentially exercised in choosing is of such a nature. Here the existence of Frankfurt devices is highly problematic, for it might be the case that when the power that must be exercised if the agent is to choose to do action A is exercised, that power is capable of bringing about either one of the following two mutually exclusive alternatives: (a) the agent chooses to do A, (b) the agent refrains from choosing A. If the exercise of that power is essential to choosing to do A, then if a device brings it about that that power is

exercised, that device will not predetermine that a choice to do A must result. But then the device will not qualify as a Frankfurt device. So under the assumptions of case 3, the story told by the Frankfurt example may not be metaphysically possible.[30]

One great difficulty, then, in trying to show that Frankfurt examples are metaphysically possible is to show that choosing does not essentially involve the exercise of the sort of causal power found in case 3. Until this is done, there is no reason to accept Frankfurt examples as providing a way to show that one's making a given choice is metaphysically compatible with its being impossible for one not to make that choice. Nor is there a reason to treat Frankfurt examples as a tool to be used in showing that choosing is metaphysically compatible with determinism.

I have tried to bring out some difficulties involved in attempting to establish metaphysical compatibilism by using the standard philosophical arguments for compatibilism.[31] In the next section I will look at a way in which an argument from religious presuppositions might be constructed to support a form of metaphysical incompatibilism. But first I wish to consider an objection that could be raised at this point.[32] There is an interesting parallel to Hilary Putnam's twin-earth example that needs to be explored.[33] In Putnam's famous example, the substance XYZ plays the same role in the lives of the inhabitants of Twin Earth as H_2O plays in ours, and it has the same value for them as H_2O has for us. Yet because our word 'water' is a natural-kind term it does not apply (as used by us) to XYZ. The objection holds that even if, for example, 'choice' is a natural-kind term and turns out not to apply to any fully deterministic phenomena, there will, nonetheless, be metaphysically possible worlds in which some deterministic phenomena – call it 'detchoice' – plays the same role, and has the same value, in the lives of some creatures as choice does in ours; it just will not be correct for us to call it 'choice', since that term refers to the natural kind of phenomena found among us.

Given this fact, the compatibilist objection to the free-will defence need only be rephrased: even if God could not have predetermined how creatures choose, God could have predetermined how creatures detchoose; a world with detchoice is (other things being equal) as valuable as one containing choices; thus, since God could have predetermined that creatures always make detchoices sinlessly, the free-will defence cannot provide an account of why God allows sin. Though there are a number of difficulties with this objection, I will concentrate on just one. According to the libertarian view, there are various ways the future could go – its course is not predetermined – and we are sometimes able in choosing to exercise a power which helps to determine which of the alternative courses the future will take. This is one role of choice that is seen (at least by the libertarian) to be of great value, and it is, of course, not a role that can be played by detchoice. So, if the libertarian is correct in valuing this aspect of choice, then

detchoice lacks a value that choice has, and this undercuts the argument of the objection.[34]

Are there religious grounds for metaphysical incompatibilism?

We saw earlier that conceptual incompatibility implies metaphysical incompatibility; thus, evidence for the former serves as evidence for the latter. I will have nothing new to add to arguments for conceptual incompatibilism, so let me move to other approaches. It might be the case that empirical scientific investigation could be useful in determining whether some forms of metaphysical compatibilism hold. To illustrate with an example of a form of metaphysical incompatibilism that does not concern the will, science has shown us that it is the nature of water to be H_2O, and thus shows us that the existence of water is metaphysically incompatible with the non-existence of H_2O. If science could shed light on the nature of choice, perhaps it could help us to answer the question of whether choice is metaphysically compatible with determinism. However, I will have nothing more to say about what science might show us on this issue. My concern here will be with implications of religious belief on the question of metaphysical compatibilism.

Two difficulties must be addressed before I proceed. First, since there is a great diversity of beliefs on religious matters, it may be hard to find a common set of assumptions from which to start. My purpose will be to try to shed some light on how religious claims might play into one's thinking on metaphysical compatibilism. I will use some religious doctrines as illustrations. I hope those who do not accept the doctrines will focus on the general strategy that is employed in addressing the problem (viz. the application of some of Kripke's apparatus concerning natural kinds). The second difficulty is that subtle issues are at play here. I do not fully see my way through them. So, what I will present is meant as a starting point for those who want to investigate the implications of religious beliefs for questions of metaphysical compatibilism.

A very common religious belief is that there is a final judgement of human beings after which some are severely punished by God, and deserve to be so punished, for the ways in which they have used their will. This belief is coupled with the belief that God is perfectly just. For the purpose of the discussion I will assume the following claim:

(10) Such punishment would not be justly inflicted on persons by God if the exercise of their will was completely determined by some combination of events taking place outside their will together with some purely random events taking place in the exercise of their will.

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From this claim, it appears to follow that the justice of divine punishment depends upon its being the case that those punished had a power of will, whose non-random exercise was neither completely determined by events outside their will nor determined by a combination of such events together with random events taking place in their will, *and was such that it could stand as a basis for the fair imputation of responsibility*. Presumably, those humans are not different from other humans in this respect, at least not different from humans whose wills are developed. Small children and those who are severely deficient mentally presumably do not have a fully developed human will. The following claim seems reasonable on the basis of the religious picture being sketched:

> (11) All humans are such that were their will to be developed, they would have a power if placed in appropriate circumstances to exercise their will in a way that is neither completely determined by events outside their will nor determined by a combination of such events, together with random events taking place in their will.[35]

Here we have an important generalization concerning the will of humans. Before trying to draw out its implications I need to turn to a discussion by Kripke concerning a rather different generalization regarding cats.[36] Kripke asserts that it is not an analytic truth that cats are animals, but though we could have discovered that cats are not animals (at one time that was an epistemic possibility), now that we find that they are animals we may grasp the further insight that necessarily cats are animals.

> We could have discovered that the actual cats that we *have* are demons. Once we have discovered, however, that they are *not*, it is part of their very nature that, when we describe a counterfactual world in which there were such demons around, we must say that the demons would not be cats. It would be a world containing demons masquerading as cats. Although we could say cats *might turn out* to be demons, of a certain species, given that cats are in fact animals, any cat-like being which is not an animal in the actual world or in a counterfactual one, is not a cat. The same holds even for animals with the appearance of cats but reptilic internal structure. Were such to exist, they would not be cats, but 'fool's cats'.[37]

We use the name 'cat' to name a natural kind. We cannot know a priori that things of this kind are animals, but once we discover that the 'actual cats that we have' are animals, we can see anything that is a demon just will not be a member of this natural kind.

Something similar seems plausible in the case of the human will. We could perhaps have discovered that the exercise of the developed human will is, under all circumstances, fully determined by outside events,[38] or that it must always proceed deterministically like the running of a computational algorithm. But given our discovery (based on religious beliefs) that the developed will conforms

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to (11), we now see that something that had the properties of running deterministically in either of the ways just mentioned would not count as being of the natural kind that we refer to as the will. If that is right, then we have found essential properties of the will and discovered some significant forms of metaphysical incompatibilism.

Notes

1. In *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), Saul Kripke alternatively characterizes metaphysically possible world(s) as a 'possible state (or history) of the world' (15), a 'counterfactual situation' (15), 'total ''ways the world might have been''' (18), and 'states or histories of the *entire* world' (18).
2. We may extend this definition as follows to handle more than two statements: $S_1,\ldots S_n$ are metaphysically compatible iff $\Diamond_M(S_1 \& \ldots \& S_n)$. This method can be applied to extend the other definitions of compatibilism that will be defined.
3. This holds by the equivalence of $\Box_M S$ and $\sim \Diamond_M \sim S$ and the equivalence of $\sim \Box_C S$ and $\Diamond_C \sim S$.
4. Assume that the demonstratives in (1a) and (1b) pick out the same thing.
5. Here is why. Suppose that $\Diamond_M S$. It follows that S is true with respect to some possible world. Thus, it is not the case that the negation of S is true in every possible world in virtue of its meaning. Thus, $\sim \Box_C \sim S$. Thus $\Diamond_C S$.
6. I have formulated the notion of epistemic possibility rather generally in terms of what is not ruled out by one's epistemic body of evidence. This idea could be specified in a number of ways. On one reading, we could say that S is epistemically possible for *p* at *t* if S is logically consistent with what *p* knows at *t*. Another reading might require not merely that S be consistent with what *p* knows at *t*, but also not be ruled out by *p*'s knowledge together with any other epistemic 'evidence', such as *p*'s sense perceptions. What I say about epistemic compatibility will hold on any reasonable way of filling out the notion of epistemic possibility.
7. This is equivalent to the question of whether conceptual incompatibility implies epistemic incompatibility. One might think that this would hold and reason as follows: 'S_1 and S_2 are conceptually incompatible iff $\sim (S_1 \& S_2)$ is an analytic truth, i.e. $(S_1 \& S_2)$ is an analytic falsehood. But in that case $(S_1 \& S_2)$ can be ruled out a priori. Thus, S_1 and S_2 are epistemically incompatible.' For a difficulty with the position that analytic falsehood can in general be ruled out a priori see James Cain 'Are analytic statements necessarily a priori?', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, **69** (1991), 334–337.
8. To avoid repetition, I will henceforth use the term 'God' to mean God as traditionally conceived in Western theism. This conception includes being all perfect and in some sense omnipotent or almighty.
9. To avoid repetition, I will henceforth drop the parenthetical qualification.
10. I assume that the reader is familiar with the free-will defence and so will not present a detailed development of it. One who accepts the free-will defence need not hold that exercise of free will is intrinsically valuable; it might be of value because it is necessary for bringing about certain goods. And one who accepts the free-will defence need not say that the (intrinsic or extrinsic) value of the exercise of free will can outweigh *any* amount of evil; we are only concerned with actual evils found in the world.
11. For classic formulations of this objection see Antony Flew 'Divine omnipotence and human freedom', in Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (eds) *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (New York NY: Macmillan, 1955), 144–169; J. L. Mackie 'Evil and omnipotence', *Mind*, **64** (1955), 200–212; *idem*, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 164 ff. For an attempt to revise Flew's argument in terms of Frankfurt-style counter-examples to the principle of alternative possibilities see Andrew Eshleman 'Alternative possibilities and the free will defence', *Religious Studies*, **33** (1997), 267–286.
12. Of course there might be a variety of ways to formulate such an objection. I hope the reader will see how to apply my criticisms to the objection if it is formulated somewhat differently.
13. In a full development of a free-will defence, the notion of *having the power to ensure* would have to be spelled out more fully. Since my reply to the compatibilist's objection holds no matter how the details

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of the notion of ensuring are spelled out, it will not be necessary for the purposes of this paper to provide a fuller development of the notion.

14. Of course one could suggest that some other modality is involved. I cannot think of any other plausible candidates.
15. I do not say that these are decisive difficulties with (9M), but ones that at least raise questions about its truth.
16. I assume that the no-sin thesis is false. One who held that there is no free will could argue that NS is actually true, since if there is no free will, then there is no sinful misuse of the free will. But if this objection were correct, then FW would be false, and thus it would still not be metaphysically necessary that (FW & DET & NS).
17. The claim that what is within God's power is metaphysically possible will be crucial to my argument. A special case of this claim seems to be used by Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 154, where he reasons that if God had the power to create C-fibre stimulation that was not felt as pain then 'the stimulation could exist without the pain'. In the context of Kripke's discussion the word 'could' clearly expresses metaphysical possibility.
18. Here a possible source of confusion must be avoided. One might think that we could argue as follows (letting S_1 be 'My ring is gold' and S_2 be 'My ring contains an element of atomic number 79'): S_1 entails S_2 and thus S_1 is not epistemically compatible with $\sim S_2$. A confusion arises because entailment is often analysed in terms of the necessitated conditional. But notice that while $\Box_M(S_1 \rightarrow S_2)$ is true, $\Box_C(S_1 \rightarrow S_2)$ is false, and it is the latter that properly captures the notion of *entailment* insofar as this notion is related to that of *valid inference*.
19. Of course one could attempt to apply the paradigm case argument to other pairs than free choice/determinism, or choice/determinism; e.g. free choice/divine foreknowledge, moral responsibility/predestination.
20. On the other hand, if paradigm instances of a given type actually exist and determinism actually holds, then it follows that the existence of things of the given type is metaphysically compatible with determinism since the actual world will be a possible world in which the type exists and determinism holds.
21. Here the notion of *choice* is left unanalysed. Another style of analysis might include an analysis of the notion of *choice*; I will postpone discussion of this alternative style of analysis for the moment.
22. My discussion of whether an argument for metaphysical compatibilism can be constructed on the basis of a conceptual analysis of 'free choice' has focused on analyses of the form 'choice made under condition C' that leave the term 'choice' unanalysed. One might think that my objection could be avoided if a suitable analysis of 'choice' itself were offered, for it might then become clear that choice is metaphysically compatible with determinism. For example, if 'choice' could be correctly analysed along functionalist lines or in accordance with Daniel Dennett's understanding of the intentional stance, then a strong case could be made for metaphysical compatibilism. (For Dennett's understanding of the intentional stance see his 'Mechanism and responsibility', in Gary Watson (ed.) *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 150–173.) But such a move will not be available if (as I hold) the natural kinds treatment of terms like 'choice', 'desire', 'will', etc. is correct, for then the essential features of these kinds need not all emerge on a conceptual analysis.
23. At this point, one who previously supported the compatibilist objection to the free-will defence that we have been considering might be prepared to give up that objection only to replace it with a similar objection that relies on the (metaphysical) compatibility of an event's *being a performance of the will* and its *having a predetermined outcome*. Since outcomes of, say, choice, are (or at least strongly appear to be) *sometimes* predetermined, there is empirical evidence for such a metaphysical compatibilism (after all, actuality implies possibility). So long as God could predetermine the outcomes of peoples' exercises of the will, then (it might be argued) before we exercise our will, God could at least predetermine that it be done sinlessly. I cannot fully explore this line of argument here, but note that, even if God can predetermine the outcome of *some* exercises of the will, it may be that many of the choices that God wants us to make in this life (choices made under conditions of temptation, competing loves, incomplete knowledge, etc.) are not ones that God could predetermine that we make. So, even if *some* exercises of the will are such that their outcomes are predetermined, that does not preclude the viability of a free-will defence.

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24. See especially, John Martin Fischer *The Metaphysics of Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); and John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, SJ *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). I do not claim that Fischer and Ravizza argue for *metaphysical* compatibilism; I am simply concerned to show that one could not establish that metaphysical compatibilism holds through the sort of appeal to Frankfurt-style examples that they use.
25. Of course semi-compatibilism is not directly relevant to the free-will defence, which holds that ∼ P(FW & NS). It will be directly relevant to a variant on the free-will defence, which we may call the moral-responsibility defence, which replaces FW by a moral-responsibility thesis (MR). Candidates for MR include: 'there are non-divine beings that are morally responsible for choices, actions, omissions, etc.'; 'there are non-divine beings who are morally responsible for the sort of choices, actions, omissions, etc. found in typical adult humans in the course of a full life that regularly involves morally significant choices'. The compatibilist rejoinder to the moral-responsibility defence will claim that determinism is compatible with the occurrence of the kinds of morally responsible choices, actions, omissions, etc. that MR appeals to; i.e. it holds (3′) ◇(MR & DET). The compatibilist objection then parallels the argument in (3) through (7), except that it replaces 'FW' with 'MR' throughout. The pertinent question then is whether (3′) holds on the metaphysical reading.
26. This use of FSEs traces back to Harry G. Frankfurt 'Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility', *Journal of Philosophy*, **66** (1969), 829–839.
27. I will follow the literature in speaking of a 'mechanism' or a 'device' when developing FSEs. But, as is generally recognized, the role of the 'device' in FSEs may be played by the presence of 'any condition under which it will be maintained that [the agent] cannot do otherwise'; Frankfurt, 'Alternate possibilities', 836. Frankfurt mentions hypnosis, threats, potions, brain implants, and 'natural forces involving no will or design at all' as candidates that could play this role, depending on which account of *inability to do otherwise* one wishes to adopt; (*ibid.*, 835–836). Eleonore Stump, in her article 'Alternative possibilities and moral responsibility: the flicker of freedom', *The Journal of Ethics*, **3** (1999), 299–324, (see 311n) and Eshleman, in 'Alternative possibilities and the free will defence', allow for the possibility that the role of the Frankfurt device in an FSE could be directly played by God. Nothing I say will depend on there being a mechanical device as opposed to one of these other sorts of possibilities. See n. 29.
28. These assumptions can be relaxed to handle other accounts of choice as well, e.g. dualistic accounts of choice. For a more thorough treatment of FSEs, see my 'Frankfurt style examples', *Southwest Philosophy Review*, **19** (2003), 221–229.
29. In n. 27 I mentioned that it is not crucial to FSEs that an artificial device be present; it is assumed that something is present (e.g. a natural process) that would bring about the choice in question if the person doesn't immediately make the appropriate choice. Now we can see why my argument does not depend on there being a device. Even if something other than a device is present, the point in the text holds: if something (whether or not it is a device) is to guarantee that the given choice is made, it will still have to guarantee that any causal power that is essentially active in choosing is properly exercised in such a way as to bring about the predetermined choice. My argument will only rely on this fact.
30. Even though most discussions of FSEs involve the assumption that choice is either a brain process or in some sense strictly correlated with brain processes, this assumption is not necessary. For example, Eleonore Stump notes that FSEs could be constructed for accounts of the mind along the lines of Cartesian dualism ('Alternative possibilities and moral responsibility', see esp. 306n). And, as noted previously, both Stump and Eshleman allow for the possibility that the role of the Frankfurt device in an FSE could be directly played by God. Note that the considerations I bring up in case three still apply. If choice essentially involves the exercise by an agent of the sort of causal power discussed in case three, then FSEs in which God plays the role of the Frankfurt device may be metaphysically impossible – whether or not dualism holds.
31. Other arguments for compatibilism could be developed. A referee has suggested that I consider the following argument along Humean lines: 'Non-deterministic ''free will'' is incompatible with responsibility, since one can only be held responsible for an action determined by one's character. But a free action is one that one is responsible for. Hence, indeterminism in a choice is incompatible with free will. Since free will is a fact, but indeterminism in a choice is incompatible with free will, it follows that determinism about a choice is compatible with free will.' I see no reason to accept the premise

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that 'one can only be held responsible for an action determined by one's character'. Take someone who sometimes tell lies and sometimes is honest, and is faced with the temptation to lie. If it is not already fully determined by his character whether he will lie, that hardly seems to be grounds to say that no matter how he chooses he cannot be responsible (this of course is not to say that character is irrelevant). This point, however, has been the subject of extended debate and it goes beyond the scope of this paper to deal fully with the issue.

32. I thank a referee for raising this issue.
33. Hilary Putnam 'The meaning of ''meaning''', *Philosophical Papers, vol. 2, Mind, Language and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
34. There are other ways one might respond to the objection. A referee for this journal suggested that one might try arguing along the lines of Robert Merrihew Adams's 'Must God create the best?', in *idem The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology* (New York NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 51–64. Adams holds that '[a] God who is gracious with respect to creating might well choose to create and love less excellent creatures than he could have chosen', 56.
35. In speaking of the human will I mean in 'this lifetime', not in an afterlife.
36. The passages I will discuss are from Kripke *Naming and Necessity*, 122–123, 125–126, and 138.
37. *Ibid*., 126.
38. Note that here I am speaking of 'the human will' not 'free will'.