

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 16 | Issue 1

Article 5

1-1-1999

Is There Freedom in Heaven?

James F. Sennett

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy>

Recommended Citation

Sennett, James F. (1999) "Is There Freedom in Heaven?," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol16/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers by an authorized editor of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

IS THERE FREEDOM IN HEAVEN?

James F. Sennett

This paper examines the *dilemma of heavenly freedom*. If there is freedom in heaven, then it seems that there is the possibility of evil in heaven, which violates standard intuitions. If there is not, then heaven is lacking a good significant enough that it would justify God in creating free beings, despite the evil they might cause. But then how can God be justified in omitting such a good from heaven? To resolve this dilemma, I present the *Proximate Conception* of freedom, which holds that actions may be free though determined, but only if they have in their causal history some undetermined free actions by the same agent. I show how this conception resolves the dilemma, defend it against objections, and comment on its implications.

1. *The Dilemma of Heavenly Freedom*

Is there freedom in heaven? Regardless of how this question is answered, it seems to lead to problems for traditional theism. These problems arise, in part, because of the standard theistic response to the problem of evil known as the “free will defense.” The crux of this argument is the claim that it is impossible for God to create a world in which there is both human freedom and a guarantee of no evil.¹ So, according to the free will defense, human freedom makes logical room for the existence of evil, even if God exists.² Therefore, if agents in heaven are free, then either there is the possibility of evil in heaven or the free will defense fails (since it is possible that there be freedom and a guarantee of no evil).³

However, traditional theism regards heaven as a place in which evil is completely eradicated – it is not even *possible* that any should arise.⁴ The difference between heaven and earth is not simply that earth contains evil while heaven does not. It has been concluded by the best free will defenders that it is possible that there be no evil, even with the presence of free agents.⁵ It is only the *guarantee* of no evil that the presence of freedom eliminates. If heaven is nothing more than a place where the possibility of freedom and no evil is realized, then the absence of evil in heaven is purely contingent on the choices of human beings, and not a matter of God’s sovereignty or the nature of heaven at all. But the traditional view of heaven is that it owes its purity to the unmediated presence of God. Heaven is *essentially* pristine, grounded in divine immanence, not contingently so due to the fortunate choices of humans.



Furthermore, if heaven is only evil-free contingent on the choices of its human occupants, then it is constantly in danger of losing its evil-free status, since it is always in the power of those occupants to introduce evil into heaven. But certainly the idea that heaven might yet become a place of sin and rebellion is contrary to traditional theism. In order for heaven to be essentially pristine and free from future corruption, it must be necessarily evil-free – it cannot be possible for there to be evil.⁶

The second option for those affirming freedom in heaven – that the free will defense fails – is conceptually unproblematic. However, it is certainly dialectically undesirable. It is arguable that the free will defense is the most promising philosophical response to the so-called “logical argument from evil” available. At the very least, the free will defense is an extremely important theistic tool. It should be surrendered, if at all, only with great fear and trepidation. If there is any way to avoid its loss, that way is *prima facie* preferable.

So it seems that the theist should answer the question, “Is there freedom in heaven?” with a resounding and unequivocal “No.” Neither of the consequences of an affirmative answer – the possibility of evil in heaven nor the failure of the free will defense – is desirable. But a negative answer leads to disturbing consequences of its own. First, it can be argued that traditional theism is committed to the claim that agents in heaven are free. It is clear that the tradition assumes that we will be basically the same people in heaven that we are on earth. Though we may have resurrection bodies, be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and the like, none of this will cause us to lose our specific identities or divorce us in any important metaphysical sense from the people we are on earth. But certainly being free is an important metaphysical property. Therefore, if we will not be free in heaven we will indeed be divorced in some important metaphysical sense from the people we are on earth. So, while it may not be obvious that the Western theistic tradition explicitly endorses the view that agents in heaven are free, it seems that the tradition is committed to such a view. At the very least, the tradition would require some serious rethinking if we were to accept the view that there is no freedom in heaven.

But a more important problem, from a philosophical standpoint at least, awaits the one claiming that there is no freedom in heaven. Free will defenders most often bolster the defense by arguing that human freedom manifests a moral good significant enough to outweigh the evil that occurs if it is permitted.⁷ Call this morally significant good the “freedom good.” If there is no freedom in heaven, then heaven is lacking the freedom good. Now, if God can justifiably withhold the freedom good from heaven by withholding freedom, then why could he not do so on earth? If he could have justifiably withheld the freedom good from earth and thus avoided the possibility of moral evil, then he is morally culpable for not doing so, and the free will defense fails. Therefore, an answer of “no” to the question of heavenly freedom causes as serious a problem for the free will defense as does an answer of “yes.”

So there is a dilemma – what I will call *the dilemma of heavenly freedom*. If there is freedom in heaven, then there are serious philosophical problems. If there is no freedom in heaven, then there are serious philosophical prob-

lems. However, I believe that a path can be successfully navigated between the horns of this dilemma. Furthermore, the solution I propose involves some significant theses concerning the conception of human freedom in general, and is therefore of interest beyond the confines of this dilemma. I will say a word or two concerning these theses at the close of this paper.

2. *Compatibilism and the Dilemma*

The dilemma of heavenly freedom results from the fact that freedom is interpreted in a *libertarian* sense – whether or not an agent performs a free action is causally undetermined. Hence, whether or not evil will result from those actions is causally undetermined, and no one – not even God – can guarantee that freedom will not result in evil.

So perhaps one could escape the dilemma by opting for a *compatibilist* or *soft determinist* view of freedom.⁸ On this view, all that is required for an action to be free is that there be no coercion, artificial manipulation, or any other interference with the agent's normal decision-making processes. Such a view of freedom is consistent with determinism. Free actions must simply be determined *in the right sort of way*. Hence, it is consistent with the claim that heaven contains free agents who cause no evil. All that is required is that the appropriate causal structures be sufficient to result in all agents in heaven freely choosing good on all occasions.

Unfortunately, this solution also affords unsavory consequences. If God can avoid evil in heaven with compatibilist freedom, it seems that he could exercise the same option on earth, thereby avoiding evil all together. I argued a few years ago in this same journal that the free will defense entails a libertarian view of freedom – if it is true, or even possible, that all free actions are determined, then God bears some moral responsibility for the evil there is.⁹ So an attempt to resolve the dilemma of heavenly freedom by adopting compatibilism encounters the same problem as the original dilemma; *viz.*, it wreaks havoc with the free will defense.

Despite this difficulty, however, I will argue that there is a compatibilist conception of freedom that can solve the dilemma of heavenly freedom. The problems just alluded to come about only if one insists that freedom is compatibilist both in heaven and on earth – that is, that *all* free actions are determined. But if there is a way to argue that heaven has only compatibilist freedom while earth includes at least some libertarian freedom, then the pitfalls can be avoided.¹⁰ This is my strategy.

Such a strategy will strike many as obviously incoherent. Compatibilism and libertarianism are, it is most often supposed, conceptual contradictories. Freedom is either one or the other. It cannot be both, or sometimes one and sometimes the other. Besides, even if it could be, it is unclear how this solves any problems. God would still have had the option of making all freedom compatibilist, and thus avoiding evil while retaining freedom. Nonetheless, I will argue that the most plausible notion of compatibilist freedom is not only one with which libertarian freedom is consistent, but one for which libertarian freedom is a necessary condition. Hence, while God can have only compatibilist freedom in heaven, with its guarantee of no evil, he can do so only by surrendering such luxury on earth.

3. The Consequence Argument and Proximate Determinism

I begin with a standard argument against a popular conception of compatibilism – an argument best articulated and defended by Peter van Inwagen. Following van Inwagen, I will call it the *Consequence Argument*. He summarizes the argument thus: “If determinism is true, then our actions are the consequences of laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born, neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequence of these things are not up to us.”¹¹

I find this argument compelling and will, for the balance of this paper, assume that it is sound. However, I think there has been confusion over exactly what the argument proves if it is sound. It is very natural to see it as an argument to the conclusion that the notions *free action* and *determined event* are incompatible – no event can bear both properties. But the notion *determined event* is ambiguous. To clear up this ambiguity, I introduce the concepts of *proximate* determination and *remote* determination.

An event is *remotely determined* just in case the laws of nature and the state of the world *at any given time prior* to the event entail that the event will occur. (That is, for every time t prior to time t^* at which the event occurs, the laws of nature and the state of the world at t entail the occurrence of the event at t^* .) An event is *proximately determined* just in case the laws of nature and the state of the world at some time *immediately prior* to the event entail that the event will occur. (For the sake of simplicity, I will ignore the technical difficulties inherent in specifying a notion such as *time t immediately prior to time t^** . The intuitive notion is clear enough for my purposes – that there is a time t prior to t^* such that t is sufficiently close in time to t^* to render any identification of times after t and before t^* irrelevant.) An event is *remotely undetermined* just in case there is some time in the past such that the laws of nature and the state of the world at that time do not entail that the event will occur. An event is *proximately undetermined* just in case there is no time in the past such that the laws of nature and the state of the world at that time entail that the event will occur.¹²

Any remotely determined event is proximately determined. However, there is conceptual room for an event that is proximately determined and remotely undetermined. The Consequence Argument entails only that no free action is *remotely* determined. It does not entail that there are no *proximately* determined free actions. More specifically, the Consequence Argument entails that

For every free action A , either

- (i) A is proximately undetermined; or
- (ii) A has in its causal history some proximately undetermined event such that it is up to the agent in question whether or not the undetermined event occurs (i.e., a libertarian free action).

The proximately undetermined events referred to in (ii) above may have occurred quite far back in the past. The Consequence Argument entails absurdity only in the notion of a free action with no agent control (in the lib-

ertarian sense that the agent is not determined to perform the action) *at any time in the past*. Therefore, the notion of a free action over which there is no agent control at the time it is performed, but which is such that there must be agent controlled events in the past that led to the determination of the event, is not ruled absurd.¹³ That is, the argument allows for proximately determined free actions whose causal histories contain proximately undetermined free actions by the same agent.¹⁴

4. *The Proximate Conception of Freedom*

It is standard compatibilist procedure to insist that free actions are those that are determined by relevant intentional states of the agent – by some appropriate combination of or interaction among her volitions, desires, goals, etc. For the sake of simplicity I will refer to such a phenomenon as an action being determined by the agent's *character*. It is important to note, however, that I am not committing to any particular psychological or mental states comprising the character. Any compatibilist view that appeals to an intentional criterion for free action (a feature shared by virtually all significant views) is susceptible to the kinds of points I will raise. Therefore, any of these criteria can be subsumed under the notion of acting "from character."

For all such theories, it is *how* an action is determined that specifies it as free. It must be determined by the agent's character, and not by any illegitimate interference from external forces. It must not be the handiwork of a Cartesian demon, evil neurosurgeon, or brain washing interrogator. It must not be performed at gun point or under any other threat of danger. The agent's character must determine what the agent will do at the time she acts freely – not any factors independent of that character. But, the story goes, it is perfectly acceptable that one's character itself be causally determined to be what it is. The facts and events of one's heritage, environment, upbringing, etc., may together necessitate the character from which she freely acts. So when an agent claims to have done something "of her own free will," she need not be claiming that it was causally contingent that she do what she did. It need only be the case that no causal structures independent of her character determined her action. She and she alone (i.e., her character) provided the causal structure sufficient to determine her action.

I will concede the coherence of the notion of free actions determined by character. In fact, I find such a notion quite compelling at times. When I think of Martin Luther declaring before the Diet at Worms, "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise," I sense the power of an immovable spirit bound to act from character in the face of great external pressures to do otherwise.¹⁵ I understand the action to be free, though so bound – indeed, I understand it to be free, in part, *because* it is so bound. I can, with little reservation, agree to the claim that there is a coherent notion of determined freedom, and that something like acting from character is a necessary condition for such freedom.

But this cannot be a *sufficient* condition for a determined action's being free. Even if an action is determined by character, it will not be free if the character by which it was determined has been illegitimately influenced by

coercion or manipulation. If Luther's refusal to recant is true to his character, but his character was formed through brain washing or Cartesian demonic influence, his action is not free.

In Aldous Huxley's anti-utopian novel *Brave New World*, genetic manipulation was used to lead to character formation for virtually all citizens. Because of this manipulation, the people chose the lifestyles the government intended them to choose, no matter how menial, and desired no others. It is canonical to view these people – and it was certainly Huxley's intention that we view them – as quintessentially unfree. The manipulation of their characters, over which they had no control, disqualified their actions as free – even though the actions were determined by the agents' characters. It is not enough that an action be *caused* appropriately; it must also be determined by a character that has been *formed* appropriately.¹⁶

What does it take for a character to be formed appropriately? There are many possible suggestions, and it is not my intention to name, defend, or refute any of them. I wish here only to note that we have begun a causal regression that should remind us of the dangers signaled by the Consequence Argument. Any suggestions for appropriate character formation will invoke either all determined events or some undetermined events. If the latter are invoked, the determinist thesis is compromised. If the former are invoked, it could then be argued that those events alone are not sufficient for appropriate character formation. The circumstances in which those events occurred could have been different in such a way as to constitute illegitimate character formation. This contingency could be accommodated only by moving further back in time to specify conditions necessary to assure that the future events leading to character formation are appropriate. Thus, a regressive pattern is established that must either end in undetermined events under the control of the original agent (i.e., libertarian free actions) or take us back to events occurring before the birth of the agent (as in the case of the *Brave New World* citizens), in which case we run into the Consequence Argument.¹⁷

So those moved by the Consequence Argument will conclude that determination by character is insufficient to make a determined action free. And the missing necessary condition must involve undetermined free actions by the same agent in order to avoid the incoherence outlined in the Consequence Argument. The most natural explanation for this is that an agent must be responsible for his character formation – *choosing* it by performing certain undetermined free actions at certain points in his life. A character that is libertarian freely chosen is the only kind of character that can determine compatibilist free actions.¹⁸

What I have in mind is this: many of the character traits we display – honesty, for example, or courage or rudeness or punctuality – were formed in us as a result of consistent behavior patterns that developed into habit. These behaviors were not always habitual, but began as overt, deliberate actions, perhaps taken after not a little pondering and soul searching. So one may be an honest and dependable person today because at critical points earlier in her life she decided to behave in honest and dependable ways. Perhaps she now is so practiced in the art of probity that she responds with ingenuousness and veracity without hesitation or fore-

thought. Her character demands and determines that she do so. But she could not have reached such a state had she not deliberately chosen honestly from among genuine alternatives in the past. My assertion here is that her current determined acts of honesty can be labeled 'free' without running afoul of the Consequence Argument only provided that they have in their causal past certain libertarian free actions – *viz*, the deliberately chosen acts of honesty that led to the development of the character trait.¹⁹

Of course, this scenario is open to the charge that these precedent deliberate actions were themselves the determinate product of her character as it stood at that time, and so the standard compatibilist position would insist. But again such a response would suggest a regression that will inevitably lead back to before her birth, and the Consequence Argument again threatens. I will call this conception of compatibilist freedom – under which compatibilist free actions are causally dependent on libertarian free actions – the *Proximate Conception*. Therefore, there is a consistent ontology of free actions under which there are compatibilist free actions that do not violate the Consequence Argument.

5. *The Resolution of the Dilemma*

I have made two substantive philosophical claims. First, there is a conception of compatibilist freedom that is consistent with – indeed entails – libertarian freedom: compatibilist free actions are *proximately* determined actions whose causal histories include proximately undetermined free actions by the same agent. Second, the standard compatibilist doctrine of free actions as those determined by the agent's character escapes the Consequence Argument only if the agent's character was formed, at least in part, by proximately undetermined free actions by the same agent. I submit that the most plausible way to think about compatibilist free actions is as those proximately determined by the agent's character, but remotely undetermined, since the character is remotely undetermined. In this section I will outline how the Proximate Conception resolves the dilemma of heavenly freedom.

First, the Proximate Conception allows for freedom in heaven with no possibility of evil. If all free actions in heaven are proximately determined, all that is required is that the characters determining them be formed in such a way as to determine no actions that cause evil. Nevertheless, the danger in the suggestion of compatibilist freedom rehearsed in the second section of this paper is avoided. Since proximately determined actions are free only if the agent performed some libertarian free actions in the past, there must be the possibility of evil at some time in the past in order for there to be any compatibilist free actions in the present. The dilemma of heavenly freedom is resolved if all libertarian free actions contributing to the characters of agents in heaven were performed while those agents were on earth. That is, the characters are formed on earth, but those characters determine only actions for good once the agents enter heaven.²⁰

The Proximate Conception can also avoid the charge that the lack of possibility of evil in heaven entails that heaven lacks the freedom good – the kind of moral good critical to the free will defense. Consider the conception

of *general freedom*. A world segment includes general freedom just in case that segment includes libertarian freedom or (proximate) compatibilist freedom. It can be argued, consistent with the free will defense, that it is general freedom, not libertarian freedom *per se*, that manifests the freedom good. Either libertarian freedom or (proximate) compatibilist freedom is sufficient for general freedom. Thus, any world segment excluding libertarian freedom but including (proximate) compatibilist freedom is a world segment manifesting the freedom good.

One way to argue this would be to suggest that the freedom good is the potential or actual possession of character formed by the self – the ability to become and be the person we choose to be. If this is the freedom good, it is clearly manifested by both libertarian and proximate compatibilist freedom. Hence, the freedom good is not absent from heaven, though libertarian freedom is. One might also suggest that the freedom good is the potential for or actual possession of a certain God-like quality – the quality of self-determined righteousness. Again, this good is manifested by both libertarian and proximate compatibilist freedom, and hence is also present in heaven though libertarian freedom is absent. I believe that either of these goods (and they are not unrelated) is a prime candidate for the freedom good, and can certainly play the role called for by the free will defense.²¹

So any world segment in which conditions for general freedom are satisfied is a segment that includes the freedom good. Since heaven is such a world segment, it does not lack the freedom good. Since the presence of proximate compatibilist freedom entails only that there be libertarian free actions in the same world, and not in the same world segment, there need be no libertarian free actions in heaven in order for the freedom good to be manifest.²²

The last point to note concerning the dilemma of heavenly freedom is that the Proximate Conception leaves room for the success of the free will defense. Proximate compatibilist freedom in heaven necessitates libertarian freedom at some time in the past. Given the provision mentioned above that all libertarian free actions determining the characters of agents in heaven are performed on earth, it follows that the presence of freedom at any time requires the possibility of evil at some time, which is what the free will defense requires.

6. Responses to a Few Objections

In this section I will address several important objections that have been raised against the points of this paper. First, it has been suggested that the threatened absence of some significant good in heaven does not necessarily forebode a dilemma.²³ After all, unless all significant goods are logically compatible, they cannot all be present anywhere – even in heaven. Furthermore, it may well be that certain sensory pleasures would not be present in heaven, as well as goods dependent on the presence of suffering, want, or some other evil – compassion, sympathy, sacrifice, and the like.

I concede all of these points. However, the point generating the dilemma of heavenly freedom is not simply that there is some significant good lacking in heaven.²⁴ Rather, the point is that the significant good lacking is

one such that, according to the free will defense, God is relieved of moral blame for the evil in the world because he could not avoid the possibility of the evil without removing the source of the good (human freedom). The problem then, is this: if God could justifiably remove the good from heaven by removing freedom, then why could he not do so on earth? If he could have, then he is morally culpable for not doing so, and the free will defense fails. The Proximate Conception allows that the good manifested by libertarian freedom be present in heaven, though there is no libertarian freedom there. Yet the problem just elucidated does not arise, because even though God has the option to avoid libertarian freedom in heaven, he does not have that option on earth. If there is to be an essentially evil-free heaven at all, there must be a pre-heaven segment of the same world containing the possibility of evil.

Second, I have been asked if it even makes sense to call proximately determined actions *free* at all. After all, the agent could not have done otherwise, at least in the sense that vindicates libertarianism and gives rise to the Consequence Argument. Hence, those sympathetic to libertarianism and the Consequence Argument, to whom my paper allegedly appeals, will not be inclined to accept the Proximate Conception.²⁵

This objection raises a fascinating point concerning proximately determined actions, especially in light of the kinds of issues that normally surround the free will/determinism debate. While it is true that the agent could not have done otherwise in the relevant sense, it is also true that the agent can nonetheless be held morally responsible for proximately determined actions – even in the sense that libertarians claim soft determinism cannot account for. If agent S is determined by his character to do A, and the relevant part of his character was formed by the performance of libertarian free actions by S in the past, then it makes sense to charge that the moral responsibility accruing to those libertarian free actions transfers through the character to A. S can legitimately be rewarded or punished for A, even though it was proximately determined. For example, if I am rude or dishonest literally by “force of habit,” so that I no longer have libertarian control over my obnoxious or larcenous behavior, I can nonetheless be held morally (and criminally) responsible for it, because I developed these habits through libertarian free choices I made throughout my life. But given the standard assumption that I am morally responsible for actions only if I am free in performing them, it follows that my actions are free, even though I could not have done otherwise in the sense that motivates libertarianism.²⁶

Finally, I have been asked repeatedly if my position entails a rather stringent doctrine of salvation; *viz.*, that only those who have lived long enough and worked hard enough to develop a character that fully determines actions for the good will be allowed into heaven. I do not believe it does. There is room for some kind of doctrine of sanctification, whereby God supplies upon our deaths whatever is lacking in our character formations to bring us to the state of compatibilist free perfection. I believe this can be worked out consistently by insisting that it is the pattern we establish throughout a life of persistent intentional character building that is critical – not our actually attaining the desired character itself in our lifetimes. By establishing such a pattern we are, in effect, giving God permission to fill in

the gap. This is a highly complex matter, and one that must await a fully developed theological encounter with the Proximate Conception for complete explication. For the time being, however, I will claim only that it is not apparent to me that it cannot be made consistent with standard Christian views of salvation and sanctification.

7. *The Proximate Conception in Broader Context*

I wish in closing to point out two further advantages to the Proximate Conception – one philosophical and one theological. The theological advantage is that the Proximate Conception is compatible with and suggestive of a traditional line of thinking regarding the relationship between life on earth and life in heaven. In theistic circles life on earth is often viewed as a proving and training ground for life in heaven. The choices made for good or evil are directly relevant to the eternal destinies they determine for us. As we form our characters, we set our spiritual compass for that location in which the lives we desire for ourselves are most fully and naturally realized. Furthermore, for those who “choose life,” earthly living is a time of training and honing of our benevolent and aretaic skills, so that upon entering heaven we are prepared for a life of compatibilist moral perfection, where our very natures compel us to choose only the good – infallibly *and* freely. Such a state is attainable, but only if we choose, free from any compulsion, to develop that character that will guarantee such a state.

The philosophical advantage of the Proximate Conception I wish to mention is wholly independent of the dilemma of heavenly freedom. The Proximate Conception provides a link between compatibilism and libertarianism that softens the hard line commonly perceived to divide the two doctrines. Earlier I noted that libertarianism and compatibilism are traditionally thought of as conceptual contradictories — if one is true, the other must be false. The Proximate Conception removes this incompatibility and replaces it with a significant conceptual dependence.

I believe that the Proximate Conception can help to account for many of the conflicting intuitions that make both compatibilism and libertarianism appealing in the right conceptual contexts. Of course, a driving intuition behind many compatibilist arguments is a desire to retain complete physical determinism. The Proximate Conception will do nothing to alleviate the fears of those unwilling to allow the universe some elbow room. Neither will it steady the nerves of those motivated to compatibilism by what I take to be the false dilemma of determinism and randomness — the Humean charge that undetermined actions are sheerly random, and hence cannot qualify as free. For those haunted by this bugbear, I can only urge reconsideration of the libertarian alternatives. However, for libertarians who, like me, are struck by the plausibility of many of the points made by the compatibilist camp, the Proximate Conception offers hope for squaring the intuitions stirred by such suggestions with the undeniable – though undeniably puzzling – fact of undetermined freedom.²⁷

NOTES

1. The literature on this subject is, of course, enormous. A collection of much of the most important material recently produced is provided in Robert M. and Marilyn M. Adams, editors, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford University Press, 1990). For an excellent survey of the debate from an atheistic perspective, see Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1990), pp. 363-391. Perhaps the finest and most sophisticated development of the free will defense to date is offered by Alvin Plantinga in *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), ch. 9, and *God, Freedom, and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 7-64. See also my *Modality, Probability, and Rationality: A Critical Examination of Alvin Plantinga's Philosophy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), ch. 3.

2. It only *allows* for evil, however. It is logically consistent to assume that free agents always choose the good, hence never engender any evil. It is this assertion that fuels J. L. Mackie's important criticism of the free will defense in "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 (1955); reprinted in Nelson Pike, ed., *God and Evil* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964), pp. 41-67. (Though Mackie assumes a compatibilist conception of free will, the claim is consistent even with libertarianism.) It is a special strength of Plantinga's free will defense (see n. 1 above) that it succeeds in spite of Mackie's objection. See *Modality, Probability, and Rationality*, pp. 53-62, for a critical analysis of the debate between Mackie and Plantinga.

3. It has become canonical in the literature to distinguish between defense and theodicy in the problem of evil. While the latter attempts to present a genuine explanation for God's allowing evil, the former has a much more modest task. A defense attempts only to show that it is possible that God and evil coexist by sketching out a coherent scenario under which both do exist. A defense makes no claim that the scenario is actual – its possibility is enough to accomplish the task at hand.

So construed, the free will defense does not assume that the actions of free beings actually do explain the evil in the world, or even that there are any free beings at all. It is clear, however, that traditional Christianity does assume that there are free moral beings, and that they are responsible for at least some of the evil in the world. Hence it is easy in discussions of the free will defense for the line between the mere possibility of freedom-produced evil and its actuality to become blurred. I have taken precautions to keep this line distinct, but discover on practically every rereading another technical inaccuracy. This is due, in part, to the fact that I am raising the question of whether or not there can be any freedom in heaven, given that there is freedom on earth. This causes me to dance very close to the line and even occasionally step across it. Nevertheless, it should be clear from the discussion that it is not simply free will as a theodicy that is stake here, but the free will defense itself – the dilemma threatens that it may not even be possible for God justifiably to permit free will and the evil it threatens. I beg the reader's indulgence as the line between defense and theodicy alternately blurs and sharpens throughout the paper. I am certain that there is no place where any blurring of the line compromises the central arguments of the paper.

4. Some theists claim that evil did once arise in heaven, when Satan and his armies rebelled against God and were cast out. At least two responses are available. First, traditional theism in no way *entails* the story of a Satanic fall, and there are serious questions about whether or not it even represents good biblical exegesis. (A seminary professor of mine once remarked that we owe our conception of Satan much more to John Milton than to any biblical sources.) Second, one might accept the story, yet maintain that the fall of Satan constitutes the final eradication of evil from heaven, so that, consequent to his expulsion, no evil can ever arise

again. This line is perhaps representative of most theists who accept the story of the fall of Satan, and still leads to the dilemma that will be explicated.

5. See note 2 above.

6. It would be more accurate to say that it cannot be within the ability of any *non-divine* occupants of heaven to bring it about that there is evil in heaven. This claim is still consistent with the modal claim that it is metaphysically possible that there be evil in heaven, yet gives rise to the dilemma. However, this is a level of precision that would unduly complicate a secondary point. In a paper that will virtually swim in technicalities, I will take advantage of this one opportunity to sacrifice accuracy for the sake of clarity.

7. While this claim is not, strictly speaking, necessary to the success of the defense, free will defenders most often see the need to go beyond the bare bones claim that the existence of God and the existence of evil are shown to be consistent by the possibility of free will. This need arises because of the rejoinder that God could never make such free beings, since they might cause evil, and he would bear some moral responsibility for any such evil. This rejoinder is usually met by claims concerning the moral value of freedom similar to those presented in the text. Without such development, the free will defense lacks the dialectically essential element that God would, in some possible world, allow the possibility of evil by creating free beings.

This move is prominent throughout Plantinga's treatment. Plantinga focuses on the moral good that can only be done if people freely choose to perform certain actions. Early in his defense, Plantinga gives "a preliminary statement of the Free Will Defense" thus: "A world containing creatures who are sometimes significantly free (and freely prefer more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all" (*Nature of Necessity*, p. 166). Later in his discussion he characterizes the free will defense claim as "God is omnipotent and it was not within his power to create a world containing moral good but no moral evil" (p. 184). Finally, at the end of his discussion, he notes, "Of course, it is up to God whether to create free creatures at all; but if he aims to produce moral good, then he must create significantly free creatures upon whose cooperation he must depend" (p. 190, emphasis mine).

8. In "The Free Will Defense and Determinism," *Faith and Philosophy* 8 (1991): 341, I make a modal distinction between soft determinism and compatibilism. While both assert the *compatibility* of determinism and freedom, only the soft determinist commits to the *actuality* of either. Hence it is possible to be a compatibilist, yet hold that determinism is in fact false, or that there are in fact no free actions, or even that there are in fact free actions that are not determined. I also distinguish between weak and strong compatibilism. The former has all these options open, while the latter commits to the necessary truth of *If there are any free actions, they are determined*, and thus does not have the final option open. As will be seen, the present paper is, in part, a presentation of a weak compatibilist conception that entails that there are some undetermined free actions.

9. "The Free Will Defense and Determinism," pp. 340-353.

10. This conclusion is still consistent with my argument in "The Free Will Defense and Determinism," though the conclusion of the latter needs to be stated more specifically: the free will defense entails that there are *some* libertarian free actions if there are any free actions at all. But the compatibilist conception I will argue for here also entails this claim.

11. *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 16. Van Inwagen offers three highly sophisticated versions of this argument in chapter three of his book, and defends them against many objections. For substantive rejoinders to this argument, see John Fischer, "Van Inwagen on Free Will," *Philosophical Quarterly* 36 (1986): 252-260 and Terrance Horgan, "Compatibilism and the

Consequence Argument," *Philosophical Studies* 47 (1985): 339-356.

12. I take it as obvious that, if there is a time t prior to t^* , such that the laws of nature and the state of the world at t entail that E occurs at time t^* , then the laws of nature and the state of the world at every time subsequent to t and prior to t^* entail that E occurs at t^* . Therefore, if there is no time in the *immediate* past at which the event is determined to occur, then there is no time in the past *at all* at which the event is determined to occur.

13. Libertarian *extraordinaire* Robert Kane argues for just such a conception of free will. (*The Significance of Free Will*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996; see, e.g., pp. 73-78.) While I developed the ideas of this paper before examining Kane's work, it is quite reassuring to find so important a voice in the free will/determinism debate agreeing with me.

14. Note that it is necessary that at least some of the undetermined events in the action's causal history be free actions performed *by the same agent*. If a proximately determined action could have only indeterminate causal elements that are either not free actions or free actions performed by some other agent, then it could be easily argued – analogous to the Consequence Argument – that such an action is no more "up to" the agent than a remotely determined action.

15. According to church historian Roland Bainton, this famous saying of Luther's is missing from the transcription of the trial at Worms, and it is questionable whether or not Luther actually said it. Like Bogart's "Play it again, Sam," or Mae West's "Why don't you come up and see me sometime?" Luther may have become identified with an epithet for which he was not responsible. Nevertheless, the remark undoubtedly reflects Luther's sentiments, and its rhetorical force remains for the purposes of this paper. (Qualifications such as this are the price we inevitably pay for allowing historians access to so precious a commodity as cultural myth).

16. The *Brave New World* brand of control is what Kane labels "covert, non-constraining control." He cites Huxley in his explication, but concentrates on the control exerted in B. F. Skinner's novel *Walden Two* (Kane, pp. 64f). Kane acknowledges that there is a brand of freedom that the inhabitants of the brave new world and Walden colony possess, but argues that it is not the kind of freedom that allows for ultimate moral responsibility.

17. Needless to say, this argument is far too brief and assumes far too much. However, fleshing it out is well beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that this paper is addressed primarily to those who share my affinity for the Consequence Argument, yet who find the implications of a strictly libertarian doctrine of freedom bothersome when they consider either the Luther-type cases of apparently determined freedom or the implications of libertarianism and the free will defense for the question of freedom in heaven. In short, the paper is for those who believe the dilemma is real, and this would rule out compatibilists unmoved by the Consequence Argument.

18. Kane develops a similar notion in great detail in chapter five of *The Significance of Free Will*. He argues that a condition he calls "Ultimate Responsibility" is necessary in the causal history of my free actions, and an agent is ultimately responsible for an action only if the action is undetermined.

19. Kane calls these "Self-Forming Actions," and holds that they are the actions for which Ultimate Responsibility is a necessary condition (see above note).

20. Notice, incidentally, that it is a consequence of this position that heaven *per se* cannot be a possible world. It can only be a part, or segment, of some world in which there is libertarian freedom in some other segment that does not include heaven. However, this consequence holds little danger for traditional theism, since heaven is normally thought of as a segment of the actual world, and not a possible world in itself. For an argument to the conclusion that heaven is not a

possible world and implications of such a conclusion for theism, see Donald Erlandson and Charles Sayward, "Is Heaven a Possible World?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 12 (1981): 55-58.

21. Even more to the point is Plantinga's suggestion that the existence of any moral good at all is dependent on the existence of "significant" freedom. In this case the freedom good would simply be the conglomeration of all moral good. Under the Proximate Conception, moral good can be accomplished even through proximately determined actions, provided they are remotely undetermined.

Note, by the way, that Plantinga's conception of the freedom good makes the case that there must be freedom in heaven even stronger. If there is no freedom in heaven, then there is no moral good in heaven – a suggestion bordering on the ludicrous.

22. One might object that my use of the notion of *manifestation* of good won't do. Libertarian freedom *just is* a significant good, and if it is missing, so is the good. My only reply to this position is that it gives rise to the dilemma of heavenly freedom, while my approach resolves it. Furthermore, my approach does not seem to sacrifice any of the philosophical import of the identification of libertarian freedom with good – most notably, it still supplies the necessary philosophical fuel to power the free will defense.

Michael Gorman has suggested a rather clever alternative response to this objection. Perhaps, though libertarian freedom is a significant good, proximate compatibilist freedom is even better. So, if God (*per impossible*) could create earth with only the latter, he would. Since proximate compatibilist freedom requires libertarian freedom at some prior time, the best world God could create would contain not a heaven and earth with libertarian freedom, but an earth with libertarian freedom and a heaven with proximate compatibilist freedom. Thus, God permits libertarian freedom on earth not only to provide a significant good on earth, but also to make a greater good possible in heaven.

23. This objection was raised by Philip Quinn in written comments.

24. In fairness to Quinn (see above note), I must point out that in earlier drafts I equivocated on this point. I cleared up the ambiguity and developed the position that follows as a result of pondering Quinn's original objection.

25. This objection was raised in conversation by Tim O'Connor, and subsequent discussion with him aided greatly in my proposed solution.

26. So, interestingly enough, if the Proximate Conception of freedom is coherent, then it is indeed possible for S to be free in performing A, even though S could not have done other than A – a conclusion quite significant for the general debate over free will and determinism. Robert Kane argues that it is the matter of ultimate responsibility, not simply of "could have done otherwise," that is at stake in the Consequence Argument (pp. 75-78).

27. I thank Keith Cooper, Timothy O'Connor, and Mel Stewart for very helpful discussions on previous drafts of this paper. Previous versions were read and discussed before the philosophy department at Pacific Lutheran University, at the 1992 Intermountain Meetings of the Society of Christian Philosophers at Brigham Young University, at a colloquy sponsored by the Palm Beach Atlantic College philosophy club, and at the 1992 American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Meetings in Washington, D.C. I thank participants in all of these forums for their helpful comments and questions. I offer special thanks to Philip Quinn for characteristically helpful and lucid prepared comments at the APA meetings. Finally, I thank Bill Wainwright and two anonymous referees for *Faith and Philosophy* for final refining comments that helped bring this paper (at long last!) to publishable form.