

## Freedom and Determinism

If determinism is to be carried to the extreme then somewhere, at sometime, there had to be a beginning. Because somewhere, at sometime, something had to be the first causal act that started the chain reaction that brings us to today.

If there was no first causal act then the argument for determinism is lost. This must be true because the very principle of determinism is that "...every event has a cause." (Blatchford, 30) If, then, the determinist tries to argue that all matter has existed throughout infinite time he is trying to argue a circle of events rather than a chain of events. This would mean that eventually we would have to go full circle. In a sense we would have to go back to our very beginnings, which would be caused by whatever we end up being. This is true because, if every event has a cause, and if time is eternal, then if we stand at one event we can trace that event back to itself. Every event must have caused another event, which caused another, which eventually leads back to the event that causes the event where we now stand. This is the only way that the concept of eternity, and the claim that every event has a cause, can be meshed. Every event must lead to the event eventually causes itself. Otherwise there is one event without a cause.

In other words, A caused B, which caused C, which caused D, and on throughout eternity. But if this is true, what caused A? Using the four letters here, the only answer the determinist can have, if he is going to stick to the idea that time is eternal, is that D caused A. Whatever is the last caused event has to come back to cause what we see as the first event, A.

This concept cannot be accepted by a reasonable person because he would then have to agree that we somehow must devolve back to a prehistoric state. Therefore we must go with the more reasonable assumption that if every event has a cause then there must have been one event that started it all. Yet, if that is true, what caused that one event; the very first event? Obviously nothing could have caused it if nothing existed before it, because if something existed before the first event we would then be forced to ask what caused whatever existed before the first event. Therefore, it is at this point that the determinist loses his argument. It is readily apparent that there was at least one event that did not have a cause, and the underlying principle of the determinist is that everything has a cause.

I've already pointed out that the determinist cannot give a strong argument for eternity; claiming that there was no first event. Eternal existence means that nothing caused the first event because there never was a first event. The very concept that every event has a preceding event that caused it implies a beginning or first event. But eternity implies that nothing caused existence, it simply always was there. Eternity cannot be caused by something, otherwise it would not be eternal, it would have had a beginning.

Why do I preface my paper with all of this? Because one cannot argue with a determinist on the day-to-day acts of life. No matter what one says about why someone did something, the determinist will argue that his decision to do something was caused by some event or a chain of events in that person's past. For each situation the proponents of free will would propose, the determinist would again claim that he really did not have a choice. His so called choice, they would argue, was the result of prior events in their lives. Choice to them is an illusion. It may seem as though we've freely chosen to do one thing or another, but in reality our heredity and environment caused us to make the choice we made. Even if we pointed out that a person would choose A today and B tomorrow, the determinist would argue that the environment changed enough in that one day to make the difference in the person's choice.

Let us suppose you are able to point to a set of identical twins, who obviously have the same heredity, and proved they were raised side-by-side from birth to the day they graduated from high school. Let us say that the day after they graduated from high school one of the twins joined the Army, eventually married and lived his life in the middle class suburbs of a mid-west city. Meanwhile, the other twin entered college as soon as possible after graduating from high school, never married, became a highly respected medical doctor, wrote books and became a multi-millionaire. The first twin is very conservative, goes to church and believes in the family. The second twin is very liberal, does not even believe in God, and has never considered having a family.

The free will advocate would ask the determinist how he could explain the fact that these two, who had the same heredity and environment all the way through graduation, took completely different paths beginning the day after graduation. At this point the determinist would argue that each twin had many hours, and probably days, in their lives when they were not together. Thus, at those times their environments were different. They would go on to say that it was in these differing environments that we could find the causal factors that caused them to take unlike paths upon graduation. It does not matter how small the times were when their environments differed, they all added up to be enough of a difference.

This is an example of why one cannot defeat the determinist's argument at the day-to-day level. One must prove him wrong by proving his definition wrong.

The determinist wishes to distinguish between the act of choosing and free will. According to him the act of choosing may appear to be the act of free will, but in actuality the choice is caused by forces brought on by heredity and environment. They say that it is "his temperament and his training" (Blatchford, 35) that causes him to make his choice. But, if a man can be trained then it proves that a man can change. And, if a man can change, then the determinist's argument that all our actions are pre-determined becomes considerably weaker. The determinist keeps using the terms "taught" and "environment" as though they influence a man's decision. But if a person has no free will, then it would not matter what his environment is; he would do what he is predestined to do, no matter what. If "teaching is part of the environment," (Blatchford, 37) then change is possible. If change is possible then free will is possible. You cannot have it

both ways. If your life is predetermined by causes then you cannot be taught. If you can be taught then you can choose to change based on what you have learned.

Robert Blatchford used the story of Macbeth to make his point. I believe this to be a mistake. He argues that Macbeth was taught that honor was strength and that murder was wicked and disgraceful. So it was because of his environment, what he had been taught, that he could not kill Duncan. Macbeth seemingly chooses honor over murder. But does he? What honor is there in allowing another to commit murder simply because you fear the act itself? Macbeth chose to let his wife murder Duncan by not taking the daggers from her when she chided him for his weakness. His training taught him murder was disgraceful, yet he chose to murder Duncan albeit through the action of his wife. He made a choice contrary to his training.

If we set before the determinist the example of a man who has changed from a decrepit immoral person to one who now lives a moral life, he will argue that it is the man's environment that caused the change. But how often do we see a man change then leave his environment because of that change? It was not the environment that changed, it was the man of his own free will who decided to change. Granted, he realizes that if he stays in his present environment those influences will likely cause him to change back to the immoral man he once was. But this is precisely why he freely makes the choice to leave that environment.

The determinist contradicts himself on this point. At one moment he claims that to reverse a man's "...conduct we should have to reverse [his] heredity and environment." (Blatchford, 40) Yet, at another moment, he allows that a man can change, but it "...is the environment that has wrought the change." (Blatchford, 38) Obviously one cannot reverse his heredity. It is stamped upon him at birth, and will remain with him until death. So how can the determinist claim that conduct can only be reversed if both heredity and environment is reversed, but then claim that man can change if his environment only has changed? What then happens to the definition of determinism which includes the belief that all choices are the result of heredity and environment? Again, he cannot have it both ways. Environment may influence a man's decision, but the choice is still his. To deny that we are influenced by our environment would be foolish, but such influence does not negate free will.

This statement also flies in the face of the determinist who claims that man is not responsible for his actions, and therefore should not be punished for them. If a change in environment can cause a change in man, as is shown above to be claimed, then man is morally responsible to do everything possible to ensure that each man's environment nurtures acceptable moral behavior. It is obvious this cannot be done. Why? Because not every man will choose to allow his environment to be changed to concur with someone else's moral standards.

Passing a law to punish by death a kidnapper does not completely wipe out the crime of kidnaping. This is because some will choose to kidnap no matter what the punishment. But the fact that others choose not to kidnap because they fear the punishment shows that a choice is possible. All have been taught by the

society that certain behaviors are unacceptable. All persons of a particular society are subject to the laws of that society, and learn the repercussions of not obeying those laws. But some choose to obey, while others choose not to obey.

The idea of punishment for crime cannot be argued against by the determinist who also wishes to argue that a man's actions are caused by our heredity and by what we are taught, our environment. Punishment is meant to teach the criminal that the society in which he lives does not accept his criminal behavior. If he cannot be taught he cannot be changed. And, if he cannot be changed, in other words, if a new causal factor cannot be introduced to induce a change, then where does that leave determinism? Man is responsible for his behavior precisely because he can be taught what behavior is acceptable and what is not.