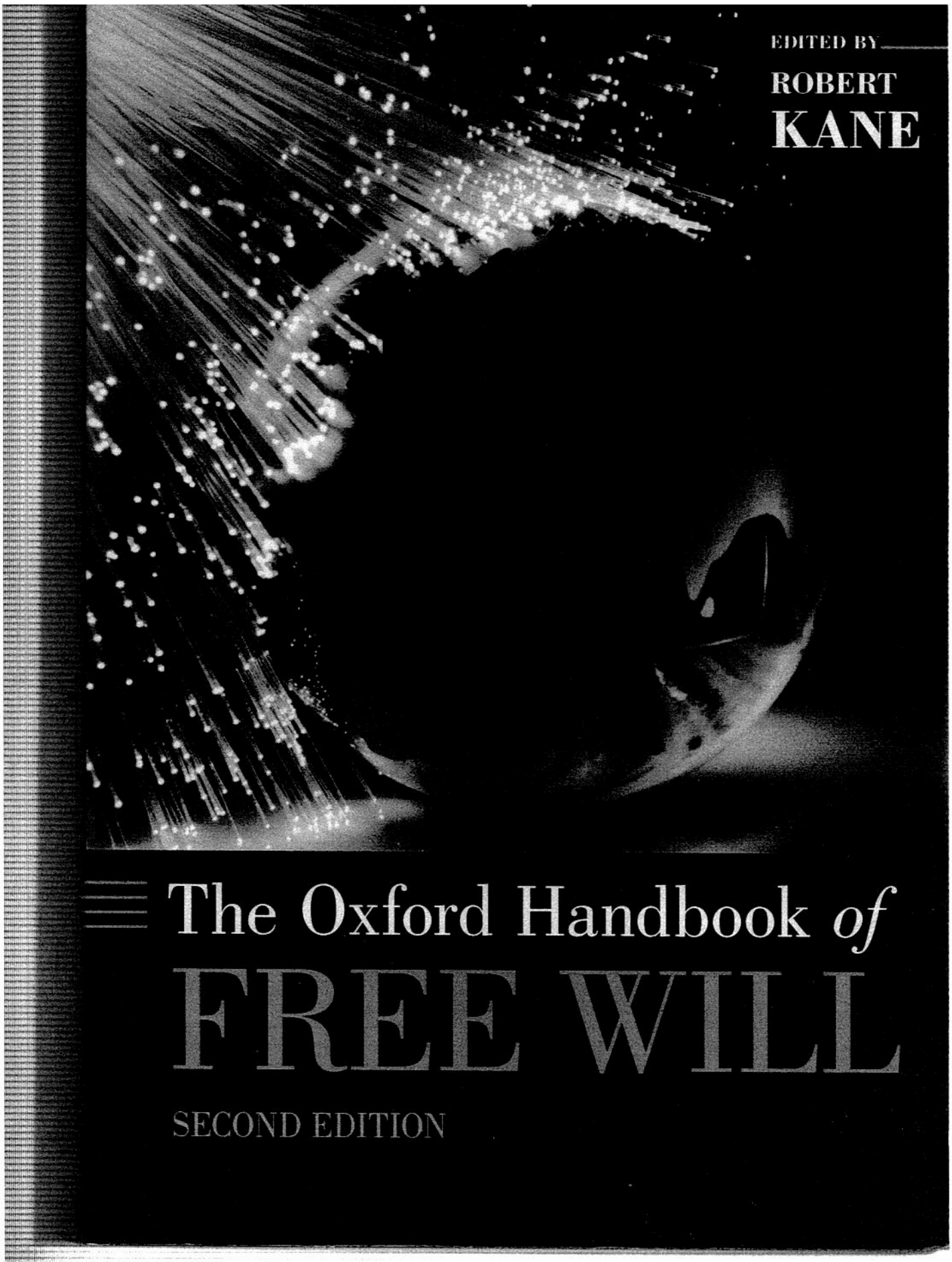
EDITED BY
ROBERT
KANE
The Oxford Handbook of
FREE WILL
SECOND EDITION

CHAPTER 21

FREE WILL, FUNDAMENTAL DUALISM, AND THE CENTRALITY OF ILLUSION*

SAUL SMILANSKY

THIS chapter presents, in outline, a novel position on the issue of free will and compares this position to other, more familiar ones. It consists of two radical proposals, summarizing the main claims that I make in *Free Will and Illusion* (Smilansky 2000). The complexity of both the free-will problem and my claims, and the fact that the latter appear at late stages of the complex train of arguments on the issue, mean that this brief essay is necessarily sketchy.

The first part presents, in a way that should not be particularly controversial, the four questions composing the issue of free will. The second part sets out the first of the two radical proposals just mentioned, a "Fundamental Dualism" according to which we have to be both compatibilists and hard determinists. The third and final part presents the second proposal, "Illusionism," which claims that illusion on free will is morally necessary.

PRELIMINARIES

I believe that the best way to understand the problem of free will is as a conjunction of four questions; the first two are the more familiar ones, but as we shall see, the last two are also crucial:

1. Is there libertarian free will? (Here would be included as subquestions the issue of determinism, the question whether libertarian free will is at all coherent, and so on.) Libertarians of course think that that there is libertarian free will, compatibilists (typically) and hard determinists disagree. This first question is metaphysical or ontological, or perhaps logical.
2. If libertarian free will does not exist, do we still have moral responsibility and the related notions (e.g., desert)? This is, of course, the familiar compatibility question: Is moral responsibility compatible with determinism or, better, is it compatible with the absence of libertarian free will irrespective of determinism? Compatibilism and hard determinism are opponents on the compatibility question. This question, in my opinion, is mostly ethical. The first proposal that I offer, "Fundamental Dualism," relates to this second question, that of compatibility.
3. If we do not have moral responsibility in light of the absence of libertarian free will, or if moral responsibility is at least seriously affected by the absence of libertarian free will, is this good or bad?
4. What can and should we do about the replies to questions 1–3? (Here would be included as subquestions descriptive questions that concern the nature of folk belief and the possibility of radical change, and normative questions such as whether the continuation of widespread false belief can be tolerated.)

I offer pessimistic answers to the first three questions. In response to question 1, I hold that there is no libertarian free will. In response to question 2, I show that compatibilism is insufficient. And in response to question 3, I illustrate why this insufficiency is very important, and indeed tragic. This pessimism has complex and radical implications for question 4. My second proposal, Illusionism on free will, relates to this fourth question.

Why Not Libertarian Free Will?

The most ambitious conception of free will, commonly called "libertarian free will," is the natural place to start exploring the issue of free will. For if we have libertarian free will, then the free-will problem is in effect solved—the questions of compatibility, favorableness, and meta-implications (namely, questions 2–4) become unimportant. However, I believe that robust libertarian free will is impossible. The case against such libertarian free will has already been well stated, and I have nothing substantially original to say about it. One cannot transcend oneself in the robust, libertarian sense. Either we end up with compatibilist free will mixed with some arbitrary indeterminism, which does not give us much[1]; or if a robust libertarianism is attempted, then it must fail (for reasons explained in G. Strawson 1986, 1994, 2002; compare Smilansky 2000, ch. 4, where I offer a moralized version of Strawson's argument). The libertarian project was a worthwhile attempt: It was supposed to allow a deep moral connection between a given act and the person, yet not fall into

being merely an unfolding of the arbitrarily given, whether determined or random. But it is not possible to find any way in which this can be done.

Libertarians will not, of course, be satisfied with this cursory treatment. I am merely expressing here my conviction that these efforts to defend libertarianism cannot succeed and my reasons for this conviction. We shall proceed on the assumption that the conviction is correct from this point onward, and ask what the nonexistence of libertarian free will means.

The First Proposal: The Fundamental Dualism

The Assumption of Monism

It seems to me that a harmful assumption of monism has seriously impaired the debate about free will, and the assumption helps explain why an explicit dualism such as I am presenting has not been previously developed. The assumption of monism is the assumption that, on the compatibility question (question 2 of the four I listed), one must affirm compatibilism or incompatibilism. In fact, there is no conceptual basis for thinking that the assumption of monism is necessary. Compatibilism and incompatibilism are indeed logically inconsistent, but it is possible to hold a mixed, intermediate position that is not fully consistent with either. The compatibility question might be answered in a yes-*and*-no fashion, for there is no conceptual reason why it should not be the case that certain forms of moral responsibility require libertarian free will, whereas other forms could be sustained without it.

There has been much sophisticated work on free will and moral responsibility in recent years, and there is a readiness to consider revisions to common beliefs (see, e.g., Vargas 2005a and Vargas's essay in this volume), but "choosing sides" on the compatibility question, rather than embracing both compatibilism and hard determinism, is still the rule in the debate.

An Economy of Intuitions

Recognizing and rejecting the assumption of monism allows us to stay close to the deepest intuitions on the free-will issue. The intuitive attraction of the assumption of monism is great, but once we cross this "intuitive Rubicon," we see that its parsimony is nothing but false economy. A true "economy of intuitions" cannot afford to sacrifice the strength of either our compatibilist or incompatibilist instincts on the compatibility question. The initially counterintuitive step of rejecting the assumption of monism thus allows us to proceed along a new path that ultimately runs closer to the intuitive field than do either of the conventional monisms.

Why Not Compatibilism?

I will now say something about why I think that compatibilism, its partial validity notwithstanding, is grimly insufficient. First, compatibilism is a widely prevalent view, and hence it is necessary for me to show its inadequacy in order to defend my first proposal of Fundamental Dualism—the proposal that we should be, in a sense, both compatibilists and hard determinists. Second, I need to combat the complacency that compatibilism encourages if my second proposal of Illusionism is to be motivated.

We can make sense of the notion of autonomy or self-determination on the compatibilist level but, if there is no libertarian free will, no one can be ultimately in control, ultimately responsible, for this self and its determinations. *Everything* that takes place on the compatibilist level becomes on the ultimate hard determinist level "what was merely *there*," ultimately deriving from causes beyond the control of the participants. If people lack libertarian free will, their identity, character, motivation, and actions flow from circumstances beyond their control. Being the sort of person one is and having the desires and beliefs one has (including any desire to change oneself), are ultimately something that one cannot control, which cannot be one's fault; it is one's luck. And one's life, and everything one does, is an unfolding of this. Let us call this the "ultimate perspective," which connects to hard determinism, and contrast it with the "compatibilist perspective," which takes the person as a "given" and enquires about her various desires, choices, and actions.

Consider the following quotation from a compatibilist:

> The incoherence of the libertarian conception of moral responsibility arises from the fact that it requires not only authorship of the action, but also, in a sense, authorship of one's self, or of one's character. As was shown, this requirement is unintelligible because it leads to an infinite regress. The way out of this regress is *simply to drop* the second-order authorship requirement, which is what has been done here (Vuoso 1987, 1681; emphasis added).

The difficulty is that there is an *ethical basis* for the incompatibilist ("second-order authorship") requirement, and, even if it cannot be fulfilled, the idea of "simply dropping it" masks how problematic the result may be in terms of fairness and justice. The fact remains that if there is no libertarian free will, a person being punished for her determined but compatibilist-free actions may suffer justly in compatibilist terms for what is ultimately merely her luck. She may spend twenty years in prison as punishment for her compatibilistically free actions, but in the end those actions just follow from being what she is, with her character and motivation set, which were ultimately beyond her control—a state that she had no real opportunity to alter, hence neither her responsibility nor her fault.[2]

A similar criticism applies to other moral and nonmoral ways of perceiving and treating people. The compatibilist cannot maintain the libertarian-based view of moral worth or of the grounds for respect; what she has to offer is a shallower sort

of meaning and justification for such notions. These two charges—of shallowness, and of a complacent compliance with the injustice of not acknowledging lack of fairness and desert—form the backbone of my case against compatibilism.[3]

Why Not Hard Determinism?

If there is no libertarian free will and compatibilism is insufficient, should we not then opt for hard determinism, which denies the reality of free will and moral responsibility in any sense? As I explained in the preceding section and in previous writing (e.g., Smilansky 2000, ch. 3), I favor certain hard determinist intuitions, but I do not think we can go all the way with hard determinism either. Important distinctions made in terms of *compatibilist* free will need to be retained as well if we are to do justice to morally required "forms of life." These distinctions would be important even in a determined world, and they have crucial (nonconsequentialist) ethical significance. For example, the kleptomaniac and the alcoholic differ from the common thief and common drinker in the deficiency of their capacity for local reflective control over their actions (see, e.g., Glover 1970; Fischer 1994; Wallace 1994; and the essay by McKenna in this volume). Likewise, there is a huge difference in the capacity for reflective self-control and for taking responsibility between a baby and a fifteen-year-old (see Smilansky 2005). Here everyone should agree. But the point is that such differences are often morally significant.

A central concept in the free-will problem is that of desert, and doing justice to this concept is the greatest challenge facing the compatibilist. For it seems that if people are in the end ultimately just arbitrarily "given" and have no ultimate control over the sources of their behavior, then they cannot truly deserve and, for example, merit no blame. But I think that this is too quick a judgment, and that we can defend a compatibilist-level sense even of desert. Consider the following:

> *Case of the Lazy Waiter*
> Take the example of a waiter working in a café. He is young and healthy, his pay is reasonable, the hours not too long. There is also a shortage of waiters, so he may feel reasonably certain that he can keep the job as long as he wishes. In short, our waiter has an agreeable job. Part of his earnings depend on tips, and let us assume that the level of tips is directly related to how he serves his customers. This waiter, however, usually does the minimum, is slow and inattentive to the customers, and makes little effort to be helpful or pleasant. There is nothing extreme in his behavior or in the motivation behind it, and he is capable of behaving differently, for example when his relatives come to the café or when a customer known to be particularly generous appears. But normally he is prepared to make no more than the minimal effort required.

It seems to me that there is nothing wrong with a situation in which part of the waiter's pay depends on the tips of reasonable customers, and it is perfectly acceptable for those who have been badly served to make him "pay" for exercising his freedom, by reducing his tip. We can see from his varying daily behavior that it is within his control, and no deep moral concern is aroused if he receives part of his

pay in accordance with his choices. He does not *deserve* the full tip. The intuitive strength of the compatibilist perspective in such a case does not seem to depend on actually seeing the waiter benefit from his laziness; it suffices that such behavior in normal cases is up to the person in question in any compatibilist sense that seems relevant. Moreover, if another waiter is more attentive but it is stipulated that tips cannot vary, then we may want to say that the effort-making waiter is not getting what he deserves. Showing good will and making an effort are meritorious; and the second waiter prima facie deserves to get more than the first. All this can be confirmed if we imagine ourselves as such functioning waiters: We cannot honestly say that we cannot now make more effort, nor explain why we deserve a full tip if we do not.

This is not to deny that in many cases complex factors make it difficult to agree with compatibilist justice. Particularly with extremes of environmental deprivation, or when people's negative behavior does not seem to serve any obvious purpose, the reasons why some people make an effort and others do not will cause us to mitigate our judgment of people. Cases such as the lazy waiter, however, show that there is a legitimate compatibilist basis for talk about desert and justice.

In certain cases the compatibilist perspective is morally salient: The "givenness" of the initial motivation set is not so morally worrisome as long as the person can evaluate it and choose as he wishes. Respect for persons can be satisfied if people get the life they reflectively want in conditions of opportunity for the free exercise of compatibilist control. Consider again the very different situations of a baby versus a typical fifteen-year-old: Both (we may assume) are completely determined creatures, yet the fifteen-year-old has acquired compatibilist capacities that make him liable to be blamed for "behaving like a baby," in a way that a baby should not be. Likewise, unfortunate adults who are ruled by phobias or compulsions know all too well that what matters most is not whether one is determined, but *which* type of determination exists. A person freed from such phobias and compulsions is no less determined, but he or she is manifestly freer. It is unreasonable to conclude that, because we do not have libertarian free will, free will does not exist in any form. It is unreasonable to deny the real differences among people in terms of their compatibilist control over their actions, or to deny the importance of the great differences among social orders as to whether such individual control matters within them.

We want to be members of a Community of Responsibility where our choices will determine the moral attitude we receive, with the accompanying possibility of being morally excused when our actions are not within our reflective control, for instance, when they result from a brain tumor. The exceptions and excuses commonly presented by compatibilism should continue to carry weight. For if people are to be respected, their nature as purposive agents capable and desirous of choice needs to be catered to. We have to enable people to live as responsible beings in the Community of Responsibility, to live lives based largely on their choices, to note and give them credit for their good actions, and to take account of situations in which they lacked the abilities, capacities, and opportunities to choose freely and

are therefore not responsible in the compatibilist sense. (For an elaboration of the case for compatibilism and against hard determinism, see Smilansky 2000, ch. 5, sec. 6.1; 2005.)

The Joint Perspective

The case for a Fundamental Dualism on the compatibility question follows from the partial validity of both compatibilism and hard determinism or, in what amounts to the same thing, from the partial inadequacy of both.

Many of the practices of a community based on compatibilist distinctions, a Community of Responsibility, would be *in one way* unjust, owing to the absence of libertarian free will, which implies that our actions are on the ultimate level not up to us. To hold us responsible for them is, therefore, in one deep sense morally arbitrary. Proper respect for persons and, indeed, common decency and fairness, requires that this be acknowledged. Nevertheless, working according to compatibilist distinctions might be just *in another way*, because they correspond to a sense of being up to us, which exists in many normal situations, but not in cases such as kleptomania or addiction. It would be unjust to treat these different cases in the same way. To fail to create a Community of Responsibility is also in one sense to fail to create a feasible arbitrariness-limiting moral order (i.e., a moral order allowing people control over their lives and their moral status through their actions). This is to fail to show the proper respect for persons. There is thus a basis for working with compatibilist notions of fault and moral responsibility, based on local compatibilist-level control, even though we lack the sort of deep grounding in the "ultimately guilty self" that libertarian free will was thought to provide. Moreover, we are morally required to work in this way. But doing so has often a "hard determinist" moral price in terms of unfairness and injustice. We must recognize both the frequent need to be compatibilists and the need to confront that price.

The immediate reaction of both compatibilists and hard determinists to such a dualistic account is likely to involve an attempt to discredit the other side. "Ultimate" hard determinist injustice does not matter, the compatibilist might say. After all, you yourself tend to admit that we can distinguish between the guilty and the innocent, and meet common intuitions about the way to treat various situations. Why care about "ultimate fantasies" when, if we only remain on the compatibilist level, we can see that people can have control of their lives, reform and even partly create themselves, and behave responsibly? The hard determinist is likely to attack my position from the other side, saying that all talk about moral distinctions and about desert is groundless. Do I not myself admit that everyone is not ultimately responsible for being whoever he or she happens to be and for the actions that result from this? What sort of control is it that is merely an unfolding of preset factors?

Both sets of arguments have a certain degree of strength, which is why I think that any "monistic" position is inadequate. However, once we make a conscious attempt to rid our minds of the Assumption of Monism, we begin to see that there

are aspects of the compatibilist case that the hard determinist cannot plausibly deny; likewise, with the hard determinist case for the compatibilist. Because persons tend to be immediately inclined in one way or the other, and to be overly impressed with the side they are on, they will have to work on themselves *in order to see* the side they are blind to. One must try to conquer one's blind side.

However deeply we might feel that all people are ultimately innocent, it is unconvincing to deny the difference between the control possessed by the common thief and that of the kleptomaniac, and to ignore the moral inadequacy of social institutions that fail to take account of this difference. We have an intimate experience of control (or its lack). If a man believes that he is Napoleon, then he is deluded, and his belief is false. But a woman's belief that her decision to see a movie and not a play is up to her is, even in a deterministic world, well founded on the compatibilist level. True, she did not ultimately create the sources of her motivation, and this hard determinist insight is sometimes important. But her sense of local control is not illusory, although it is only part of the truth about her state. Irrespective of the absence of libertarian free-will, the kleptomaniac is simply not in a condition for membership in a Community of Responsibility in which most people, having the required control, *can be*, and *would want to be* members. The eradication of free-will–related distinctions does not make the hard determinist more humane and compassionate, but rather morally blind and a danger to the conditions for a civilized, sensitive moral environment. We must take account of such distinctions and maintain the Community of Responsibility, in order to respect persons. That hard determinists are indifferent to such distinctions and ethical imperatives is morally outrageous.

Likewise, once we grant the compatibilist that his distinctions have some foundation and are partly morally required, there is no further reason to go the whole way with him. There is no reason to claim that the absence of libertarian free will is of no great moral significance or to deny the fact that, without libertarian free will, even a vicious and compatibilistically free criminal who is being punished is in some important sense a victim of his constitutive circumstances. If we reflect upon the fact that many people are made to undergo acute misery, although the fact that they have developed into criminals is ultimately beyond their control, it is hard to dismiss this matter in the way that compatibilists are wont to do. Likewise, any favorable compatibilist appreciation of persons is necessarily shallow for, in the end, it rests upon factors not under the person's control. One chooses and acts, but this follows from who one is ultimately as a "given." Any factor for which one is appreciated, praised, or even loved is ultimately one's luck. In the end, one does not deserve credit for it. That compatibilists are indifferent to such ultimate arbitrariness, shallowness, and injustice is morally outrageous.

That is the human condition: Our being reflective, choosing creatures who (except in exceptional circumstances) ought to be treated as responsible agents, and who are allowed to live out the consequences of our choices; but we are at the same time determined beings, operating as we were molded. For we are typically capable of (compatibilist) agency, we desire to be able to exercise it, and, indeed, agency is

central to our humanity. But in so being and acting, we are also determined, and may fall victim to the forces determining us, ultimately beyond our control.

I would emphasize that one need not follow my particular sort of dualism zealously: I favor one that takes the notion of respect for persons to be central (see Smilansky 2005). But other varieties can be imagined, varieties that defend the compatibilist and hard determinist perspectives in somewhat different ways than mine. My main aim has been to illustrate the possibility of working within a dualistic framework, and even of looking at the same act or the same agent in dual ways. In fact, because the compatibilist and hard determinist cases have been well presented before, the point I would most like to stress is that we need to try out ways of combining them. We must overcome the temptation to say that there are two contrasting ways of looking at the compatibility question, and that is that. It is not as though we are missing something in order to appreciate that either the compatibilist or the hard determinist perspective is, in the end, the true one. Rather, to be entirely blind to the virtues of either of these two perspectives is to fail to see the case on free will. (For an elaboration of this joint "dualistic" position on the compatibility question, see Smilansky 2000, sec. 6.1, 6.4; 2005; and, focusing on fairness, Smilansky 2008.)

Second Proposal: Illusionism

The Fundamental Dualism, according to which we must be both compatibilists and hard determinists, was my first proposal. Now let us move on to the second. Illusion, I claim, is the vital but neglected *key* to the free-will problem. I am not saying that we need to induce illusory beliefs concerning free will or can live with beliefs that we fully realize are illusory. Both of these positions would be highly implausible. Rather, I maintain that illusory beliefs are in place, and that the role they play is largely positive.

The Problem: Examples

In order to see how illusion is crucial, we must deepen our understanding of the difficulties that (would) prevail without it. Why is there an urgent problem requiring illusion? I will give a number of illustrations.

The Question of Innocence

The danger concerning respect for moral innocence is serious. Even in a world without libertarian free will, the idea that only those who deserve to be punished in light of their free actions may be punished is a condition for any civilized moral order (see Hart 1970). "Punishment" of those who did not perform the act for which they are "punished," or did so act but lacked control over their action in any sense,

is the paradigm of injustice. Yet although the justification for these values does not require libertarian free will, in practice they might be at risk were the lack of libertarian free will internalized. Consider Anscombe's (1981) passionate remark, "[I]f someone really thinks, *in advance*, that it is open to question whether such an action as procuring the judicial execution of the innocent should be quite excluded from consideration—I do not want to argue with him; he shows a corrupt mind" (40). Surely, if a moral system that seeks to preserve and guard vigilantly the common conception of innocence is to function well, such a sentiment should be prevalent, almost instinctive. But if this is to be so, the worst thing one could do would be to point out that, ultimately, none of this makes sense—because the "guilty" are, ultimately, no more guilty than others.

The Ultimate Conclusion as a Practical Threat to the Taking of Responsibility

We cannot tell people that they must behave in a certain way, and that it is morally crucial that they do so, but then, if they do not, turn and say that this is (in every case) excusable, given whatever hereditary and environmental influences have operated in their formation. Psychologically, the attribution of responsibility to people so that they may be said to justly deserve gain or loss for their actions requires (even *after* the act) the absence of the notion that the act is an unavoidable outcome of the way things were—that it is ultimately beyond anyone's control. Morality has a crucial interest in confronting what can be called the "Present Danger of the Future Retrospective Excuse," and in restricting the influence of the ultimate hard determinist level. To put it bluntly: People, as a rule, ought not to be fully aware of the ultimate inevitability of what they have done, for this will affect the way in which they hold themselves responsible. The knowledge that such an escape from responsibility, based on retrospective ultimate judgment, will be available in the *future* is likely to affect the *present* view and hence cannot be fully admitted even in its *retrospective* form. We often want a person to blame himself, feel guilty, and even see that he deserves to be punished. Such a person is not likely to do all this if he internalizes the ultimate hard determinist perspective, according to which in the actual world nothing else could in fact have occurred—he could not strictly have done anything else except what he did do.

A Sense of Value

From the ultimate hard determinist perspective, all people—whatever their efforts and sacrifices—are morally equal, that is, there cannot be any means of generating a "real" moral value. There is a sense in which our notion of moral self-respect, which is intimately connected with our view of our choices, actions, and achievements, withers when we accept the ultimate perspective. From the latter any sense of moral achievement disappears, as even the actions of the "moral hero" are simply an unfolding of what he happens to be. *No matter how devoted he has been, how much effort he has put in, how many tears he has shed, how many sacrifices he has willingly suffered.*

True appreciation, deeply attributing matters to someone in a sense that will make him worthy, is impossible if we regard him and his efforts as merely determined products. All that the compatibilist can offer us in terms of value, although important in itself, is meager protection from the cold wind that attacks us when we come close to reaching the luck-imbued ultimate level. There is an obvious practical danger here to our moral motivation, which can be named the "Danger of Worthlessness." But the concern is not only to get people to function adequately as moral agents; it also has to do with the very meaning we can find in our lives.

Consider a parent who, for decades and at great sacrifice, conscientiously devoted herself to her children. On the ultimate level, real appreciation and a real sense of her individual attainment, and the respective emotions and reactions, make no sense. From this lofty level, all her hard choices, her continuous and overwhelming efforts, her suffering and her triumphs, become imbedded in what must be seen only as an inevitable chain of events beyond her control. What room, then, for a special sense that *here* one did "the best that one could?" What room for the pride of overcoming, an achievement which is never even thought about as being simply *given?* What room for the deep appreciation and gratitude of others? (see Nagel 1986, ch. 7; Kane 1996, ch. 6; Smilansky 2000, sec. 6.4, 7.3, 7.4, ch. 8, 9; 2005.)

Remorse and Integrity

If a person takes the ultimate hard determinist perspective, it is not only others who seem to disappear as moral agents—but in some way the person herself is reduced. In retrospect, her life, her decisions, that which is most truly her own, appear to be accidental phenomena of which she is the mere *vehicle*, and to feel moral remorse for any of it, by way of truly *owning up* to it, seems in some deep sense to be misguided. Feelings of remorse are inherently tied to the person's self-perception as a morally responsible agent (see G. Taylor 1986 107).

It sharpens our focus not to dwell upon those happy to escape accountability, but rather upon those who have good will. Here we confront a third "danger," which can be termed the "Danger of Retrospective Dissociation." This is the difficulty of feeling truly responsible after action. One can surrender the right to make use of the "ultimate level excuse" for normative reasons and yet perhaps not be able to hold oneself truly responsible (e.g., to engage in remorse), if one has no grain of belief in something like libertarian free will. One can, after all, accept responsibility for matters that were not up to one in any sense, such as for the actions of others, for normative reasons. But here we are dealing with a different matter: not with the acceptance of responsibility in the sense of "willingness to pay," but rather with feeling compunction. Compunction seems conceptually problematic and psychologically dubious when it concerns matters that, it is understood, ultimately one could not in fact help doing. But such genuine feelings of responsibility (and not mere acceptance of it) are crucial to being responsible selves! We see here the intimacy of the connection between moral and personal integrity and illusion about free will; hence the danger of realizing the truth also looms large.[4]

Illusion as a Solution

What Is Illusionism?

Illusionism is the position that illusion often has a large and positive role to play in the issue of free will. In arguing for the importance of illusion, I claim that we can see why it is useful, that it is a reality, and why by and large it ought to continue to be so. Illusory beliefs are in place concerning free will and moral responsibility, and the role they play is largely positive. Humanity is fortunately deceived on the free-will issue, and this seems to be a condition of civilized morality and personal value.

The sense of "illusion" that I am using combines the falsity of a belief with some motivated role in forming and maintaining that belief—as in standard cases of wishful thinking or self-deception. However, it suffices that the beliefs are false and that this conclusion would be resisted were a challenge to arise. It is not necessary for us to determine the current level of illusion concerning free will.

The importance of illusion flows in two ways from the basic structure of the free-will problem. First, indirectly, from the Fundamental Dualism on the compatibility question—the partial and varying validity of both compatibilism and hard determinism.[5] Second, illusion flows directly and more deeply from the meaning of the very absence of the grounding that libertarian free will was thought to provide.[6] We cannot live adequately with the dissonance of the two valid sides of the Fundamental Dualism, nor with a complete awareness of the deep significance of the absence of libertarian free will. We have to face the fact that there are basic beliefs that morally ought not to be abandoned, although they might destroy each other, or are even partly based on incoherent conceptions. At least for most people, these beliefs are potentially in need of motivated mediation and defense by illusion, ranging from wishful thinking to self-deception.[7,8]

Why Is There a Need for Illusion?

Our previous results supply the resources for an answer to this question. Let us concentrate, for the sake of simplicity, on the concerns of a strictly "practical" point of view: If the basic ethical concern for free will is taken seriously, and the absence of libertarian free will is to some extent realized, then the ultimate-level (i.e., hard determinist) conclusion might tend to dominate in practice. This might pose a danger—especially because of the human tendency to oversimplify—to the "common form of life" and to the strict observance of the corresponding moral order. Many people would find it hard to think that the partial compatibilist truth *matters*, as in fact it ethically does, if they realized the sense in which both the compatibilistically free and unfree were merely performing according to their mold. And this might lead them to succumb to "pragmatic" consequentialist temptations, or unprincipled nihilism. The ultimate hard determinist perspective does not leave sufficient moral and psychological "space" for compatibilistically defensible reactive attitudes and moral order. The fragile compatibilist-level plants need to be defended from the chill of the ultimate perspective in the hothouse of illusion. *Only if we do*

not see people from the ultimate perspective can we live in a way that compatibilism affirms—blaming, selectively excusing, respecting, being grateful, and the like.

A number of distinct alternative positions conflict with my claim for the positive necessity of illusion. I cannot consider them in detail, but will note them in brief. Honderich (1988), Waller (1990), Pereboom (2001), and Sommers (2007) have explored some of the less pessimistic implications of hard determinism (see the essays of Pereboom, Honderich and Russell in this volume). Bok (1998) has made a similar sort of contribution, although she would not agree to being characterized as a hard determinist. Waller, Pereboom and Sommers reject Illusionism (as a reply to the forth question of the free-will problem, as I presented it at the beginning of this essay), by giving an optimistic reply to the third question, which asks how it would be to live without moral responsibility. They think that we should embrace hard determinism as a basis for social and personal life. Honderich and Bok, although less extreme, also think that we can work things out, and accommodate the absence of libertarian free will. I argued above that belief in compatibilism cannot suffice, and needs to be backed up by libertarian beliefs. And as to the possibility of living without any sort of belief in the existence of free will and moral responsibility, this has been shown to be an unreal and dangerous fantasy; due to the partial viability of compatibilism, it is also unnecessary. There is no substitute for the paradigmatic ethical requirement for control and responsibility as the central basis for moral life, a civilized social order, and self-respect. There is still room for revision of the sort that the optimistic hard determinists propose, but this, I claim, would be only on the margins of our lives and hence would not seriously affect my claims.

Also potentially problematic for Illusionism is the sort of Humean "no need to worry" position proposed by P. F. Strawson in the seminal essay "Freedom and Resentment" (1962). Unlike the optimistic hard determinists, Strawson does not think that we would be better off without moral responsibility (as to the third question), but holds (on my fourth question) that our natural "reactive attitudes" guarantee the status quo. Because there is not going to be much change in any case, there would be no need for illusion. For all the importance of our natural proneness to free-will–assuming reactions, I think that there would be considerable room for worry if people became aware of the absence of libertarian free will, which they may do. Strawson is here complacent: History is full of examples where even a minimal control requirement was not a condition for blame and punishment, and an adequate moral and interpersonal order (e.g., forbidding the "punishment" of the innocent) is not guaranteed. Likewise, we cannot take for granted that many crucial personal practices and attitudes would be maintained if belief in desert were to be shaken. Once again, the points that I made above show that there is a real need for concern. (For a detailed critical examination of Strawson's position, see the essay of Paul Russell in this volume.)

Within these parameters, there is a prima facie case for a large measure of motivated obscurity regarding the objections to libertarian free will: If libertarian assumptions *carry on their back* the compatibilist distinctions, which would not be adhered to sufficiently without them, an illusion that defends these libertarian

assumptions seems to be just what we need. The ethical importance of the paradigm of free will and responsibility as a basis for desert should be taken very seriously. But the ultimate perspective threatens to present it as a farce, a mere game without foundation. Likewise with the crucial idea of a personal sense of value and appreciation that can be gained through our free actions: This is unlikely to be adequately maintained by individuals in their self-estimates, nor warmly and consistently projected by society. A broad loss of moral and personal confidence can be expected. The idea of action-based desert, true internal acceptance of responsibility, respect for the efforts and achievements of others, deep ethical appreciation, self-respect, excusing the innocent—all these and more are threatened by the "leveling" or homogenizing view arising from the ultimate perspective. Illusion is crucial in pragmatically safeguarding the compatibilistically defensible elements of the "common form of life." But we can see the role of illusion not only as a "functional" assistant that keeps the compatibilist and the hard determinist insights separate from one other (hence making it easier for us to function despite the dissonance) but as an *enabling* condition for the most important elements of our view of ourselves, for our ability to maintain our integrity, a sense of value, and indeed perhaps our very sense of self. *Illusion is, by and large, a condition for the actual creation and maintenance of adequate moral and personal reality.*

How Does Illusion Function?

When illusion plays a role, things can, in practice, work out. Two schematic answers can be given. First, it may be suggested that significant realization of the absence of libertarian free will, and concern about ultimate-level injustice, for example, can remain more or less limited to part of the population, such as those more concerned with policy making (the "elitist solution"). This maintains the widespread intuition that, for instance, punishing the innocent is an abomination whereas criminals deserve "to pay," although permitting the amelioration of treatment, resulting from the recognition by some that ultimately things are not morally that simple. Complex patterns of self-and-other deception emerge with elitist solutions. But, in addition to all the general practical and moral difficulties with elitist solutions, which we cannot consider here, elitism can in any case be only a partial solution concerning free will. For, in the light of the reasons that we have already seen, people not under illusion would have great difficulty in functioning.

The major solution will be one where, because two beliefs are vaguely but simultaneously held, yet commonly not set side by side (often, I claim, due to the presence of a motivated element), their contrary nature is not fully noticed. When acting in the light of compatibilist insights, we suspend the insights of the ultimate hard determinist perspective (of which we in any case are likely to be only dimly aware). We *keep ourselves* on the level of compatibilist distinctions about local control and do not ask ourselves about the deeper question of the "givenness" of our choosing self; resisting threats to our vague, tacit libertarian assumptions. As Bernard Williams (1986, 194) has put it, "To the extent that the institution of blame

works coherently, it does so because it attempts less than morality would like it to do ... [it] takes the agent together with his character, and does not raise questions about his freedom to have chosen some other character." The result is not philosophically neat, but that, after all, is its merit: The original reality was that we face practical dangers if we try to make our (incoherent or contradictory) conceptions too clear, but that we ought not to give any of them up entirely. Illusion, in short, allows us to have "workable beliefs."

Moreover, even those elements of our self-understanding that are purely illusory (and not compatibilistically grounded reality that is merely assisted by illusion) may nevertheless be very important in themselves. Illusion not only helps to sustain independent reality, but also is in itself a sort of "reality," simply by virtue of its existence. The falseness of beliefs does not negate the fact that they exist for the believer. This is the way in which the illusory libertarian beliefs exist. In addition to supporting the nonillusory compatibilist basis, illusion also *creates* a mental reality, such as the particular sense of worth, appreciation, and moral depth associated with belief in libertarian free will, which would not exist without it. The effects of this illusory "reality" are frequently positive. In a number of ways, illusion serves a crucial creative function, which is a basis for social morality and personal self-appreciation, in support of the compatibilist forms and beyond them.[9]

Conclusion

There is no libertarian free will: People can have limited compatibilist forms of local control over their actions, but not the deep form of a robust libertarian free will. Whether determinism is completely true or not, we cannot make sense of the sort of constitutive self-transcendence that would provide grounding for the deep sense of desert and moral responsibility that libertarian free will was thought to supply. Our common libertarian assumptions cannot be sustained.

The implications of the absence of libertarian free will are complex, and the standard assumption of the debate, the Assumption of Monism, according to which we must be either compatibilists or hard determinists, is false. We saw why "forms of life" based on the compatibilist distinctions about control are possible and morally required but are also superficial and deeply problematic in ethical and personal terms. I claimed that the most plausible approach to the Compatibility Question is a complex compromise, which I called Fundamental Dualism. The idea that either compatibilism or hard determinism can be adequate on its own is untenable.

In my view, a philosophical understanding of the free-will problem is in large measure understanding how the compatibilist and hard determinist levels coexist and that they are both important normatively. Respect for persons requires, on the one hand, respect for agency, the establishment of a moral order, a Community of Responsibility, based on individual control and responsibility, and the attempt at

human empowerment within compatibilist spheres; on the other hand, it requires recognition of the limitations and shallowness of these spheres, where everything that goes on is ultimately an unfolding of the given, beyond anyone's control.

There is partial nonillusory grounding for many of our central free-will–related beliefs, reactions, and practices, even in a world without libertarian free will. But in various complex ways, we require illusion in order to bring forth and maintain them. Illusion is seen to flow from the basic structure of the free-will issue, the absence of libertarian free will, and the Fundamental Dualism concerning the implications. We cannot live with complete awareness of the truth on the free-will problem, and it would be dangerous to try to do so. Revealing the large and mostly positive role of illusion concerning free will not only teaches us a great deal about the free-will issue itself but also posits illusion as a pivotal factor in human life.

NOTES

I am very grateful to Robert Kane, Tomis Kapitan, Iddo Landau, Paul Russell, and Daniel Statman for helpful comments on drafts of this essay.

1. For example, in Robert Kane's sophisticated form of libertarianism (Kane 1996 and see his essay in this volume), the agent's character stimulates effort resulting in a choice. However, crucially, *whether* this effort bears fruit in a given direction (goes one way or another) is in fact arbitrary and not under the agent's control.

2. Compatibilists may argue at this point that if libertarian free will is incoherent, then it is not "worth wanting" in the first place, and we need not make such a fuss about the absence of the impossible (e.g., Dennett 1984; S. Wolf 1987, 59–60; Frankfurt 1988, 22–23 and see the essay of Dennett and Taylor in this volume). This, however, is a red herring. The various things that free will could make possible, if it could exist, such as deep senses of desert, worth, and justification, *are* worth wanting. They remain worth wanting (and regretting) even if something that would be necessary in order to have them cannot be coherently conceived (see Smilansky 2000, 48–50).

3. Compare Wiggins (1973), Berlin (1980), G. Strawson (1986), Kane (1996, ch. 2, 6), Smilansky (2000, chaps. 3, 6; 2003; 2005). For criticism of my "argument from shallowness," see, e.g., McKenna (2008, 192–98).

4. For an elaboration of the "problem" requiring illusion, see Smilansky (2000, ch. 7–9); I consider in some detail the question of remorse of a formerly abusive parent in Smilansky (2005).

5. The partial validity of compatibilism does not reduce the need for illusion so much as it complicates and adds to it. This follows from the need to guard the compatibilist concerns and distinctions, in light of the contrast and dissonance with the ultimate hard determinist perspective.

6. This means that the Fundamental Dualism leads to Illusionism, but Illusionism does not depend on the dualism. Even a hard determinist, if she is not implausibly optimistic, should recognize the general case for Illusionism.

7. I consider the possibility for exceptions, which I call "Unillusioned Moral Individuals" (UMIs), in Smilansky (2000, sec. 10.2). See also the related discussion of the problematic role of philosophers in sec. 11.4).

8. I discuss Strawson's position in detail in Smilansky (2000, ch. 9; 2001). There are many good discussions of P. F. Strawson's position: see, e.g., G. Strawson (1986, ch. 5); Watson (1987b); Klein (1990, ch. 6); and Russell (1992; 1995, ch. 5). McKenna and Russell (2008) is a collection of important essays on "Freedom and Resentment." Russell's essay in this volume provides a critical overview of Strawson's view and related "reactive attitude" views that have emerged from it.

9. For an elaboration of illusion as "a solution," see Smilansky (2000, sec. 7.4 and ch. 8).