

PHIL 3923H: Honors Colloquium on Free Will  
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van Inwagen, Chapter 4, §4.1–4.3

#### 4.1

- In this chapter van Inwagen presents 3 arguments for compatibilism: the Paradigm Case Argument, the Conditional Analysis Argument, and the *Mind* Argument.

#### 4.2

- The Paradigm Case Argument, in the first instance, is an argument for the conclusion that ‘free will’ must refer (to its paradigm examples). This argument, attributed to Antony Flew, is presented on p. 107. How can this line of argument then be augmented so that it becomes an argument for *compatibilism*? Flew offers 2 routes, given as (a) and (b) on pp. 107–108.

- The (b) route is an instance of the Conditional Analysis Argument. So, it will be put aside and handled later. So, van Inwagen will focus on the (b) line of reasoning:

We have seen that scientific investigation could not show that none of us has free will. But scientific investigation could show that determinism is true. Hence, if free will were incompatible with determinism, scientific investigation could show that we have no free will, which is impossible. (107–108)

- The story involving Martians manipulating human beings, (M), is supposed to show that the (b) line of reasoning is invalid. (109)

- The gist of his criticism of the Paradigm Case Argument is that the advocate of such an argument seems to be claiming that only the most superficial of observable properties are relevant to determining the appropriateness of free will ascriptions.

Indeed, it is hard to see how, if the Paradigm Case Argument is correct, *any* features of a given proposition could be relevant to the question whether that proposition is compatible with free will, other than those of its features that would make a difference in how things *appear* to us. But there just obviously *are*

other features of a proposition than these that are relevant to whether that proposition is compatible with free will, or, indeed, compatible with any given proposition. (111)

#### 4.3

- The Conditional Analysis Argument depends on a certain theory of abilities — *conditionalism*. This theory takes ability talk (e.g., “could have”) as disguised conditionals (if-then statements).

For example, according to one version of conditionalism, what the proposition

Smith could have saved the drowning child

“really means” is

If Smith had chosen to save the drowning child, Smith would have saved the drowning child. (114)

- Van Inwagen thinks there are plenty of counter-examples to any of the proposed conditional analyses (and that there would be plenty for any analysis offered in that spirit). Take the example of Smith on p. 115, who, due to a phobia, cannot eat red candies. The conditional theory gets things wrong here. Van Inwagen gives another such counter-example on p. 119 — Smith in a coma.
- Van Inwagen denies that ability statements are disguised conditionals, and he sees his Chapter III arguments for incompatibilism as offering reasons for rejecting any such (compatibilist friendly) conditional analysis of ability talk. Take Rule  $\beta$  from Argument 3, for example. Van Inwagen holds that  $\beta$  would conflict with the ideal conditional analysis. But, he insists that  $\beta$  is independently more plausible than even the ideal conditional analysis. This is discussed on pp. 122–125.