# RELATIVE MODALITY AND THE ABILITY TO DO OTHERWISE*

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## ABSTRACT

*It is widely held that for an action to be free it must be the case that the agent can do otherwise. Compatibilists and incompatibilists disagree over what this ability amounts to. Two recent articles offer novel perspectives on the debate by employing Angelika Kratzer's semantics of 'can'. Alex Grzankowski proposes that Kratzer's semantics favour incompatibilism because they make valid a version of the Consequence Argument. Christian List argues that Kratzer's semantics favour a novel form of compatibilism. I argue that List's compatibilist application of Kratzer's semantics faces problems not faced by Grzankowski's incompatibilist employment of them. On the other hand I argue that Kratzer's semantics make Grzankowski's version of the Consequence Argument valid only at the cost of rendering it dialectically useless. Contrary to both views Kratzer's semantics do not appear to add substantial weight to either side of the compatibilism/incompatibilism dispute.*

**Keywords:** *free will, determinism, compatibilism, consequence argument*

## 1.Introduction

It is widely held that in order for an action to be free, it must be the case that the agent can do otherwise.[1] A major dispute between compatibilists and incompatibilists concerns what this ability amounts to. Compatibilists offer various interpretations of 'can' on which the agent's ability to do

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[1] For an influential argument against this principle not discussed here see Frankfurt (1969).

otherwise is compatible with determinism. Incompatibilists typically argue that these interpretations are implausible and that intuitively an agent's ability to do otherwise is not compatible with determinism.

Two recent articles offer novel perspectives on this debate by employing Angelika Kratzer's semantics of 'can'. Alex Grzankowski proposes that Kratzer's semantics are favourable to *incompatibilism* because on a natural application they make valid a version of the Consequence Argument for the incompatibility of determinism and the ability to do otherwise. Christian List on the other hand argues that Kratzer's semantics make natural a novel form of *compatibilism*.

Section I, introduces Grzankowski's and List's positions. Section II argues that List's employment of Kratzer's semantics faces problems not faced by Grzankowski's. Section III argues that on the other hand Kratzer's semantics make valid Grzankowski's version of the Consequence Argument only at the cost of rendering it dialectically useless. Contrary to both views Kratzer's semantics do not appear to add substantial weight to either side of the compatibilism-incompatibilism dispute.

## Section I

In this section I introduce the new perspectives on the compatibilist/ incompatibilist dispute offered by Grzankowski and List by employing Kratzer's semantics of 'can'. Grzankowski's discussion focusses on a version of the Consequence Argument.[2] The argument is supposed to show that determinism is incompatible with the ability to do otherwise. Suppose that at $t1$ Jones puts his hand down on a desk. Let $L$ denote the laws of nature and $P$ the conjunction of propositions describing some past time ($t0$) before any humans were born. The argument proceeds:

1.  No one at $t1$ can change the past (i.e. make it the case that $P$ is false).
2.  No one at $t1$ can change the laws (i.e. make it the case that $L$ is false).
3.  One's present actions are the necessary consequences of $P$ and $L$ (i.e. determinism is true).
4.  No one at $t1$ can change the fact that her present actions are the necessary consequences of $P$ and $L$.
5.  One cannot at $t1$ change the fact that her present actions occur at $t1$ (e.g. Jones cannot raise his hand at $t1$).

This is the Consequence Argument as Grzankowski presents it. I understand premiss 3 to say that every possible world that shares the

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[2] Grzankowski (2014, 174) adapts this version from Kane (2005).

actual past at $t0$ (where P obtains) and the actual laws of nature (where L obtains) also shares one's actual present actions. This looks like an uncontroversial correlate of determinism. Premises 1, 2, and 4 are at least very plausible. Where these premises are accepted it is supposed to follow that Jones cannot act otherwise than he does at $t1$.[3]

Although the Consequence Argument is attractive, there exist compatibilist-friendly readings of 'can' on which it is invalid. A classic compatibilist move analyses 'can' as a conditional such that 'A can φ' is true if and only if had A wanted or tried to φ, A would have φ'ed. (E.g. Hume 1978, 73; Ayer 1954; Hobart 1934.) On this reading the compatibilist can grant the premises of the argument whilst denying the conclusion.[4]

Incompatibilists are typically unpersuaded by the conditional analysis of 'can', as well as more recent compatibilist-friendly analyses.[5] But they do not typically specify an alternative. It is here, Grzankowski suggests, that Kratzer's semantics can provide a new perspective, favourable to incompatibilism:

> At some point, incompatibilists must offer an acceptable positive account of 'can' that allows for a valid statement of the argument. Fortunately linguists and philosophers of language have on hand a very plausible proposal… Indeed, it is surprising that the proposal has not been carefully considered in this context. Interestingly, the news is, I believe, good for incompatibilists, (Grzankowski 2014, 179)

According to Kratzer the terms 'can' and 'must' always have an additional argument of the form 'in view of X', sometimes explicitly stated, sometimes not.[6] Consider for example the sentence:

[A] 'The ancestors of the Maori must have arrived from Tahiti.'

Following Kratzer [A] might usefully be paraphrased:

[A*] 'In view of what is known, the ancestors of the Maori must have arrived from Tahiti.'

For an example with 'can' consider:

[B] 'You can open by moving your knight.'

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[3] The argument also depends on a controversial suppressed premiss 'rule β', discussed in section III. Cf. Johnson and McKay (1996) and Van Inwagen (2000).

[4] For detail see (Grzankowski 2014, 177-8).

[5] E.g. the 'New Dispositionalism' of Fara (2008) Smith (2003) and Vihvelin (2004) critically discussed by Clarke (2009) and Whittle (2010).

[6] My exposition follows Grzankowski (2014, 180-2). For some refinements see Kratzer (1977).

This might be paraphrased:

> [B*] 'In view of the rules of chess, you can open by moving your knight.'

Unparaphrased there seems to be a distinct deontic 'can' and 'must', an epistemic 'can' and 'must', a 'can' and 'must' of legal chess moves and so forth. But when paraphrased as above it is possible to treat these terms univocally as quantifiers over worlds restricted by the 'in view of' clause. For example, [A*] restricts our attention to the set of worlds in which everything that is known about the actual world obtains. [A*] is true if and only if all the worlds in this set are ones where the ancestors of the Maori arrived from Tahiti. [B*] restricts our attention to the set of worlds in which the rules of chess are obeyed. [B*] is true if and only if there is *some* world in that set where you open by moving your knight. So on Kratzer's semantics:

> **CAN:** 'S can φ' is true *iff* there exists a world in the restricted set in which S φ'es.

Grzankowski argues that by employing Kratzer's semantics the incompatibilist can show that the Consequence Argument is valid. To do so it is necessary to decide what restricted set of worlds 'can' introduces in the premises and conclusion. Plausibly, Grzankowski suggests, this should be the same set of worlds throughout. For otherwise something like a fallacy of equivocation will result (cf. Grzankowski 2014, 182, fn. 23). It should also be a set that captures the intuitive truth of the premises. Grzankowski proposes:

> Incompatibilists can offer a straightforward way, in the present dialectic, of making the premises true—simply focus on the worlds in which the laws are as they actually are and the past is as it actually is. (Grzankowski 2014, 183)

Where *W* denotes that set the argument can be represented as follows:

> K1. In view of *W*, one cannot change the past.

> K2. In view of *W*, one cannot change the laws of nature.

> K3. Our present actions are the necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature.

> K4. In view of W, one cannot change the fact that our present actions are the necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature.

> K5. In view of W, one cannot change the fact that one's present actions occur (say, that Jones raises his hand at *t*1).

Understood in this way the argument appears to be valid. As Grzankowski says:

> In actuality, Jones puts his hand on the desk. Take the set *W*, recalling that those worlds are worlds in which the laws are as they are in the actual world and the past is as it is in the actual world. If determinism is true, are any of those worlds ones in which Jones now raises his hand…? No, for the worlds under consideration are deterministic worlds that have the same laws and the same past as the actual world. (Grzankowski 2014, 184)

According to Grzankowski, Kratzer's semantics are therefore favourable to incompatibilism. For they offer an independently plausible reading of 'can' that makes valid this version of the Consequence Argument.

If Grzankowski's were the only thinkable way of employing Kratzer's semantics in this context, then they certainly would favour incompatibilism. In another recent article however, Christian List has defended a novel version of compatibilism that also appeals to Kratzer's semantics. To this I now turn.

List's strategy is to draw a distinction between our understanding of things at the *physical level* and our understanding at the *level of agents*.[7] He proposes:

> When we are interested in whether a particular action is possible for an agent … the appropriate frame of reference is not the one given by fundamental physics, but rather the one given by our best theory of human agency. (List 2014, 161)

List introduces the following model (List 2014, 162-5). Let all physically possible states of the world be denoted by *S*; all points in time by *T*. A *world history* is a temporal path through *S*, represented by a function *h* that assigns to each time, *t* in *T*, a state $h(t)$ in *S*. $\Omega$ denotes the set of world histories that are possible according to the actual laws of physics. Propositions can be defined as subsets of world histories in $\Omega$. A proposition *p* is true in exactly those world histories that it contains. The truncated part of a history *h* up to a time *t* is denoted $h_t$. Determinism is then defined as follows:

**Determinism:** For any two histories *h*, *h'* in $\Omega$ and any point in time *t* in *T*, if $h_t = h'_t$, then $h = h'$.

List defines an accessibility relation *R* between histories:

**Accessibility:** For any histories *h*, *h'* in $\Omega$ and any point in time *t* in *T*, $hR_t h'$ if and only if $h'_t = h_t$.

That is, two histories stand in the accessibility relation at a certain time, if and only if they share their pasts up to that time. Possibility can then be defined as follows:

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[7] In this respect List's theory resembles that of (Kenny 1975).

'It is possible that *p*' is true in history *h* at time *t* if and only if *p* is true in some history *h*' that is accessible from *h* at time *t*.

List's model has the consequence that if determinism obtains then for any history *h* and time *t* there is no proposition *p* such that '*p* is possibly true' and '*p* is possibly false' are both true in *h* at *t*.

List introduces an equivalent set of apparatus for the agential level. An 'agential state' is the state of an agent and her macroscopic environment as specified by our best theory of human agency. $\underline{S}$ denotes the set of all possible agential states so specified. States in $\underline{S}$ supervene on those in S:

There exists a (many-to-one) mapping σ from *S* into $\underline{S}$ such that each physical state *s* in *S* determines a corresponding agential state σ(*s*) in $\underline{S}$, but the same agential state $\underline{s}$ in $\underline{S}$ may be realized by more than one physical state *s* in *S*. (List 2014, 164)

List adds that for any physical history *h* there is a corresponding agential history $\underline{h}$, where $\underline{h}$ is some function from the set of time points *T* into the agential state space $\underline{S}$. The agential state $\underline{h}(t)$ is determined by applying the mapping σ to the physical state *h*(*t*). So for any physical history *h* in Ω, the corresponding agential history is σ(*h*) = $\underline{h}$. List uses $\underline{Ω}$ to denote 'the set of all possible agential histories thus determined'. (List 2014, 165) (It will be important in what follows that the agential histories in $\underline{Ω}$ are exactly those that supervene on physically possible physical histories.) It is then possible to define the agential accessibility relation $\underline{R}t$:

**Agential accessibility:** For any histories $\underline{h}$, $\underline{h}$' in $\underline{Ω}$ and any point in time *t* in *T*, $\underline{h}\underline{R}_t\underline{h}$' if and only if $\underline{h}_t = \underline{h}'_t$.

That is, two histories stand in the *agential* accessibility relation at a certain time, if and only if they share their pasts *as described by our best theory of human agency* up to that time.[8] Finally List states the following truth conditions for agential possibility where a proposition $\underline{p}$ is defined as a subset of $\underline{Ω}$:

It is (agentially) possible that $\underline{p}$' is true in history $\underline{h}$ at time *t* if and

[8] Agentially accessible histories will be those that contain the future actions that an agent is able to perform. In this respect List's notion of agential accessibility resembles that employed by Lehrer (1976, 253–254) and others. Lehrer also understands what an agent can do in terms of a restricted set of possible worlds, and like List he argues that the relevant set of worlds can include physically impossible actions. For Lehrer this is because the physical possibility of a future action does not count as an 'advantage' to those who would perform it. I do not think Lehrer's arguments would convince an incompatibilist, but to show this would require a separate discussion. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for the EuJAP for pointing out the parallels between Lehrer's position and those discussed here.

only if **p** is true in some history **h**' that is agentially accessible from **h** at time *t*. (List 2014, 165)

With this system in place List observes:

> While any physical history (in Ω) may have only one possible continuation at any time, namely the history itself, there can be two or more distinct agential histories (in **Ω**) that coincide up to time *t* but then branch out in different directions.

Therefore, on List's model the agential possibility to do otherwise appears to be compatible with physical determinism.

Of course, this does not mean that, agential possibility as defined by List's model, on a reasonable interpretation, captures what we are interested in when we say that the ability to do otherwise is a necessary condition for free will. List argues, however, that if we adopt Kratzer's semantics of 'can' this is very plausible.[9]

Recall that on Kratzer's semantics 'can' signifies possibility relative to something or other that is 'in view'. List proposes that when we are interested in an agent's ability to do otherwise the situation that is naturally 'in view' is not that described by physics but that described by our best theory of agency—a theory he imagines to resemble advanced psychological decision theory and improved extensions of folk psychology (List 2014, 168). He considers the example:

> 'Brutus could have chosen not to murder Caesar.'

The normal interpretation of this, List claims, is not:

> 'Brutus could have chosen not to murder Caesar in view of the full physical history of the world up to the act in question.'

But rather:

> 'Brutus could have chosen not to murder Caesar in view of his capacities as an agent.'

As List notes, Kratzer herself appears to be in agreement. Having introduced her semantics, Kratzer recalls hearing a philosopher claim that it makes no sense for a judge to ask himself whether a murderer 'could have acted otherwise'. For *obviously* given the whole situation of the crime (plus determinism) the murderer could not have acted otherwise. According to Kratzer:

> [The philosopher] misunderstood the judge: what the judge probably meant was: Given such and such aspects of the situation,

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[9] List (2014, 167-9) offers a further 'top down' argument for attributing to agents the ability to do otherwise. Since my interest is whether Kratzer's semantics support List's version of compatibilism I pass over this argument here.

   could the murderer have acted otherwise than he eventually did?
   (Kratzer 1977, 343)

Grzankowski advised that in the context of the ability to do otherwise, the restricted set of worlds introduced by 'can' is that in which the actual past and the actual laws of nature are fixed. According to List the relevant set is, on the contrary, that where 'our best agential description of the situation' is fixed. If List is correct, the ability to do otherwise looks compatible with determinism after all. In the next section I raise some concerns for List's position.

## Section II

The first thing we should note is that Kratzer's semantics, even in the context of the Consequence Argument, seem to be neutral as regards compatibilist versus incompatibilist readings of 'can'. In support of his reading Grzankowski says:

   In that dialectic, the premises give one the sense that the focus is on scenarios in which the past and laws are as they actually are. (Grzankowski 2014, 186)

But on the contrary we can easily find a reading that adopts Kratzer's semantics on which those premises indicate no such thing. Suppose for example that we are committed to the classical view that '$A$ can $\varphi$' is true if and only had $A$ wanted to $\varphi$, $A$ would have $\varphi$'ed. In that case we might adopt Kratzer's semantics, but insist that in this context the supressed 'in view of' clause introduces the restricted set $W'$ containing precisely the nearest world or worlds where $A$ wants to $\varphi$. On such a reading the Consequence Argument is again invalid.

So it seems that the premises of the Consequence Argument indicate that we are focussed on scenarios in which the past and the laws are as they actually are only if we *presuppose* Grzankowski's choice of $W$ as the restricted set of worlds introduced by 'can'. But as Grzankowski himself foresees, this choice is just what the compatibilist is likely to dispute (see, Grzankowski 2014, 187-9). And so Kratzer's semantics do not seem of themselves to favour an incompatibilist-friendly reading of the argument.

Of course, the conditional analysis of 'can' is widely regarded as failing to capture the sense of 'can' relevant to the ability to do otherwise. The question addressed in this section is whether List's proposal gives the compatibilist a plausible alternative. I argue that it does not.

Stated informally List's position looks attractive. It is surely true that we usually have in mind matters closer to decision theory and folk psychology than to fundamental physics when considering whether an agent could act otherwise. There is therefore some initial plausibility to the thesis that it is the situation described at this level that we naturally have 'in view' in this context. But when we try to be precise about the

alternative restricted set recommended by List's theory, the apparent naturalness of his position is substantially compromised.

On List's model a proposition **p** is agentially possible at a time *t* in a history **h** if and only if **p** is true in some history **h**' that is agentially accessible to **h** at *t*. The history **h**' is agentially accessible to **h** at *t* if and only if **h**$_t$ = **h**'$_t$. So the restricted set recommended by List's theory will contain only worlds whose histories according to our best agential description coincide with that of the actual world up to the time in question. Further, an agential world history **h** is defined as a function from the points in time *T* into the agential state-space **S**. And so since **S** contains only states specified by our best theory of human agency the restricted set recommended by List's theory will also be one whose members involve no states ruled out by our best theory of agency. This set of worlds can be defined as follows:

> **[W'']** A world *w* belongs to the restricted set *W''* if and only if *w* shares its agent-level past with the actual world, and *w* contains no states that are ruled out by our best theory of agency.

Suppose we grant that *W''* contains no worlds where one changes the past, or the laws of nature, or the fact that one's present actions are jointly necessitated by these. Given determinism the premises of the Consequence Argument would then be true. But *W''* might nonetheless contain worlds where one's present actions are other than they actually are. For some members of *W''* whilst sharing their agent-level past with the actual world may differ in their physical-level past, agential histories being multiply realisable. In those worlds one's present actions might also differ. Therefore where 'can' is read as introducing the restricted set *W''* the Consequence Argument is invalid.

But *W''* is not a plausible alternative to *W*. To see this, suppose we ask: can Jones, at *t*, build a perpetual motion machine? Now it seems at least intuitive that our best agential theory does not rule this out. Folk psychology and rational choice theory are, one supposes, silent on such matters. It is hard to imagine how any advance in them would change this. Surely we would not have to revise our theories of agency if it were discovered that such machines are physically possible after all.

So intuitively, *W''* *does* contain worlds in which Jones builds a perpetual motion machine. But of course, it is highly implausible that in the sense of 'can' relevant to the ability to do otherwise, Jones can build such a machine. After all we would not hold him morally responsible for failing to do so, and the natural rationale for this is that it was not possible. *W''* then looks problematic. As List himself says, "by admitting possibilities ruled out by our scientific understanding of the world… the claim that the agent can do certain things loses its bite" (List 2014, 160).

How might List reply to this? The obvious move appeals to the fact that when List defines agential possibility, he does so for a proposition **p** that is itself defined as a subset of **Ω**. **Ω**, recall, is the set of all agential histories determined by applying the mapping σ to members of Ω. And Ω denotes the set of physical world histories that are possible according to the laws of physics. This is supposed to model the supervenience relation between the agential level and the physical level. Now of course, there is no *physically possible* history in which Jones builds a perpetual motion machine. As such there are no members of **Ω** in which Jones builds such a machine. So presumably on List's model the proposition 'Jones builds a perpetual motion machine' corresponds to the empty set. And if so the same applies to *any* agent-level proposition whose supervenience base is ruled out by the laws of physics. If we take into account these features of List's model it looks like the restricted set that it recommends is not *W''* after all, but something like:

> **[*W'''*]** A world *w* belongs to *W'''* if and only if *w* shares its agent-level past with the actual world; *w* contains no states that are ruled out by our best theory of agency; and *w* involves no breach of the actual laws of physics.

Where the restricted set introduced by 'can' is *W'''* it is no longer true that Jones can build a perpetual motion machine. For *W'''* contains no world in which he does so. But the move from *W''* to *W'''* ought to worry us. For the restricted set introduced by 'can' according to List is supposed to be that determined by our best agential description of the situation—the situation as described by some advanced version of decision theory or folk psychology. But surely *W'''* goes significantly beyond this. For *W'''* also rules out *every* physically impossible world. It would be surprising if even a very advanced theory of agency were up to this. With *W'''* the sense that we are deploying 'can' at a purely agential level begins to erode.

Neither is *W'''* otherwise unproblematic. For whilst perpetual motion machines have been avoided we can imagine a similar problem arising. To see this suppose that physical level states include, amongst others, *J*-events and *K*-events. It is a physical law or a consequence thereof that *J*-events never occur later than *K*-events. Using List's model we might say that for any history *h* in the set of physically possible histories *Ω*, and for any time *t*, if the state *h(t)* involves a *K*-event then for any time *t1* later than *t*, the state *h(t1)* involves no *J*-event. Suppose further that some action supervenes necessarily on *J*-events, perhaps for example, building a *J*-machine. Suppose finally that some person, Jones, wants to build a *J*-machine at some time *t*, but that at an earlier time *t-1* a *K*-event has occurred. Can Jones build a *J*-machine at *t*?

Where the restricted set introduced by 'can' is *W'''* the answer seems to be 'yes'. Unlike perpetual motion *J*-events are not physically impossible. So worlds in which the proposition 'Jones builds a *J*-machine at *t*' is true need not breach the laws of physics. And since *K*-events are physical states, there is no reason why some worlds in which 'Jones builds a *J*-machine at *t*' is true should not share their agent-level past with the actual world. Neither is there any reason to suppose that 'Jones builds a *J*-machine at *t*' involves states ruled out by our best theory of agency. If this is right it seems that there will be members of *W'''* where Jones builds a *J*-machine at *t*.

But the conclusion that Jones can build a *J*-machine at *t* in the scenario described is surely wrong. For the earlier *K*-event will make any effort to do so futile. And note that the judgement that Jones cannot build the *J*-machine at *t* is something that incompatibilists and classical compatibilists *agree on*. For on the conditional analysis of 'can' 'Jones can build a *J*-machine at *t*' is true only if in the nearest worlds where Jones wants to build a *J*-machine at *t* he does so. But in the example Jones *actually* wants to build a *J*-machine at *t*. And so it follows *ex hypothesi* that in the nearest possible world where Jones wants to build a *J*-machine at *t* he *does not do so*. Where *W''* is replaced by *W'''* the restricted set recommended by List's model remains objectionable.

Might we avoid this problem by refining the restricted set further? It is not clear that we can. The obvious move would be to try to incorporate the virtues of the conditional analysis into List's model. It might be hoped that in doing so we will get the best of both (restricted sets of) worlds. But this too seems problematic. Suppose we say that for any action φ, the 'can' in '*A* can φ' introduces the restricted set:

> **[*W''''*]** A world *w* belongs to *W''''* if and only if *w* shares its agent-level past with the actual world; *w* contains no states that are ruled out by our best theory of agency; *w* involves no breach of the actual laws of physics; and *w* is one of the nearest possible worlds where *A* wants to φ.

*W''''* avoids giving Jones the ability to build either perpetual motion machines or *J*-machines after *K*-events. And it is difficult to come up with further problem cases of that kind. But *W''''* faces a different difficulty, at least in the context of List's discussion. For if we ask why it is that *W''''* contains no worlds where Jones builds a *J*-machine at *t*, the answer appears to be because worlds in which he does so are 'less near' to the actual world than those in which he does not. And what makes them less near is precisely that no *K*-event has occurred in them prior to *t*.

But since *K*-events are physical events, that is a difference at the physical level only. So it is not clear how $W''''$ could be the restricted set specified by our 'best agential description of the situation' when our agential descriptions are not supposed to be able to take account of differences at the physical level only.

And even if this is possible, it seems to me necessary to acknowledge that if $W'''$ compromised the initial naturalness of List's position then $W''''$ does so even more. It seems both surprising and highly unprincipled that physical possibility should determine agential possibility to such a high degree as it does on $W''''$ whilst becoming conveniently irrelevant just when, as a compatibilist, one would like to be able to speak of alternative possibilities. On one occasion van Inwagen dismisses the conditional analysis as follows:

> I will say only this—and this is nothing new. The compatibilist's "move" is contrived and *ad hoc*; it is "engineered" to achieve the compatibility of free will and determinism. (van Inwagen 2000, 10)

If this worry is to be taken seriously with respect to the conditional analysis it is even more pressing with respect to an employment of Kratzer's semantics engineered to yield $W''''$.

### Section III

Kratzer's semantics applied to the premises of the Consequence Argument need not yield a reading on which the restricted set is Grzankowski's recommendation, *W*. But a consideration of the alternatives recommended by List's employment of Kratzer's semantics runs into serious difficulties. Such difficulties result where agential possibility extends beyond physical possibility. This gives us some reason to prefer Grzankowski's recommendation of *W,* on which no such divergences can occur.

Of course this does not mean that some further refinement of List's position will not avoid these difficulties, or that there is not some distinct compatibilist-friendly employment of Kratzer's semantics that I have left untried. Within the limited purview of the present discussion however Grzankowski's position seems to come out on top.

In this final section I should like briefly to qualify this judgement by noting one respect in which the conclusions Grzankowski draws overstate the favourability of Kratzer's semantics to the incompatibilist. I have in mind the claim that, even if the compatibilist does produce a plausible alternative restricted set to *W,* the incompatibilist has made progress, since:

'Incompatibilists needn't simply wait for the next conditional analysis or merely rely on the intuitive force of the argument as given in plain English. Rather, they have a positive semantics and a plausible restricted set of worlds that validates their argument.' (Grzankowski 2014, 12)

It seems to me that on the contrary this progress comes at the significant price of rendering Grzankowski's version of the Consequence Argument dialectically useless. My reasons for thinking so are as follows.

I take it that an argument for a thesis is dialectically useful only if it has the potential to persuade someone who does not already accept that thesis of its truth. For Grzankowski's version of the Consequence Argument the hope is to show that if one cannot change the past or the laws, then given determinism (the fact that one's present actions are the necessary consequence of the past and the laws) one cannot change one's present actions either. This move relies on the controversial 'rule β': if there is nothing we can now do to change X, and Y is a necessary consequence of X, then there is nothing we can now do to change Y.

If our interlocutor insists that the restricted set introduced by 'can' in this context is W', W'''' or some other compatibilist-friendly set, she will judge the argument invalid. For although these restricted sets contain no worlds where one changes the past or the laws, they do contain worlds where one's present actions differ from what they actually are. That is, if the relevant set is W', W'''' or similar, rule β is false. And the Consequence Argument itself cannot be expected to persuade an interlocutor who thinks it invalid that she has erred in judging W', W'''' or similar to be the relevant restricted set. If this is correct the argument appears to have no potential to persuade such an interlocutor of its conclusion.

Of course as Grzankowski points out, where the restricted set is *W* the Consequence Argument is valid. But if our interlocutor accepts that *W* is the relevant restricted set, the argument is also superfluous. For even a compatibilist will readily accept that if we restrict our attention to worlds that share the actual past and the actual laws, then given determinism, those worlds must share our present actions as well. So where *W* has already been agreed upon as the restricted set introduced by 'can' in the phrase 'can do otherwise', the need for rule β and for premises concerning our inability to change the past or the laws—in short the Consequence Argument—is obviated.

It is therefore difficult to imagine what kind of interlocutor the Consequence Argument, as interpreted by Grzankowski, could persuade. Until we get her to accept that *W* is the relevant restricted set she can reject the Consequence Argument as invalid. If she *does* accept that *W* is the relevant restricted set, the Consequence Argument ought to be

redundant.[10] And so it looks like Kratzer's semantics render the Consequence Argument dialectically useless. It would seem strange to consider *this* result favourable to incompatibilism. Perhaps it does point the way ahead for the compatibilist/incompatibilist dispute however. If we accept Kratzer's semantics, we must turn our attention away from the venerable Consequence Argument, and seek new arguments that speak for or against candidate sets of possible worlds, such as those put forward in section 2.[11]

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[10] The argument is sound only according to a reading of 'can' that would yield its conclusion directly. It is natural to understand this as a form of question-begging. In their discussion of the Consequence Argument Fischer and Pendergraft (2013, 593) offer a stronger criterion on which an argument is question-begging only if it contains a premiss that its proponent has no reason to accept apart from a prior acceptance of the conclusion. I do not claim that the Consequence Argument is question-begging in this sense. For, where the requisite reading of 'can' is treated as a supressed premiss, there may well be reasons for accepting it other than a prior acceptance of incompatibilism. Indeed, the argument of section 2 above provides modest grounds for doing so. My claim is only that once the supressed premiss has been accepted, the conclusion of the Consequence Argument follows immediately, without need for the argument itself. It is this that makes the Consequence Argument dialectically useless. Again I owe thanks to an anonymous reviewer for the EuJAP for pointing out the relevance of Fischer and Pendergraft's discussion here.

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