

REPLY TO HELLER

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We thank Heller for his gracious concession and engaging comments. We should also note that we think highly of his intriguing article, despite our criticisms.

In his response, Heller concedes that actions must meet certain conceptual requirements in order to be free. He agrees that genuinely free acts can't be controlled by van Inwagen's Martians or by our evil neurosurgeons. But he claims that 'cats' and other Putnamian-kind terms are also subject to minimal conceptual conditions. And he believes that, unlike Martian-controlled behavior, the acts ordinarily called 'free' probably satisfy the conceptual requirements for being genuinely free. He therefore reaffirms his principal methodological conclusion that the compatibility issue is empirical, like the issue of whether cats are mammals.

We hate to press our luck. But we don't think Heller's revisions succeed in rescuing his proposal.

Let's begin with his attempt to maintain a strong analogy between the semantics of 'free action' and 'cat'. We continue to see a substantial disanalogy here. Consider his example in which Earthly cats are robotic and Martian cats are organic. Are the Martian animals really cats? Putnam and Kripke would say No, and we're inclined to agree. Whether the Martian creatures are cats depends on how they relate to Earthly paradigms. The situation is different in the case of free acts: whether Martian acts are free does *not*

depend on how they relate to Earthly paradigms. So, Heller's analogy remains problematic.

That problem is symptomatic of a general difficulty with Heller's approach: his revised proposal, like the original one, ascribes a Putnamian role to Earthly paradigms in the semantics of the phrase 'free action'. But, as the Martian examples reveal, that's wrong. And Heller's *semantic* proposal is the basis for his *methodological* claim, that the compatibility issue is empirical. So, since his semantic proposal is false, his methodological claim remains unsupported.

Suppose Heller were correct that 'free acts' is a Putnamian-kind term, the extension of which is subject to minimal conceptual conditions. Even so, the question remains: Is *being determined* a conceptual requirement for *being free*? On Heller's view, that conceptual issue is a *preliminary* to empirical investigation. And in one sense that's right: settling the conceptual issue would leave open empirical questions about the nature of free action. But the conceptual issue is not a *preliminary* to the central, enduring issue that divides compatibilists and incompatibilists. The conceptual issue *is* the central, enduring issue that divides those camps. You *could* construe the compatibility issue as one concerning the "minimal conditions" of free action. But that changes nothing of substance. In particular, it does nothing to show that the dispute between compatibilists and incompatibilists is empirical. Nor does it threaten the relevance of conceptual counterexamples. In short, Heller's minimal-conditions requirement renders his revised proposal too weak to support his methodological conclusion.

Of course, that doesn't imply that his methodological conclusion is false. But we see no reason to suspect that science will justify or undermine the ordinary practice of

calling certain acts 'free' and others 'un-free'. Perhaps an underlying physiological distinction between those two sorts of action will be discovered. But if both sorts are causally determined, how would such a discovery tell in favor of compatibilism (or incompatibilism)? It wouldn't. And we can't imagine what sort of empirical discovery *would* settle the compatibility issue. Perhaps we're just unimaginative. But, at least for now, a skeptical attitude toward Heller's methodological conclusion seems warranted.

It's indisputable that many acts are ordinarily called 'free'. It's debatable whether those acts are *genuinely* free in a sense that's compatible with determinism (or to be more accurate, with the facts about the causation of action). Heller agrees, but argues that the debate must be settled by empirical science, not philosophy. But his argument fails, because it's based on a false hope that Putnamian insights about kind terms transfer to the term 'free action'. Thus, we think Heller's approach to the compatibility issue, like Flew's before it, should be abandoned, and not refined. If Heller wants to show that the compatibility issue is empirical, then he must supply a wholly different argument for that intriguing thesis.