



A REFUTATION OF DETERMINISM

by

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## ABSTRACT

Determinism, the doctrine that every event is made necessary by antecedent factors, is refuted as a universal principle by showing that it does not apply to man's choice to utilize his conceptual capacity. The assumption that determinism is true of man's conceptual capacity is demonstrated to lead to the impossibility of human knowledge - an untenable conclusion. Volition is shown to be man's freedom to operate his conceptual faculty - specifically, that a man's choice to think or not to think is not made necessary by antecedent factors. The belief that determinism is a corollary of causality is seen to be the result of the theory that causality is either (1) a necessary connection of event to event - a theory which Hume and others have shown to be indefensible, or (2) merely the observed constant conjunction of event to event - which cannot be shown to apply to the choice to think. As an alternative, the traditional Greek concept of causality as a necessary relation between events and entities is suggested and supported. Free will is shown to be compatible with this latter concept of causality. Introspective evidence for the existence of a free choice is examined and defended.

"It was as if he had run a race against his own body, and all the exhaustion of years, which he had refused to acknowledge, had caught him at once and flattened him against the desk top. He felt nothing, except the desire not to move. He did not have the strength to feel - not even to suffer. He had burned everything there was to burn within him; he had scattered so many sparks to start so many things - and he wondered whether someone could give him now the spark he needed, now when he felt unable ever to rise again. He asked himself who had started him and kept him going. Then he raised his head. Slowly, with the greatest effort of his life, he made his body rise until he was able to sit upright with only one hand pressed to the desk and a trembling arm to support him. He never asked that question again." 12

- Ayn Rand

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## THE PROBLEM DEFINED

No problem can be solved without a clear, precise, unequivocal definition of the terms involved. Yet the lack of definitions singularly characterizes modern philosophy, whether it be existentialism, pragmatism, or, paradoxically, the linguistic analysis school. The attempt to deal with the problem of determinism without quite knowing what the concepts of determinism, volition, cause, and knowledge are - i.e., without a definition of those terms, is largely responsible for the confusing nature of the arguments which have surrounded this topic for twenty-five hundred years. The major effort of this thesis is directed toward presenting and defending definitions for the central concepts with which either determinism or else volition must ultimately be consistent. In this sense the thesis is analytical - but in the same sense all genuine philosophy is analytical.

Determinism is the principle that every event is made necessary by antecedent factors; the sub-species of determinism which is important for this thesis is psychological determinism: the principle that every event in man's consciousness is made necessary by antecedent factors over which he has no control. Since psychological determinism is merely a particular instance of the universal principle of determinism, I will not bother to distinguish the two in this paper: if it can be shown that psychological determinism is false, then the general principle has been contradicted.

The terms "volition", "free will", and "freedom" will be used synonymously for the position that is the contradictory of determinism, namely, that there is an event which is not made

necessary by antecedent factors. Since volition is understood to apply to human beings, and specifically (as will be shown) to the human mind, it may also be phrased as: the principle that there is an event in man's consciousness which is not made necessary by antecedent factors beyond his control. The term "libertarian" will be occasionally employed to refer to one who is an advocate of the theory that man has volition. The use of the phrase "free will" is not to be taken to imply that there is any special mental faculty or domain called "the will"; it is simply to mean volitional control over some event in man's consciousness.

The thesis will attempt to prove that determinism (as defined above) is false, and that its logical negation - volition - is true. In proving this the thesis will consider separately all the possible categories of arguments: (1) those for volition, (2) those against determinism, (3) those for determinism, and (4) those against volition. The thesis is that: (1) there is evidence for the existence of free will, (2) determinism implies the impossibility of human knowledge and is therefore self-refuting, (3) there is no valid argument for determinism, and (4) there is no valid argument against free will.

The views of specific philosophers will be dealt with only in so far as they are arguments for or against determinism or free will - that is, the thesis is in no sense historical. It is possible that I have ascribed to some philosopher a view which is not his. If so, I am responsible, but this should bear no weight in considering whether the view - independent of who holds it - is true or false.

Many principles in metaphysics and epistemology have had to be presupposed, as their support would require a number of volumes. The fundamental assumption of the thesis is that the three Aristotelian laws of logic are axiomatically true of reality and constitute the basis for all human knowledge. These laws may be stated as follows: (1) Identity: a thing is itself  $\lceil A = A \rceil$ ; (2) Non-contradiction: the same thing cannot simultaneously have and not have the same property in the same respect  $\lceil \text{not}(A \ \& \ \text{not-}A) \rceil$ ; and (3) Excluded middle: either a thing has a certain property or it does not  $\lceil A \ \text{or} \ \text{not-}A \rceil$ .

I owe an overwhelming debt for the ideas on which the thesis is based to the Objectivist philosophy of Ayn Rand and her associate, Nathaniel Branden. Objectivism in turn acknowledges a debt to Aristotle. Of course, no one but myself is responsible for the interpretation and development of those ideas which appear in this thesis.

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## THE NATURE AND LOCATION OF VOLITION

If the volitional position is that there is at least one class of events whose occurrence is not made necessary by antecedent factors, then what is this class? What choice does man have the power to make?

Traditionally, the area of man's volition has been located in his actions. On this view one has the choice to lift one's arm, or not to lift it; to lift it to the right, or to the left; to reach for a book or a gun. The actions of one's consciousness are included on an equal basis with bodily actions: we are free to listen, or to refuse to listen; to lie, to tell the truth, or to remain silent; to think or not to think. In short, everything which we would ordinarily say a person does, is under that person's volitional control. Without being censorious, this may be identified as the naïve doctrine of free will, since it seems to be an outgrowth of ordinary discourse - whenever the active voice is used, volition is assumed (to call this a naïve view is only to point out that it is the position which occurs spontaneously or naturally when one first thinks about the problem).

Although the naïve view is natural to pre-reflective man, who experiences himself as an integrated organism - not as a dualism of mind and body, it is a view which leads to many difficulties. We know from many sources that a man's physical actions are under the control of his mind. Foremost we know instantly from the briefest reflection that every voluntary physical action is preceded by a mental decision, and that unless

this decision is made, the physical action does not occur. Taking the examples used to illustrate the naïve view, whether or not I lift my arm, whether I lift it to the right or to the left, whether or not I reach for the book or the gun, all depend upon what I decide to do - on my mental acts. If my arm should move upwards in the absence of this mental act (as say from a reflex), we should not say that I lifted it. On the contrary it would be said that "his arm jerked up involuntarily", and if I wanted to deny this description I would do so by maintaining that I had decided or chosen to perform that action, that my arm was acting under the control of my mind.

It will be immediately objected that there are many cases in which an agent is said to perform an action for which no previous act of decision took place. If, for instance, I am driving an automobile over a very familiar route, I may be paying very little attention to the road ahead or road signs, and yet be performing a complex series of actions unerringly which result in my going to my destination. Surely there is no "mental debate" going on inside me; how could I be making decisions as to which way to turn the wheel while I am thinking about something entirely different? I mean to use the term "decision" in such a way that no "mental debate" or conscious deliberation need be implied. What is to be pointed out is that as long as I am in control of the car, my mind is in control of my overt actions. At whatever level of consciousness I might be affording to my car-driving actions, it is undeniable that I turn the wheel to the right or left in response to environmental stimuli received through my

sense organs, transmitted to my brain and - once I have made the initial decision to drive this route - automatically resulting in the sending of efferent signals to my muscles resulting in the appropriate overt actions. In other words, any physical actions which the naïve libertarian wants to call voluntary, are causally dependent on antecedent mental operations, and consequently are free only in a derivative sense, and only if these mental operations are free.

What, then, determines whether I reach for the book or the gun? The determining factor is the goal I have in mind. Putting it simply, if my purpose is to read, I will take the book; if my purpose is to shoot, I will take the gun. Given that my goal is reading, must I take the book, is it necessary that this particular action be chosen? Yes - with the following qualifications. It would be a contradiction or a misuse of language to say that (1) the book lay before me, (2) I saw the book, (3) I wanted\* to reach for it, and (4) I was physically able to reach for it (not paralyzed, for example), but that I did not reach for it. If such initial conditions held and I did not reach for the book, it would be conclusive evidence for you that one of the premises was false: that either (1) there was really no book there at all, (2) I didn't see the book, (3) I really hadn't wanted to reach for the book (for example, that my fear of someone's disapproval or my desire to prove a philosophical point by not reaching was stronger than my desire for the book\*\*),

\*I was at the time experiencing the desire..

\*\* See appendix for an illustration.

or (4) that I was not physically able to reach the book - that perhaps I was trying, but failing due to physical restraints, paralysis, or some other factor. The action, then, of reaching for the book was made necessary by my desire for the book plus certain other conditions.

More generally, someone will decide to perform an action if and only if: (1) he is experiencing a desire to perform that action and (2) he believes he can perform that action\*. Consequently, free will cannot be located in a decision to act, since these decisions themselves depend upon one's desires and beliefs. To carry the process farther backwards we now ask: what determines our desires and beliefs?

Our desires are determined by our goals. That is, if I have education as one of my goals, then, other things being equal, I will desire to read, if I believe that reading is a primary means to education. Given that I hold reading as a goal, I will desire to obtain books, and so on. Clearly, some desires reflect a relation between means and ends: I wanted the book because I saw it was a means to the end of reading, I wanted to read because I saw that reading was a means to the end of education. Why did I desire education? Perhaps as a means to my career. What dictates my choice of career? What in general determines a man's basic, fundamental goals - the goals which in turn shape his more concrete sub-goals in life?

There are in principle two paths open to a man in choosing his basic goals, such as his career. He may either think about

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\* See appendix for a more formal proof of this point.

the problem, or not think about it. If he consistently thinks about what basic goals it would be best for him to pursue, one set of goals will result (presumably, a set of goals consonant with the needs inherent in his nature as man). If, alternatively, he never thinks about what his goals should be, what his goals in fact ~~turn~~ out to be will be dictated by the goals of his culture, or the desires of his parents, or accidental associations formed in his youth, or by any of a number of other non-rational factors. Given either alternative, that he either thinks about the problem or he doesn't, the goals he will adopt will be made necessary by antecedent factors. If he consistently does think about what goals he should pursue, one set of factors will form his goals; if he never thinks, a different set will form them. In short, his goals will either be the result of his thinking, or they won't.

The two factors which determine a man's basic actions have been seen to be his basic goals and his beliefs (there is a third factor which has been implicit in the foregoing and which will be dealt with explicitly later - namely, whether he pays any attention to what his basic goals are and to what he believes to be true). We have just seen that which basic goals a man pursues can be determined by his thinking. That is, if he thinks about what are the right goals for him to pursue, this can affect what goals he does pursue; and if he consistently thinks about what are the right goals, this will affect his actual goals. Now we observe that a man's beliefs (the other factor which goes into determining his actions) quite obviously depend crucially on the exercise of his cognitive faculty.

Beliefs are the products exclusively of man's reason, of his conceptual faculty. Animals have no beliefs. The mere presentation of facts to an individual is not a sufficient condition for his forming any specific belief about those facts. If the teacher gives a proof of the principle that three times two is six, this does not guarantee that Johnny, who is looking at the board, now believes or understands that three times two is six. He may simply have not been paying any attention to the proof or the teacher. Or, he may even have been paying attention to the proof, but not doing the thinking necessary in order to understand it, he might have been thinking that this is the longest proof he has heard today, or that if he were the teacher he'd never give proofs like that, and so forth. Similarly with normative beliefs: the mere fact of being presented with moral statements such as "It's wrong to steal" is not necessarily a sufficient condition for the listener's acceptance of the proposition expressed in the statement. It's an observed fact that many people go through an extensive "indoctrination period" in childhood during which they are ceaselessly bombarded with moral slogans (sometimes emphasized with beatings) which they simply never accept.

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Any defensible theory of volition must locate man's freedom in the choice to use or not to use his cognitive faculty. This we have seen, is due to the fundamental role played by man's conceptual faculty in all of his behavior which we would call "voluntary". A man's overt actions depend upon his desires and beliefs which themselves depend upon whether or not he has

exercised his conceptual capacity.

It is in the use of his cognitive or conceptual capacity that the Objectivist theory of volition locates man's freedom.

"Objectivism locates man's free will in a single action of his consciousness, in a single basic choice: to focus his mind or to suspend it; to think or not to think."<sup>1</sup>

"In the Objectivist theory of volition, a man is responsible for his actions, not because his actions are directly subject to his free will, but because they proceed from his values [goals] and premises [beliefs], which in turn proceed from his thinking or non-thinking. His actions are free because they are under the control of a faculty that is free - i.e., that functions volitionally."<sup>2</sup>

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Since man's volition must pertain to the use of his consciousness if free will is to be possible at all, it is crucially important to understand precisely what acts of consciousness do operate by choice, and in what forms the individual encounters this choice. It has been seen that one psychological action which must operate volitionally, on any consistent libertarian view, is thinking. But "thinking" is a notoriously vague word which needs to be defined. If thinking is defined, as it sometimes is, as a kind of internal conversation with oneself, then it loses its significance for theories of volition, since that kind of "thinking" seems to go on during virtually all of our waking hours, and more importantly, its occurrence doesn't seem to bear any necessary connection to our beliefs, values, or actions. Rather, I will utilize the definition presented by Nathaniel Branden in the fifth lecture of his series, "Basic Principles of Objectivism": "Thinking is a purposeful mental

activity having knowledge of reality as its goal." Thinking includes such activities as the forming of questions, logical deductions, abstraction, the forming of definitions, the identification of the evidence provided by the senses\* and the integration of these identifications.

Whether or not a man is thinking is related to a more fundamental question: what level of awareness is he operating on? Thinking is an aspect of one's level of awareness, not the reverse. At the lower levels of awareness, thinking as defined above is not possible. The sort of organized, purposeful activity which is thinking, is characteristic of a high state of awareness. For example, consider the variety of mental states possible to a man in front of a TV set. First, he might be totally unconscious. Second, he might be drifting off to sleep, and experiencing the TV program as only a faint distracting hum. Third, he could be awake, looking at the screen, and operating on a mere perceptual level, that is, he sees a man sitting in front of some other men and hears the words the seated man is saying, but that is all. Fourth, he could be following the story, know that the seated man is defending himself at a murder trial, but be unable to predict the ending, see the significance of the story, or whether the defendant is innocent or guilty. Fifth, he might be thinking about the program, able to answer all the questions the person in the fourth stage couldn't, but drawing no new conclusions outside the context of the program, and has not thought about whether the show is good or bad. Sixth, if he is in the highest level of awareness, he understands the

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\*E.g., looking at a tree and thinking "this tree has dark bark."



program, judges its merit, and draws new conclusions from the example in the program - he discovers that the reason the defendant is not to be punished is that he was acting in self-defense, and he, the viewer, raises the question, "what distinguishes an act of violence in self-defense from other instances of violence?" - a question which he would not have raised in a state of lesser awareness. These six stages are not exhaustive nor necessarily discrete. Further, a man may, and often does, change his level of awareness in the course of watching the program. In the Objectivist philosophy the term "focus" is conveniently used to describe one's degree of concentration, level of awareness, and the changes between levels. A man in stage six above is said to be in full mental focus, while one in stage two or three is quite out of focus. Raising one's level of awareness is described as focusing one's mind (or simply "focusing" when the context is understood), while the lapse to a lower level is going out of focus; or, if the process of going to a lower level is active, as in the case of evasion, is unfocusing. The intuitive analogy with optical focus is a good one - not only because both imply clarity and increased information content, but also because, just as with optical focus\*, being in focus on one thing implies being out of focus with respect to everything else. To be fully focusing your attention on the question of free will, one must necessarily be out of focus with respect to extraneous topics - e.g., if you are thinking hard about free will you are not thinking

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\*See appendix for explanation of optical focus.

about your up-coming vacation.

There are two aspects to the act of focusing. The first is that of raising the level of awareness, as explained above. The second is the concrete act of applying this awareness to the problem at hand. The act of focusing must be a focusing on something; it is by applying one's mind to some specific, concrete task that one "sets the mental machinery in motion". For example, when arising in the morning, sitting on the edge of the bed with my mind in a state of semi-consciousness, I may snap into focus by asking myself, "All right, what have I got to do today?" Of course, a state of focus has to be maintained - it is not the case that, once set, one's mind will remain at a high level of awareness - it requires an expansion of effort to stay in focus. If I don't make this effort, I will not think about what I have to do that day; I may fall back to sleep.

This leads to the first manner in which the issue of focusing is encountered by an ordinary individual. Primarily, the dichotomy of focus vs. non-focus is experienced as: effort vs. non-effort. Secondly, the effort may be required to overcome more than "mental inertia"; for example effort may be needed to keep in focus on the long-term undesirable consequences of a short-term pleasurable act. Or, effort may be required to use one's own mind instead of uncritically accepting the beliefs and goals of others. These three common ways of concretely running into the choice to think or not to think may be

summarized in the following three questions:

- 1) Do I take the trouble to think?
- 2) Do I take the trouble to think when it may be unpleasant?
- 3) Do I take the trouble to think when I could let others do my thinking for me?

It is a man's answers to these three questions which determine the course of his life and happiness.\*

\* \* \*

Since man's volition relates to the use of his conceptual faculty - to his ability to draw abstractions, integrate them, and form concepts, he does not become actually free until he has reached the stage in his development at which he can form and use concepts. (This probably occurs in the second year of a child's life.) The form in which the infant first becomes aware of his control is in terms of effort. While operating on the perceptual level required nothing of him, he learns that in order to understand the world he has to put forth effort - he has to concentrate. Of course, for the most simple problems not much is required of the child. But even with the simple concepts, such as color abstractions, the child learns\*\* that he can be mistaken. He can point to an object and say "red", and have his mother reply, "no, green". Such a thing never occurred on the perceptual level, as perceptions deal only with concretes, not universals, hence the concept of a purely perceptual error has no meaning.

Once a child has learned an item of knowledge, he can

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\*This is the theme of Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged.

\*\*I am not inferring that this learning takes place in words.

automatize it - make it "second nature". Thus an adult needs to exert no mental effort to do the multiplication table, to recite a well-known rhyme, or just to use the language; but initially, the learning of each required effort and attention. Sometime after the child has a fund of automatized knowledge, he learns another basic fact about himself: he can evade knowledge he already has. He discovers that he has areas of knowledge which aren't automatic, and which he doesn't have to utilize if he chooses not to. To use an example, suppose a child borrows a toy, promises to return it by a certain time, and then fails to do so. He remembers his promise after the deadline is past and feels guilty. He finds he can lessen the guilt by not thinking about what he already knows: that he broke his promise. He can evade his knowledge by either focusing on something else, or by refusing to focus at all. If his process of evasion is to succeed for any length of time, it is the latter alternative that he must adopt, since which thoughts will occur to him is determined by what is important to him. Then was his initial evasion, which was achieved by thinking of something else, an involuntary action? Do we have the power to choose what we think about, given that we have the power to choose whether to think at all? The answer is that we have no direct control over what thoughts occur to us, but we are able to pursue or not pursue every thought which does occur to us. It is as if you are browsing through a bookstore - what books you will find there is already completely determined and is not open to your immediate choice. But as you wander down the aisles glancing at

titles, there is nothing which compels you to stop and open up this book just because you read the title. If it is on a subject which doesn't appeal to you, or which doesn't suit your purpose, you can go on to another book, or another section. Once you do find a book you decide is suitable, however, you can open it up and investigate it further. The bookstore is analogous to your subconscious\*; what books it contains is analogous to what store of information you've assembled; what order the books are assembled in is analogous to how orderly your mind is. This order is dependent upon your past thinking or lack thereof, just as the order in which the books are arranged depends upon whether the bookseller filed each book when he received it, or whether he simply put the new book anywhere - so that there was no logical connection between books located together, and so that you in looking through the books would have an impossible time in finding the book you want. And just as you can go into the bookstore in a number of different states: alert, relaxed, or with your eyes closed, so you can operate mentally in various degrees of focus, from a semi-conscious daze, to full, purposeful clarity\*\*.

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As the child builds up a history of either thinking or non-thinking, he builds up a character. A character is the dominant principles exhibited by one's past and present choices. For instance, one man may chronically elect to substitute others'

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\* See appendix for what is meant by the subconscious.

\*\* See appendix.

thinking for his own. This man will build up a character of psychological dependence, since this has been the dominant principle exhibited by his choices. It is commonly known that one's character pre-disposes one to act in certain ways - namely in agreement with the type of character one has. This observation is so widespread that some modern philosophers have equated character with dispositions to act in a specified manner. The definition given above, however, is more useful, as it points out that the sequence is: choices, character, more choices. With the definition of character tied to choices we can explain that character originates from a man's record of how he has used, or failed to use, his consciousness. One can, in effect, condition oneself over a period of years to act in a certain way psychologically, simply by having consistently acted that way. It is doubtful that one could ever completely condition oneself to focus or not to focus, such that one would after a while never have to choose at all. What seems to be the case is that the chronic non-focuser finds it increasingly more difficult, while the consistent focuser finds thinking increasingly easier and more natural to him.

Thus the answer to the determinist claim that a man's choices are determined by his character, is that each man forges (and is responsible for) his own character through the free choices he makes. Further, it seems empirically unjustified to say even that a man's character completely determines his choices, but only that it gives him a tendency or disposition to choose one way rather than another.

If a man's present choices are influenced by his earlier ones, doesn't this put a great emphasis on a man's earliest choices? And wouldn't this be tantamount to determinism since a two-year-old can hardly be expected to understand the issues involved well enough to make the correct decisions? There is an important confusion evident in these questions. First of all, there seems to be empirical evidence (admittedly shaky evidence) that one's very early choices are not as influential as might be expected, since the child is so young that his mind is still in a state of flux. It might not begin to "set", that is, to adopt characteristic rules of operation and means of dealing with problems until the individual is five, six, or even until puberty. At least we know that people can undergo radical character changes in the pre-adult years, changes that become less and less likely as they grow older.

The main confusion of the question, however, is in how the choice to focus is envisioned. The choice to think or not to think cannot be deliberated, weighed, or considered rationally by the individual. To do these things, he would already have to be thinking. Deliberation, the weighing of consequences, and rational consideration all pertain to a high level of awareness which the subject would already have had to choose and voluntarily sustain. Even given that the subject, who for one reason or another is in focus, consciously makes a decision to think, or that thinking is the best policy, this is no guarantee at all that he will go by his decision. He is perfectly capable of evading his decision, of letting his mind

drift out of focus until he is in such a state that he is not explicitly aware of his prior decision to think. Instead he is left with a dim, unidentified feeling of uneasiness which he may or may not choose to focus and think about. Once he is out of focus there is no way for him to remind himself of his decision to focus - except by choosing to focus on the issue. The choice to focus one's mind, then, is not like the choice of whether or not to buy a hat; it cannot be the subject of a conscious, reasoned deliberation. Consciousness, reasoning, and deliberation are precisely the actions he must choose to initiate.

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Thus, we have been able to relate man's physical actions to his goals and beliefs, and these to the use of his conceptual faculty, but if he is not free in choosing whether to utilize his conceptual faculty, he is not free at all. The choice to think or not to think is irreducible. There is no action a man can perform which is more basic than that of focusing his mind - of raising his awareness to the level of thought. Consequently, although we can explain any of a man's other actions on the basis of the thinking he has done or failed to do, the choice to think or not to think itself cannot be explained. There is nothing for this choice to be explained in terms of - which would be consistent with a libertarian position. To ask, "Why did he focus?" is to have already abandoned the concept of human volition.

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ARGUMENTS FOR VOLITION

What is the nature of the evidence, if any, for the position that man has volitional control over his conceptual faculty?

Two observations are offered by Branden in his lectures on psychology as evidence for volition\*. First is the phenomenon of irresistible thoughts. There is a neurosis in which the subject finds he cannot keep certain thoughts out of his consciousness - that he is no longer in control of his thinking process. What is significant, is that a person suffering from this neurosis knows that he is in a pathological condition. He feels that he is no longer fully in control of his conceptual faculty - and he seeks psychiatric help. In other words, a person who is unable to exercise his volition feels that this is not his normal, healthy state, implying that the normal, healthy state includes the ability to control one's thinking process - to move around at will, in our bookstore analogy. A person suffering from this neurosis feels, in effect, that he is not in control of what "books" he picks up, that there is some irresistible force causing him to come back again and again to the same book (i.e., thought).

However, a determinist might reply that the only thing abnormal about this condition is that the subject's thoughts are constantly guided back to the same topics - not just that his thoughts are being guided. On this view, where we go inside the bookstore is never subject to our volition, but a healthy man isn't continually forced back to the same books. Thus the burden of proof is on the libertarian to demonstrate that the pathology of irresistible thoughts is evidence for

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\*Lecture 6, Basic Principles of Objectivist Psychology.

free will.

The second observation in support of volition meets the same fate. This is the example of the "free association" test devised by Freud. In these tests the subject is told by the psychiatrist to relax his mind, and just let the thoughts flow without any conscious direction. Doesn't this assume that the subject is freely able to direct or not to direct his consciousness? Isn't the psychiatrist assuming the subject has free will? Not necessarily; when I ask a dog to "sit", I am not assuming this action is under the dog's volitional control. The mere fact that the psychiatrist's request is usually followed by the subject's "loosening the mental reins" does not imply that he freely choose to do so. According to the determinist, given that the subject is in a specific state, what he does with his consciousness is made necessary by the psychiatrist's statement: no alternative course of action is possible. The psychiatrist's statement, on the determinist view, is another determining factor with respect to how, or whether, the subject utilizes his conceptual faculty. Again, the burden of proof rests with the advocate of volition.

The only direct evidence for volition is one's experience of control over the functioning of his own mind. This is not a "feeling of freedom"; it is an experience of control. If you have ridden on a roller-coaster, would it be more appropriate to say that you had a feeling of riding on a roller-coaster, or that you have had the experience of riding on a roller-coaster? If you are standing in front of a painting,

and someone should ask you what you are doing, would you reply, "I am having the feeling of looking at a Dali," or, "I am looking at a Dali"? The only justification for saying that you are having the feeling of looking at a Dali, that you had a feeling of riding on a roller-coaster, and that you have a "feeling of freedom" is in the case where you have some evidence that:

1) there really is no Dali in front of you, 2) you never really were on a roller-coaster, and 3) you really are not free. Thus, when the determinist says a "feeling of freedom" is no evidence for freedom, he is right - but he has begged the question. If we felt as if we were free, that would be one thing, but what actually is the case is that we feel\* our freedom. The burden of proof is on the determinist to show independently that we really are not free, and hence we cannot claim to experience control - not vice-versa.

The determinist may reply that there is evidence that what we are feeling is not a feeling of control. "Don't you feel," he may ask "that your physical actions are under your control? Yet your physical actions are not themselves free: they are determined by the actions of your mind. Here is a case in which this feeling of control is illusory, hence any argument from a feeling of control is suspect." The answer is that the feeling of control over physical action is not illusory. You do control your physical actions, but not directly. Anything which is under the control of a free faculty is itself free. To deny this leads one into absurd consequences:

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\* I prefer the word "experience" in this context, but "feel" drives the point home in this parallelism.

for example, suppose for a moment that my mental decision to do X instead of Y were itself free, that is, that I freely choose to do X. Could one maintain that the actions of my body in doing X were not freely chosen, since my muscular contractions resulted from my decision, instead of having been "willed" directly? Or that if I choose to close a door, then the minute I push on the door the action becomes deterministic since the door operates deterministically? The only thing which could be "illusory" in the feeling of control over one's physical actions would be if one felt that one controlled them directly, that the source of one's choice was located in the actions themselves. It is possible for a person to have such an illusory view - the existence of the naive view of volition testifies to that fact. The determinists, however, have spent a great deal of effort to establish that this view is illusory - and their success in this effort has destroyed their own argument against the validity of the experience of control. Through various arguments\*, they have debunked the naive view that one feels a direct control over one's physical actions and/or decisions. These arguments employ such points as that one's actions and decisions are the necessary outcome of one's explicit or hidden desires and beliefs. Fine. But what they can never show is that the choice to think, the choice which determines one's desires and beliefs, is a necessary outcome of any antecedent factors. The determinist is only doing the libertarian a service by knocking down the straw-man view that volition is located in decisions

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\* See appendix for an example.

concerning physical actions. Unless the determinist can provide new evidence that your experience of direct control over your level of awareness is not genuine, he must admit that it is evidence for the existence of volition. Of course, there are only two ways for the determinist to attempt this: 1) by relating your level of awareness to some factor in your consciousness (such as your desires, beliefs, or memories) or, 2) by relating it to factors outside your consciousness (such as the state of your cortical neurons). If he takes the first path, you need only point out that factors in one's consciousness are determined by one's level of awareness - that there are no desires, memories, or beliefs prior to perception and identification - that nothing in consciousness could compel consciousness\*. But if he takes the second alternative, relating your level of awareness to some factor outside your consciousness, he is in even greater trouble - as will be demonstrated in the next section.

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\* See infra, page 19.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST DETERMINISM

One argument that is commonly advanced against the deterministic thesis that every event in man's consciousness is made necessary by antecedent factors over which he has no control, is that were the thesis true, there could be no morality. Often the point is taken further with the libertarians holding that determinism, if true, would make legal responsibility a cruel farce. The first claim, that determinism would make morality impossible, is correct. The purpose of a morality is to guide man's choices. If a man is only a passive reactor to forces impinging upon him, then he has no choice. A morality presupposes an ultimate goal - that toward which man's choices are to be guided. If determinism were correct, to what extent an individual can achieve that goal is foreordained; he has no control whatever over whether he is good or evil; in fact, he simply has no control, period. As to the claim that determinism would make reward and punishment, especially legal punishment, pointless, the consistent libertarian must admit that this does not follow. If determinism were true, reward and punishment would probably be two of the crucial molders of human behavior - just as they are in animal behavior. It would be just as important to jail a criminal as to scold or beat a mischievous dog. If determinism were true, refusing to punish criminals and miscreants would necessarily have disturbing consequences. Besides, if determinism were true, we wouldn't be able to do otherwise anyway.

The issue of whether or not determinism would make morality

and law possible is, however, entirely irrelevant at this point. If determinism could be proven true, then so much the worse for morality and law. The far more important, and self-refuting, consequence of determinism is that it makes Knowledge impossible.

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All knowledge begins with, and is based upon, perception. I know I have a hand because I see that I have a hand. Most knowledge, however, is not based directly on perception. For instance, the way that I know universals such as "all living organisms need food" is not by observing each member of the class of living organisms. I know that universal is true because I know it follows logically from other universals such as "all living organisms move themselves or parts of themselves" and "whatever moves itself or parts of itself must have an internal supply of energy". Therefore there are only two ways of justifying a claim to knowledge: by showing that it follows logically from other knowledge, or by a direct appeal to the facts through perception.

Thus, when I am challenged to support one of my beliefs I must either show that it follows from other knowledge, or show, through perception, that it is the case. There is a third kind of claim that may be made in support of certain kinds of beliefs: introspection. Is introspective evidence as valid as perceptual evidence? It is if introspection is a kind of "inward looking" in which  $\phi$ , who is perceptually aware of X, is simultaneously introspectively aware of his awareness of X in the same way he is aware of X. In other words, on this view of

introspection a person seeing a dog can at the same time see his seeing of the dog. Fortunately, this view of introspection, which would lead one into an infinite series of awareness of awareness of awareness of... - all taking place simultaneously - is false. For a thorough refutation of this view, which would be beyond the scope of this thesis, the reader should refer to the chapter "Self-Knowledge" in Gilbert Ryle's The Concept of Mind<sup>3</sup>. Rather than being a direct inner observation of conscious events, the subject of introspection is one's memory of mental events. Thus the way one knows one is seeing a dog, is through shifting one's attention from the dog at time  $t_1$  to the memory at  $t_2$  of seeing the dog at  $t_1$ . All introspection is based on memory - though on very recent memory. An appeal to introspective evidence is valid only if very recent memory is valid. One cannot claim to be immediately or directly aware of what is going on in one's mind in the exact present - one can only claim to remember what was going on a very short time ago.

What, then, is required for one to know that his belief that X is true is justified? What must one do to claim that his beliefs constitute knowledge?

It is not enough for one to show that X is true. For instance, I might flip a coin to decide whether or not it is going to rain tomorrow, and I might turn out to be right. But this would be mere coincidence, since we know no necessary connection between the coin's coming up heads, and whether it will rain tomorrow.



In order to claim that his belief, X, constitutes knowledge, one must have a good reason for believing X, and one must validate X by going over one's reasons for believing X, making sure they are true, then making sure they imply that X is true. It is only when one has verified his belief in that manner by careful checking of one's premises and one's logical operations that one can have knowledge instead of mere belief.

Now let's suppose that determinism is true. Then every event in a man's consciousness is made necessary by antecedent factors over which he has no control. If he focuses his mind, he had to. If he thinks, he had to. If he thinks about X instead of Y, he had to. If he believes A, he had to. If he believes not-A, he had to. Now let's assume that a man can know something, and show that this assumption leads to a contradiction. If a man knows something, X, he must know a good reason for believing X. If what he believes is not even indirectly under his control, then the cause of believing X may not be related to why X is true. For instance, a man may believe X because of a sexual desire (Freudian determinism), or because of his early childhood (environmental determinism), or because of the state of his brain (physiological determinism). But none of these constitute a valid reason for believing X to be true. The only valid reason for believing X is that the logical and/or empirical grounds for X led him into believing X, not that his early environment, his sexual desires, or the state of his brain led him into it. Consider, for example, whether you would think someone knew that it would rain

tomorrow if you asked him how he knew this and heard him reply: "My sexual needs led me to that conclusion" or, "I believe it because I was deprived as a child" or, "I believe it because of the state of my brain."\* Of course no determinist, hopefully, would offer such explanations for his beliefs. He would say that factors related to X made him believe X. But this is merely to claim that the factors which made necessary his belief were related to X, and we know he might very well be determined to say the same thing even if the factors which made him believe X were completely unrelated to X. More importantly, how is he himself to know that the factors which determined him to believe X are related to X? If he believes (he believes X because he was led to X by the logical and/or empirical grounds for X), how does he know he was led to the belief in parentheses by logical and/or empirical grounds rather than by extraneous factors? Every belief he holds, on the determinist assumption, may have been forced upon him by non-rational factors, and he has no way to exclude that possibility.

The same argument can be applied on the level of verification. One doesn't know a belief is true until one has verified it. How does one whose mind is determined know he has verified a given belief? Just because he believes he has verified the belief doesn't mean he actually has. Does he know introspectively that he has checked or is checking? Not necessarily, since introspection operates on memory and whether his memory

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\* Although some people claim to know when it will rain by the state of their feet, no one, so far, has explicitly claimed to know it by the state of his brain.

is correct or not is not under his control. It may very well be that he hasn't checked, but was determined to think he remembers checking.

The conclusion for both arguments is that if one believes what he has to believe, there is no way for him to know anything because there is no way for him to know that he has a good reason for any of his beliefs, or that he has verified any of his beliefs.

It may be objected that the mere possibility that he is led into his beliefs by non-rational factors isn't enough to discredit the determinist's claim to knowledge. The trouble is that on the determinist assumption, there is no way for a man to exclude that possibility, no way for him to tell whether he is determined by rational factors or by non-rational factors. If he cannot know whether the factors determining him are rational or not, he cannot know that they are rational, and hence cannot know that any of his beliefs are justified.

Because the wording is inescapably complex, two examples of the same reasoning as used above, will be useful. First, suppose you don't know whether there is one coin in my pocket or two coins in my pocket. Then, you don't know that there is one coin in my pocket, and if you cannot know whether there are one or two, then you cannot know that there is one. Second, suppose you are to tell whether a bird we both see is or is not a robin. Suppose further that you are sure it's a robin because it has a certain characteristic, C. If I remind you that there is another type of bird - not a robin - which has C also, so

that a bird might have C and not be a robin, you would either have to find more evidence or give up your claim to know that it is a robin. Similarly, suppose you are to tell whether a given belief has or has not been verified, and you are sure it has been verified because you remember having gone over it very carefully. If I remind you that you might be determined to remember going over it very carefully and not have gone over it at all, you would either have to find more evidence or give up your claim to know you have verified the original belief. Or, similarly, suppose you are to tell whether a given belief was or was not determined by rational factors, and you are sure it was determined by rational factors because you remember having thought about it, checked it, gone over it very carefully, etc. If I remind you that you might be determined to remember doing all that and yet not have actually done any of it, you either would have to find more evidence or give up your claim to know you were led to the belief by rational factors.

The question may be raised whether knowledge is any the more possible on the free will assumption by the above argument. If the argument against determinism hangs on the point that any belief may be, in effect, a rationalization - including the belief that any other belief is not a rationalization, how can a being whose mind operates volitionally know that his beliefs aren't rationalizations? The answer is that when a volitional being rationalizes, he rationalizes by choice; whether or not he rationalizes is under his control. If he chooses to rationalize, he can know he made that choice. Consider the following

argument between A, the skeptic, and B, the libertarian.

A: For any given belief you hold, how do you know it's not a rationalization?

B: Things cannot force me to rationalize. If I rationalize, then I chose to rationalize. If I chose to rationalize, then I can know I made that choice.

A: Then how do you explain the existence of people who don't know they rationalize?

B: They chose not to know. They evaded, volitionally, their knowledge that they have not chosen to verify the belief in question, and that they chose not to be guided by their perception of reality in forming that belief.

A: Do they know that they chose not to know they chose to rationalize?

B: Yes, if they haven't evaded that knowledge also. They know, for instance, that they chose to throw their minds out of focus when the question of their rationalizations came up.

A: What about the ones who don't know that they chose not to know that they chose to rationalize?

B: You can keep adding "chose not to know that ..." in front of the last question forever, but whichever was the last evasion they performed, they know (if they are not psychotic) they performed it.

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G.E.M. Anscombe has raised an objection which applies to the argument that determinism implies the impossibility of knowledge. The objection was raised by Miss Anscombe against a somewhat similar argument offered by C.S. Lewis.<sup>4</sup> She holds, as I understand it, that the two senses of "because" illustrated by such statements as (1) It's true because it follows from the premises, and (2) It fell because the rope broke, are used equivocally in the argument. "...such an argument as this [Lewis'] is based on a confusion between the concepts of

cause and reason, which arises because of the ambiguity of such expressions as "because" and "explanation".<sup>5</sup>

One crucial premise in the argument against determinism is: if  $\phi$  believes X because of extraneous factors, then he has no right to claim X as knowledge. In support of this premise, it was stated that in order for  $\phi$  to know X, he must have a good reason for believing X, and that if the reason he believes X is not related to X's truth or falsity, then this is not a good reason for believing X, and  $\phi$  cannot claim to know X. This, I believe Miss Anscombe would hold, is another form of the same equivocation between logical justification and causal explanation, this time equivocating with the word "reason".  $\phi$  might know a quite adequate logical justification of X, even in the case where he believes X because of (in the causal sense) extraneous factors. "It appears to me that if a man has reasons, and they are good reasons, and they are genuinely his reasons, for thinking something - then his thought is rational whatever causal statements we make about him."<sup>6</sup> I don't believe it would be unfair to paraphrase Miss Anscombe thusly: It is possible for someone to maintain, "I accept every idea that pleases my mother, and if I don't believe an idea would please my mother I don't accept it - but I can still know which of the ideas I accept are true and which are not." This seems to be plausible enough until one remembers that to believe an idea is to believe it is true, and to accept or hold an idea means to accept or hold it as true. If I believe a certain idea is true, then I have accepted that idea; if I believe an idea to be false, then I have rejected that idea. To say "one of my beliefs is not true" is to

utter a contradiction (unless one meant, "one of my beliefs was false"). The original statement could be re-written: "I believe to be true every idea I believe pleases my mother, and if I don't believe an idea would please my mother, I don't believe it to be true - but I can still know which of the ideas I believe to be true are true and which are not." To decide to accept X is to decide that X is true. It is by deciding that X is true that one accepts X. Thus the above statement implies, "I decide that X is true on the basis of whether or not I believe it would please my mother."

Miss Anscombe's objection itself rests on an equivocation. "Giving one's reasons for thinking something," she writes, "is like giving one's motives for doing something." There are two meanings of "thinking" which are confused: the first meaning is thinking as a process (e.g., "he was thinking something to himself"), the second is thinking as believing (e.g., "he thinks something is wrong"). There is an analogy between thinking in the first sense and doing, but it's difficult to find any between believing and doing - but even if there is, it is not at all clear that this would help Miss Anscombe's case. In any event, none of the objections serve to dislodge the premise that if  $\phi$  believes X to be true because of extraneous factors, then he has no right to claim X as knowledge. Miss Anscombe's objection amounts to a subtle variation of the claim that  $\phi$  might know that the factors which made it necessary that he believe X to be true are related to X's being true. It has been pointed out earlier (page 29) that there is no way for  $\phi$

to know that this is the case.

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There is another, but less rigorous, proof that determinism would imply the impossibility of knowledge. One of the prerequisites of knowledge is belief - yet determinism would make even that impossible. A belief involves something being accepted as true. If the acceptance of X was necessitated by antecedent factors beyond one's control, one did not accept X, one merely reacted to X in a certain way. Machines do not believe anything. If determinism is true, then men are merely super-complicated mechanisms, and belief becomes only a disposition to act in a certain way. To say a machine "believes" A is true could only mean that the machine acts as if A were true. One's beliefs do go into determining one's actions, but the disposition to act in accordance with a belief is a necessary result of having that belief; the belief is not identical to the disposition.

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Since determinism implies men can know nothing, it is false. Men quite obviously do know something - to maintain the opposite is self-refuting. Neither can one say that perhaps determinism is true and we don't know that it is true, we don't know anything is true, we only think we do. To claim to know that possibility exists, one would have to know that determinism is, in fact, false. That man knows something is an axiom: it must be assumed in any attempt to deny it. Any theory, like determinism, which implies that man knows nothing, is axiomatically false.

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ARGUMENTS FOR DETERMINISM

It would seem that the only real argument for determinism is that determinism is an outgrowth of the principle that every event has a cause which is another event antecedent to it, and if so, the whole doctrine of determinism rests on a confusion. No supportable formulation of the law of causality implies that every event in man's consciousness is made necessary by antecedent factors over which he has no control. To establish this contention, it will be necessary to understand just what causality is.

The modern, post-Renaissance view of causality has been well stated by Brand Blanshard. "... what is meant by saying that an event is caused? The natural answer is that the event is so connected with some preceding event that unless the latter had occurred the former would not have occurred."<sup>7</sup> Or again, Russel puts it in terms of predictability:

"The law of universal causation ... may be annunciated as follows. There are such invariable relations between different events at the same or different times that, given the state of the whole universe throughout any finite time, however short, every previous and subsequent event can theoretically be determined as a function of the given events during that time."<sup>8</sup>

It is true that on this view as stated by Russel, determinism is a corollary of the law of causality. If causality is the theory that every event is made necessary by antecedent events, it is certainly true that every mental event - including the functioning of man's conceptual faculty - was made necessary by antecedent factors. But is this mechanistic concept of causality

defensible? What is the exact relation between cause and effect, and how would we know that such a connection must always exist between events? Blanshard leaves open the question of whether or not the relation is one of necessity:

"By determinism, then, I mean the view that every event A is so connected with a later event B that, given A, B must occur. ... Now, what is meant here by 'must'? We cannot in the end evade that question, but I hope you will not take it as an evasion if at this point I am content to let you fill in the blank in any way you wish. Make it a logical 'must', if you care to, or a physical or metaphysical 'must', or even the watered-down 'must' that means 'A is always in fact followed by B.'"<sup>9</sup>

Let's proceed to "fill in the blank" as Blanshard suggests. We have two alternatives: we may either say that "A causes B" means "A makes the occurrence of B necessary", or we may say that "A causes B" means only that "A and B are constantly conjoined". Suppose we adopt the first alternative. Then we are vulnerable to all the empiricists' and positivists' arguments to show that there is no way in which we could have arrived at the concept of necessity in causal relationships. We cannot observe perceptually any "link" or "bond" between events in a causal sequence, and we cannot derive such "links" or "bonds" a priori. For a good discussion of these arguments, the reader should refer to chapter 4 of John Hospers' An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis<sup>10</sup>, especially pages 221-230. On page 229, Hospers quotes from a paper by Moritz Schlick which typifies the themes of these arguments:

"This shows that we are perfectly right when we think of cause and effect as connected by a causal chain, but that we are perfectly wrong when we think that this chain could consist of anything but events, that it could be a kind of mysterious tie called 'causality'... After the scient~~ist~~

has successfully filled up all the gaps in his causal chains by continually interpolating new events, the philosopher wants to go on with this pleasant game after all the gaps are filled. So he invents a kind of glue and assures us that in reality it is only his glue that holds the events together at all. But we can never find the glue; there is no room for it, as the world is already completely filled by events which leave no chinks between them."<sup>11</sup>

So let us take the second alternative in interpreting Blanshard's "must" and say that there is no necessary connection between events - only constant conjunction. In this case, to say that A causes B is only to observe that A and only A is invariably conjoined with B; that whenever we see A occur, we see B's occurrence follow. If this is all that causality comes to, why must we assume it holds universally? What evidence have we that any antecedent event is constantly conjoined with the act of focusing one's mind? Given the present primitive state of neurophysiology, it would be ludicrous to say that we know of any neural events which invariably occur just prior to the act of focusing and at no other time. It might be advanced that even if a constantly conjoined "precursor" to the event of focusing was found, this would not imply the act was not volitional. I think this would be unjustified, however. Volition requires that the antecedent conditions might have been exactly as they were prior to a man's choice to focus his mind, and yet he not have chosen to do so. The libertarian position must hold that we now know of no "precursor" to the choice to focus, and that no such precursor could ever be found, because none exists.

Either way we interpret Blanshard's statement of the modern view of the relation between causal events, we cannot support the determinist position. If we interpret causal relations as

involving necessity, we are unable to support the existence of such a relation between any two events. If, alternatively, we say that constant conjunction is all that is involved, we have no grounds for supposing that there is any antecedent which is so conjoined with the specific act of focusing one's mind.

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"...today's view of causality dates only from the post-Renaissance period and is a great philosophical mistake."<sup>13</sup>  
-- Ayn Rand

All the arguments against causality as necessary connection have been predicated on the assumption that causality is a relation between event and event. The traditional Greek view, and that of the Objectivist metaphysics, is rather that causality is a relation between actions and entities which act.

Windelband writes in his History of Philosophy:

"... the idea of cause had acquired a completely new significance through Galileo. According to the scholastic conception (which even in Descartes' Meditations, in a decisive passage, was still presented with axiomatic validity) causes were substances or things, while effects, on the other hand, were either their activities or were other substances and things which were held to come about only by such activities; this was the Platonic-Aristotelian conception of the aitia. Galileo, on the contrary, went back to the idea of the older Greek thinkers, who applied the causal relation only to the states - that meant now to the motions of substances - not to the Being of the substances themselves."<sup>14</sup> [emphasis is Windelband's]

Also, Randall points out in his Aristotle:

"The unfortunate neglect of the other three [types of causes] has been due to the dominance of mechanical thinking since the day of Newton, complicated by the popular heritage of Hume and John Stuart Mill. It is worth noting, incidentally, that the empiricist notion of causation as constant succession, of "cause" as the invariable antecedent of its effect, is wholly lacking in Aristotle. Cause and effect are always for him simultaneous, hama."<sup>15</sup>

The objections to the modern event-to-event theory as well as the substantiation of the older event-to-entity theory are covered by H.W.B. Joseph in his Introduction to Logic.

Particularly to the point is the following excerpt:

"And there is another objection to defining the cause of anything as its invariable antecedent. Antecedent and consequent are events. But we cannot treat the world as a mere procession of events; there are also things to which events happen. ... Cause no doubt implies change and succession. But there can be no change without something which changes, i.e., which persists through a succession of states. It would not be change but substitution, if one event succeeded another, and there were nothing but the events. ... Whatever difficulties there may be in understanding what a substance is, or the relation of a thing to its attributes, it is a desperate remedy to offer us instead a 'stream' of events, loose and disconnected, in relations of simultaneity and succession."<sup>16</sup>

(For a further and very excellent argument on the same subject by Joseph, see the appendix.)

The basic explanation of causality and its relation to the issue of determinism vs. volition can be given deceptively simply:\*

- 1) All actions, changes, and motions are actions, changes, and motions of entities.
- 2) What an entity can do depends upon what it is - what its identity is.
- 3) The identity of man is such as to allow him the choice of whether or not he focuses his mind. Man is, by nature, a being whose conceptual faculty operates volitionally.

Thus the libertarian position does not contradict the law of universal causality - when that law is formulated correctly.

"The law of causality is the law of identity applied to action. All actions are caused by entities. The nature

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\* This argument is basically that given by Branden in the 5th lecture of the Psychology series, but, of course, he is not responsible for my interpretation or development.

of an action is caused and determined by the nature of the entities that act; a thing cannot act in contradiction to its nature."<sup>17</sup>

What is the nature of man? The lower animals have a nature such as to allow them to control their bodily actions through the faculty of consciousness. Man can regulate and control his consciousness itself, with certain limits. Man has to cause his own mind to function (with respect to the conceptual level); the cause of focusing lies within himself. Choice is not the exception to causality; it is not an accident when a man's mind is focused, unless causality is construed as an event-to-event relation. This latter, which is a mechanistic or "billiard-ball" theory of causality, means that every action is only a reaction - a position which leads one into such paradoxes as the alternative between an infinite retrogression of antecedent events (which is impossible), and a "First Cause" (which is irrational, and itself requires explanation).

It will no doubt be objected that the action-to-entity theory of causality is trivial and empty of factual content, and that the assertion that man's nature allows him choice begs the question. To the first objection we should ask: If this version of causality is trivially true and empty of factual content, how is it that philosophers such as David Hume can assert things to be conceivable and/or possible which contradict it? Hume implicitly denies the principle that what a thing is determines what it can do in the following passage from his Inquiry:

"May I not clearly and distinctly conceive that a body falling from the clouds and which in all other respects resembles snow, has yet the taste of salt or feeling of

fire? Is there any more intelligible proposition than to affirm that all the trees will flourish in December and January, and will decay in May and June?"<sup>18</sup>

It is currently fashionable to dismiss truths of wide application, such as the laws of logic, as non-informative and trivial. But while such principles are not informative in the same way that stockmarket quotations are, they are nonetheless true and meaningful - and in the long run a lot more valuable than stockmarket quotations.

As to the objection that the libertarian position begs the question, it is to be replied that rather it is the determinist who has been begging the question all along. The determinist has asserted that every event in man's consciousness is made necessary by antecedent factors beyond his control. When asked for evidence in support of his position, the determinist points to his version of the law of causality. But determinism is just a particular instance of that view of the law of causality, and it is precisely the idea that that version of causality applies to man's conceptual faculty that the libertarian is asking the determinist to support. It is as if one were to ask a friend why he thought there couldn't be a black swan, and to get back the answer that the law of universal coloration implies that all swans are white. Upon asking what the law of universal coloration is, you are given the reply: it's the principle that every swan is white.

On the action-entity theory of causality, to say that causality implies man cannot have free will is equivalent to saying: since things can only do what their nature allows them

to do, man cannot have a nature which allows him to focus volitionally. That is, of course, a complete non-sequitor. The only thing which follows directly from the action-entity theory is that man can only do what his nature allows him to do. If the determinists think there is some impossibility in man's nature being such as to allow him volition, the burden of proof is on them to prove this impossibility, and to prove it by something other than a reference to causality.

Sometimes the attempt is made to prove this impossibility by holding that since the brain of man is ultimately composed of ordinary electrons and protons, free will would involve a violation of the laws of science for these units, and is hence false. But the argument overlooks the fact that the properties of the whole are not necessarily the same as the properties of the parts. No one is maintaining that it is the electron or proton which has free will. Volition is an attribute of man - and specifically of the organ of man's consciousness: his brain.

\* \* \*

Although most of the philosophical predilection for determinism no doubt stems from the belief that it is implied by causality, much of the "popular" favor for determinism rests on the idea that one's environment determines one's character.

Most, or all, of the alleged evidence for environmental determinism is predicated on the assumption that man's volition is located in his actions and beliefs. All attempts at unconditional explanation of behavior in terms of environmental influ-



ences fails when it is realized that the choice to think or not to think is the choice which controls what a man will believe and do. This choice may be rephrased as the choice whether or not one will seek to understand oneself and the world around one. Merely being confronted with a particular environment, whether it be rational or irrational, cannot determine whether or not you will seek to understand that environment, nor does it control what conclusions you will draw, nor what evaluations you will make. For example, consider two brothers brought up in a home dominated by grossly irrational parents. One brother gives up the struggle to understand his parents, feeling (if he could put it into words) that the realm of human motivation and psychology is incomprehensible by its very nature. The second brother, however, doesn't ever stop trying to understand what makes his parents act as they do. He may not find out until he is forty, he may never find out, but he never declares the realm of human action unknowable, as his brother did. A different kind of character and personality would result from the different choices of these two brothers.

Similarly, no parental action could prevent a child from focusing if he chooses to. Firstly, there would be no way for the parents to know when the child was focusing, so that aside from general commands such as "Don't think so much!" there isn't any way for the parents to punish the specific act of focusing. Secondly, the mere fact of meeting with disapproval or even physical beating could not compel a child to "shut off the internal machinery", to blank-out his mind. In fact, one of the most important choices one has to make is whether one will keep one's mind functioning through distress, pain, and fear.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST VOLITION

As far as I know, there is only one argument against volition, per se, and that is that the existence of volition would make a science of psychology impossible. If the argument that determinism implies the impossibility of knowledge stands, then the exact opposite is true: without the existence of volition, no science of psychology would be possible. Because man's volition is located in the very basic choice to think or not to think, once given this choice, many rigorously scientific predictions are possible. All the statements psychology arrives at will have to be in the form of hypotheticals. The antecedents of these hypotheticals will have to be explicitly or implicitly: "if  $\emptyset$  continues to think;" or, "unless  $\emptyset$  begins to think." The extensive science of psychology being developed by Nathaniel Branden is in fact based upon the theory that man is a being whose conceptual faculty functions volitionally. The rather startling success of psychotherapy based upon his theories testifies to the compatibility of volition and a science of psychology.

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## CONCLUSION

It has been argued that determinism, the theory that every event in man's consciousness is made necessary by antecedent factors beyond his control, leads to the impossibility of human knowledge and is consequently self-refuting. The alleged evidence for determinism provided by the position that causality implies determinism was seen to rest on an unsupportable notion of the nature of the causal relation. The possibility of any empirical evidence for environmental determinism was denied. The Objectivist view that man's volition is located in the functioning of his conceptual faculty was shown to be the only consistent alternative to determinism, and the Aristotelian-Objectivist view of causality, which is consistent with man's volition, was described and briefly supported. Introspective evidence in support of free will was held as prima facie valid, but the existence of free association tests and irresistible thoughts was discounted as evidence for volition. The argument that the existence of volition would be incompatible with a science of psychology was disposed of. In sum we are left with no arguments for determinism, introspective evidence for volition, a proof that determinism is false, and no arguments against volition.

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APPENDIX

Page 6. "A determinist once engaged in a public debate with an "indeterminist" - i.e., a person who rejects determinism. The debate took place in a college classroom. By the rules of the college everybody had to be out of the building not later than 11 P.M. In the course of his talk the determinist predicted that his opponent would not be in the room or in the building at 2 o' clock the following morning. The indeterminist defied this prediction. He stayed on, presumably spent a miserable night, had himself discovered in the morning by the cleaning woman, and made sure that he was reported to the dean in charge of such matters for breaking the rules of the college. His action of course falsified the determinist's prediction and greatly surprised all who had been present at the debate. Nevertheless, everyone who heard of the indeterminist's bizarre performance had no doubt that it was just as much due to a cause as any of his other, less unusual actions. Moreover, if it had been known that he was eager to defy the prediction, and furthermore that this desire was stronger than his desire for a comfortable night, the outcome could have been predicted." Edwards & Pap, page 311.

Page 7. A formal proof of the general practical syllogism:

- |  |   |                  |
|--|---|------------------|
| 1. $\emptyset$ wants to do X when conditions C hold  | / | Assumption       |
| 2. $\emptyset$ can do X  | / | Assumption       |
| 3. $\emptyset$ believes he can do X when conditions C hold   | / | Assumption       |
| 4. $\emptyset$ believes conditions C hold  | / | Assumption       |
| 5. (1&2) $\rightarrow$ $\emptyset$ wants to do X   | / | From definitions |
| 6. 1   | / | 1                |
| 7. 2   | / | 2                |
| 8. 1&2   | / | K+               |
| 9. $\emptyset$ wants to do X   | / | C- on 5          |
| 10. 2 $\rightarrow$ ( $\emptyset$ chooses to do X $\rightarrow$ $\emptyset$ does X)                          | / | Def. of 2        |
| 11. 2  | / | 2                |
| 12. $\emptyset$ chooses to do X $\rightarrow$ $\emptyset$ does X   | / | C- on 10         |
| 13. (9&3&4) $\rightarrow$ $\emptyset$ chooses to do X  | / | Empirical (?)    |
| 14. 9  | / | 9                |
| 15. 3  | / | 3                |
| 16. 4  | / | 4                |
| 17. (9&3&4)  | / | K+               |
| 18. $\emptyset$ chooses to do X  | / | C- on 13         |
| 19. $\emptyset$ does X   | / | C- on 12         |
| 20. 4 $\rightarrow$ 19   | / | C+ on 4 & 19     |
| 21. 3 $\rightarrow$ (4 $\rightarrow$ 19)   | / | C+ on 3 & 20     |
| 22. 2 $\rightarrow$ (3 $\rightarrow$ (4 $\rightarrow$ 19) $\rightarrow$ 19) $\rightarrow$ 7                  | / | C+ on 2 & 21     |
| 23. 1 $\rightarrow$ (2 $\rightarrow$ (3 $\rightarrow$ (4 $\rightarrow$ 19) $\rightarrow$ 7) $\rightarrow$ 7} | / | C+ on 1 & 22     |
- Q.E.D.

It may be objected that giving in to temptation constitutes a counterexample to the practical syllogism. I am assuming in saying " $\emptyset$  is experiencing a desire for X", however, that  $\emptyset$  pre-

sently evaluates X to be desirable in the total context he is projecting to be entailed by X. That is,  $\phi$  will experience a desire for X if he feels the positive or desirable consequences of having X outweigh the negative or undesirable consequences. In the case of the weak-willed man who gives in to temptation, he simply doesn't consider the undesirable consequences. For example, the man who is adrift on a liferaft without fresh water may "know" in an abstract sense that it is not desirable to drink the salt-water of the ocean which surrounds him. But if he doesn't make an effort to focus on this knowledge and remind himself of it - if he only thinks, in effect, "I want water, there is water", he will certainly drink. In general it is easier to blank-out long-range consequences than the ones which are immediate, urgent, and almost staring one in the face.

Page 12. If the rays of light from a point X are in focus at point Y, then light rays from a point either nearer to or farther from Y than X is, will be out of focus at Y.

Page 16. This analogy and the other analogies and metaphors used in this paper are just analogies and metaphors. There are fewer more disastrous or widespread errors in the history of philosophy than the belief that there really is a mental bookstore, that introspection is a process of real observation directed inward (wherever that is), and that in perception what one perceives are his experiences instead of real things. Introspection is treated more intensively in later parts of the thesis.

Page 16. The subconscious mind consists of all the information (factual and normative) which is not presently in the forefront of an individual's consciousness, but which he has learned and accepted. Thus the subconscious has no content at birth, and it never has any "will of its own" - it only operates upon the beliefs and goals one accepts. The best analogy to the subconscious is that of the electronic computer. Obviously, this theory is a far cry from the Freudian view of the subconscious as a mysterious latent force.

Page 23. Brand Blanshard gives a good argument against the naive feeling that we choose our actions directly:

"After the noise of argument has died down, a sort of intuition stubbornly remains that we can not only lift our hand if we choose, but that the choice itself is open to us. Is this not an impressive fact?

"No, I do not think it is. The first reason is that when we are making a choice our faces are always tuned toward the future, toward the consequences that one act or the other will bring us, never toward the past with its possible sources of constraint. Hence these sources are not noticed. Hence we remain unaware that we are under constraint at all. Hence we feel free from such constraint. The case is almost as simple as that. When you consider buying a new typewriter your thought is fixed on the pleasure

and advantage you would gain from it, or the drain it would make on your budget. You are not delving into the causes that led to your taking pleasure in the prospect of owning a typewriter or to your having a complex about expenditure. You are too much preoccupied with the ends to which the choice would be a means to give any attention to the causes of which your choice may be an effect. But that is no reason for thinking that if you did preoccupy yourself with these causes you would not find them at work. You may remember that Sir Francis Galton was so much impressed with this possibility that for some time he kept account in a notebook of the occasions on which he made important choices with a full measure of this feeling of freedom; then shortly after each choice he turned his eye backward in search of constraints that might have been acting on him stealthily. He found it so easy to bring such constraining factors to light that he surrendered to the determinist view."

Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science, p. 21.

Page 40. "If a thing a under conditions c produces a change x in a subject s - if, for example, light of certain wave-lengths, passing through the lens of a camera, produces a certain chemical change (which we call the taking of a photograph of Mount Everest) upon a photographic film - the way in which it acts must be regarded as a partial expression of what it is. It could only act differently, if it were different. As long therefore as it is a, and stands related under conditions c to a subject that is s, no other effect than x can be produced; and to say that the same thing acting on the same thing under the same conditions may yet produce a different effect, is to say that a thing need not be what it is. But this is in flat conflict with the Law of Identity. A thing, to be at all, must be something, and can only be what it is. To assert a causal connexion between a and x implies that a acts as it does because it is what it is; because, in fact, it is a. ... The fact of change is not disputed, nor the difficulty of finding two things that are qualitatively the same. But if the second has a different effect, that must be because of its qualitative difference from the first, and not merely because it is a second; and so far as it is qualitatively the same, the effect must be the same also ... What holds for the relation of subject and attribute holds in this respect eo ipso for that of cause and effect. To suppose that the same cause - other things being equal - can have different effects on two occasions is as much as to suppose that two things can be the same, and yet so far their attributes different. "

Introduction to Logic, pp. 408-409.

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FOOTNOTES

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