

ters 4 and 5, I single out the one against logical determinism, or fatalism. The topic has been much written about, often enough in terms of Aristotle's famous discussion of "the sea battle tomorrow" in *De Interpretatione*, which is also Felt's point of departure (pp. 41-42). He brings this difficult matter as close to his readers as it can be brought in so short a book: there are many concrete examples, and they are happily woven into the argument. The argument itself turns on (a) four assertions about truth and the future (pp. 43, 47, 49, 53) and (b) three principles of being and becoming (pp. 56-57).

The positive—as distinct from critical—part of Felt's book is a doctrine of causality designed to show that the agent's freedom consists in an exercise of causality rather than in the absence of causality (chaps. 6, 7, 9). The three principles just mentioned are central to that doctrine, so I give here the simplified version of them Felt gives in chapter 9: "(A) *The past is definite and settled....* (B) *The present creates the definiteness of new settled actuality out of a width of possibility for incorporating the past....* (C) *Only the activity of real agents creates the definiteness of settled actuality*" (pp. 101-2). Felt's use of the principles depends upon the distinction he makes, in chapter 6, between subject-time, the time experienced by agents, and object-time, the time of the physicist. This chapter owes something to St. Augustine and something to Bergson. The free causality of agency, Felt says, has the same temporal structure as that of lived time, or subject-time: it "takes time but is not itself temporally divisible" (p. 84). What Felt calls subject-time I prefer to call *act-temporality* and to insist on a metaphorical applicability of such temporality to the causality operative in nature in general. I do not think Felt would disagree with that, but the expression 'subject-time' suggests a more radical cleft between the causality of agents and the causality of the rest of nature than I think he has in mind. But this is perhaps no more than a terminological disagreement. As one who has argued, over many years, that if we are to understand human nature we must develop a more ample doctrine of causality, one in which human action itself is exemplary, I welcome the appearance of this compact and accessible book. An earlier version of chapter 8, "Becoming, Freedom, and the Problem of Evil," appeared in this journal (I [1984], 370-77).

*The Metaphysics of Free Will: An Essay on Control*, by **John Martin Fischer**. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994. Pp ix and 273. \$21.95.

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John Fischer has been an active participant in discussions of freedom, determinism, foreknowledge, and moral responsibility for nearly two decades. Fischer's articles and anthologies on freedom and determinism, freedom and foreknowledge, and moral responsibility are a tremendous resource to philosophers working on these topics. In this wide-ranging and clearly written book, Fischer adds to this already impres-

sive body of work. The book is essential reading to philosophers working on any aspect of free will or moral responsibility.

I cannot hope to discuss every topic covered in Fischer's book, so I will discuss what I take to be some of its more problematic features beginning with Fischer's original and important discussion of moral responsibility.

Many philosophers have worried that determinism, if true, threatens moral responsibility. Here is one way of articulating this worry. Determinism seems to imply that if S does A, then there were no alternative possibilities open to S, and it is plausible to think that S is morally responsible for doing A only if there were alternative possibilities open to S. So it is plausible to think that determinism is incompatible with moral responsibility.

In his well-known paper "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," Harry Frankfurt challenged the claim that alternative possibilities are necessary for moral responsibility.<sup>1</sup> Here is one Frankfurt style case. Jill decides on her own to steal a book from the library and she does so knowing full well that stealing is wrong. Unbeknownst to Jill, had she shown any inclination at all to refrain from stealing the book, Jack would have intervened and forced her (employing a credible threat to her life) to steal the book. But Jack did not force Jill's hand; Jill stole the book on her own. Many have thought that cases like this are cases of moral responsibility without alternative possibilities.

One response to Frankfurt cases is what Fischer calls the "flicker of freedom" response. This response accepts that agents in Frankfurt cases are morally responsible but denies that there are no alternative possibilities in the cases. For example, the flicker strategist might claim that though Jill is morally responsible for her actions, it was open to Jill to decide not to steal the book. Of course, had Jill done this, Jack would have forced her to steal the book. The point, though, is that this alternative possible course of events represents a genuine alternative possibility to the actual series of events. So, according to the flicker theorist, the Jack / Jill case is not a counterexample to the claim that alternative possibilities are necessary for moral responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

Fischer enters the debate at this point with an interesting suggestion: "I am willing to grant to the flicker theorist the claim that there exists an alternative possibility here; but my basic worry is that this alternative possibility is not sufficiently *robust* to ground the relevant attributions of moral responsibility." (140) Fischer's claim is interesting and potentially important to discussions of the nature of moral responsibility. But in the present context, as I will explain, it is hard to see why Fischer even thinks that this claim is relevant.

After some discussion of the claim quoted above, Fischer notes that he sees no reason to accept that it is in virtue of the alternative possibilities present in Frankfurt cases (or other conditions necessary for the presence of the alternative possibilities) that agents in Frankfurt cases are morally responsible. Fischer then declares that we have reached a "Dialectical Stalemate" - a situation "common in philosophy" in which one side (Frankfurt's, according to Fischer) has fallen "just short" of

establishing its position and it is hard to see how further non-question begging progress can be made.

Whatever one thinks of Fischer's metaphilosophical views, I think Fischer is wrong to claim that the present debate, at least as he presents it, has reached a Dialectical Stalemate. Frankfurt hoped to show that even if determinism rules out alternative possibilities, this does not automatically rule out moral responsibility. And Frankfurt, at least as portrayed by Fischer, hoped to show this by providing counterexamples to the claim that moral responsibility requires alternative possibilities. On Fischer's diagnosis, flicker theorists show that Frankfurt cases involve alternative possibilities and so are not successful counterexamples. I see no stalemate here; if Fischer's analysis is correct, the flicker theorists have decisively won this debate.

Fischer seems to think that rebutting Frankfurt is not enough for the flicker theorists:

"[I]t is not enough for the flicker theorist ... to identify an alternative possibility. Although this is surely a first step, it is not enough to establish the flicker of freedom view, because what needs also to be shown is that these alternative possibilities ... *ground* our attributions of moral responsibility." (140) But the flicker of freedom response is nothing more than a response to Frankfurt. One wanting to respond to Frankfurt needn't go on to do any of the things Fischer claims the flicker theorist must. So while Fischer's claims and arguments about what grounds moral responsibility are interesting and potentially important, it is misguided to think that these claims support Frankfurt.

Let me now turn to one puzzling part of Fischer's discussion of arguments for the incompatibility of free will and determinism. Such arguments typically employ what Fischer calls a transfer principle. One plausible transfer principle states that "If S has no choice about P, and Q is a logical consequence of P, then S has no choice about Q." Fischer wonders if plausible incompatibilist arguments *must* employ a transfer principle. Fischer argues that this is not the case by formulating an incompatibilist argument that does not explicitly rely on a transfer principle and then challenging incompatibilists to show that the argument somehow implicitly relies on one.

Unfortunately for Fischer, an incompatibilist needn't respond in this way, for Fischer presents a formally invalid argument and therefore does not offer a *plausible* non-transfer incompatibilist argument. Fischer admits, in a note, that his argument is invalid but says that nonetheless he "believe[s] that it is reasonable to accept its conclusion, given both its formal structure and the *content* of its premises" (228). I can make no sense of this claim.<sup>3</sup> If Fischer wishes to argue that incompatibilists needn't rely on any transfer principle, he would be well advised to offer a formally valid incompatibilist argument as evidence of this (the issue of whether the argument somehow presupposes a transfer principle would of course remain).

Fischer's admission that this central argument of Chapter Three is invalid is not the only case in which Fischer's notes seem to reveal that Fischer is aware of important difficulties for his central claims. I will briefly mention two further examples of this.

In Chapter Eight, Fischer begins to develop a sophisticated and novel account of moral responsibility. The punch line of Fischer's analysis is that weak reasons-responsiveness is sufficient for moral responsibility, where an action is weakly reasons-responsive just in case there exists a "possible world in which there is a sufficient reason to do otherwise, the agent's actual mechanism operates, and the agent does otherwise" (166). In note 8, however, Fischer admits that this account incorrectly implies that an insane killer whose mechanism is responsive only to bizarre (yet sufficient) reasons for not killing is morally responsible. Fischer admits that his account is refuted by the counterexample but says little more than that the account "needs to be refined" and that he does "not think the revision will be radical" (243).<sup>4</sup>

Similarly disappointing is Fischer's choice of opponents in Chapter Two which assesses two challenges to incompatibilist transfer principles. Fischer discusses only weak challenges from Michael Slote and Anthony Kenny, neither of which directly addresses the critical transfer principles for power necessity. Fischer is well aware, as evidenced by note 31 of the chapter, of more serious challenges to incompatibilist transfer principles from philosophers including David Widerker, Linda Zagzebski, and Kadri Vihvelin, but he does not discuss this important body of literature.

Before concluding, I should say something to readers of this journal who may be primarily or exclusively interested in the issue of human freedom and divine foreknowledge. The focus of this book is on causal determinism, so while Fischer certainly devotes a healthy number of pages to discussing the foreknowledge debate, most are spent developing parallels between foreknowledge and causal determinism. Not much space is devoted to the special intricacies of the foreknowledge debate, the exception being Fischer's helpful discussion of hard and soft facts which makes several original points and includes a response to critics of further inquiry into the nature of this extremely complex distinction. Readers interested exclusively in the foreknowledge problem can certainly skip several chapters of Fischer's book, but cannot afford to ignore the entire book.

Let me close by stressing that I have focused on what I take to be some of the weaknesses of Fischer's fine book. On the whole the book is closely argued, well written and is mandatory reading for metaphysicians concerned with the will.<sup>5</sup>

#### NOTES

1. *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (December 1969), 829-839.
2. A second reading of Frankfurt style cases is that they are counterexamples to the claim that morally responsibility for *P* requires alternative possibilities to *P*. On this reading, the Frankfurtian would claim that though there are alternative possibilities present in the Jack / Jill case, Jill is responsible for stealing the book even though there were no open alternative possibilities to her doing so. This suggests that even if determinism rules out alternative possibilities to the actions one performs, one might still be moral-

ly responsible for the actions. The standard anti-Frankfurtian reply is to deny that Jill is responsible for stealing the book and instead claim that she is responsible for stealing it *on her own* and that there were open alternatives to this action.

3. Professor Fischer informs me that he explains and defends his claim further in "Free Will and the Modal Principle," *Philosophical Studies*, forthcoming.

4. In *Responsibility and Freedom: An Essay on Control*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 1996) Fischer and Mark Ravizza discuss and defend this account of moral responsibility.

5. Thanks to Peter van Inwagen, Tim O'Connor, Chris Hill, Alicia Finch and Gordon Pettit for helpful discussion of Fischer's book.

*Is Christianity True?*, by **Hugo A. Meynell**. Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 1994. Pp.ix and 149. \$24.95 (Cloth); \$14.95 (Paper).

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The author exhibits his skill in issues connected with philosophy of religion to test out a clear intention: "that the Christian has good reason for believing what she characteristically believes"(1). He is not directly concerned with "what is for many people the crucial issue, belief that there is a God"(2), because he had already dealt with that issue in a book published in 1982: *The Intelligible Universe*. The topics he covers, in order, are (1) the sufficiency (or not) of secular morality, (2) other religions, (3) incarnation and atonement, (4) historical criticism of the bible, (5) divine triunity, and (6) "life after death." I mention these topics since the argument of the book is inevitably topical and at root rhetorical, since criteria for "good reasons" are notoriously difficult to delineate. He does want to undertake the task, however, rather than rest with accepting belief in God as "properly basic," since he does not accept counsels of despair regarding ways of determining "which beliefs are rational"(3), or at least more rational than others. Indeed, he contends "that the most cogent reason for believing in the existence of a God is the openness of the universe to investigation by the human mind"(3)—the burden of the earlier book.

But finding reasons for believing in a God, and finding commensurate reasons for believing what Christians believe are two quite distinct endeavors. And the latter, which organizes this work, is of necessity even more diffuse and rhetorical in character than the first. For one thing, what are to count as "good reasons" seem quite contingent, and hence nearly totally dependent on the attractiveness of the presentation to someone for whom the journey of faith may not previously have been an option. Nor is there a canonical set of topics available, which accounts for the diversity of approach which such endeavors might take. Meynell's approach will probably strike most readers as "old-fashioned," both in the topics proposed and the manner of dealing with them. The most arresting chapter in the book (to this reviewer) was the