

## VAN INWAGEN'S CONSEQUENCE ARGUMENT

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Intro Metaphysics

An untouchable proposition is a true proposition that is such that nothing that anyone is or ever has been able to do *might* have the consequence that it was false. (van Inwagen, p. 452)

**Necessity rule** Any necessary truth is untouchable

**Conditional rule** If  $p$  is untouchable and “if  $p$  then  $q$ ” is also untouchable, then  $q$  is untouchable as well

$F$ : any proposition that describes a free action—or anyway, an action we'd normally think of as a free action—say, that I raised my right hand

$L$ : a proposition describing all the laws of nature

$P_0$ : a proposition completely describing reality at some time in the distant past—in the time of the dinosaurs, perhaps

The argument:

1. If determinism is true, then “If  $L$ , then: if  $P_0$ , then  $F$ ” is a necessary truth
2. If “If  $L$ , then: if  $P_0$ , then  $F$ ” is a necessary truth then it's untouchable
3.  $L$  is untouchable
4. If  $L$  and “If  $L$ , then: if  $P_0$ , then  $F$ ” are both untouchable, then “if  $P_0$ , then  $F$ ” is untouchable
5.  $P_0$  is untouchable
6. If  $P_0$  and “if  $P_0$ , then  $F$ ” are both untouchable, then  $F$  is untouchable
7. Therefore, if determinism is true then  $F$  is untouchable

**van Inwagen's definition of determinism** *The laws plus the past necessarily imply the future.* That is, if  $P_0$  is a proposition that completely describes the entire universe at some time,  $L$  is a proposition describing the laws of nature, and  $q$  is any proposition about the world after the time of  $P_0$ , then “if  $L$ , then: if  $P_0$  then  $q$ ” is a necessary truth