

HARD DETERMINISM

Ted Sider, Metaphysics

1. THE ARGUMENT FROM CHOICE

But I can, after all, break through the network of thoughts, sensations, and impressions that surrounds me by resolutely saying “I will not commit murder!” (Rée, 16)

- (i) Sometimes people choose to do and then do things that are difficult
 - (ii) If sometimes people choose to do and then do things that are difficult, sometimes people commit acts that are uncaused
 - (iii) If sometimes people commit acts that are uncaused, then Determinism is false
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- (iv) Therefore, Determinism is false

Interlude: some logical concepts

An *argument* is a series of sentences, the last of which is called the *conclusion*, and is supposed to follow logically from the rest, which are called *premises*.

Explaining an argument:

- (a) Define technical terms
- (b) Give justifications for the premises

Evaluating an argument:

- (a) Is it valid? (*Valid*: it would be impossible for the argument’s premises to be true and its conclusion false)
- (b) Is it sound? (*Sound*: the argument is valid, and all of its premises are true)

A *sound argument* **always** has a true conclusion.

We must . . . not lose sight of the fact that a resolute “I will” or “I will not” is . . . a necessary result; it does not by any means exist without a cause. . . [It is] possible for a resolute “I will not commit murder” to assert itself. But is it conceivable that this “I will not” should occur without a sufficient cause? Fear, pity, or some other feeling, which in turn is an effect, overcomes him and gives rise to this “I will not” before the cause of the murder has yet become complete. Perhaps Christian missionaries have had an influence upon him; hence the idea of a deity that will visit retribution on him for murder comes before his soul. . . (Rée, 16-17)

2. ARGUMENT FROM THE FEELING OF FREEDOM

- (i) Sometimes we feel as if we act uncausedly
- (ii) If (i), then sometimes our acts are uncaused
- (iii) If sometimes our acts are uncaused, then Determinism is false
- (iv) Therefore, Determinism is false

We do not perceive the causes by which our volition is determined, and that is why we believe that it is not causally determined at all. (Rée, 19)

Perhaps the one I took was a bit closer to me, or some other trivial matter, which would be very difficult to discover and is of the kind that almost never enters our consciousness, tipped the scales. If I now look back but do not see why I took *that* particular egg, then I come to think that I could just as well have taken the other. (Rée, 19)

3. THE ARGUMENT FROM MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

- (i) If Hard Determinism is true, then no one ever does anything freely
- (ii) If no one ever does anything freely, then no one is ever morally responsible for anything
- (iii) Sometimes people are morally responsible for their actions
- (iv) Therefore, Hard Determinism is not true