

## **BACKGROUND TO THE ARGUMENT OF SECTION 3, KANT'S *GROUNDWORK***

Consider this argument (formulated by Roderick Chisholm):

1. If a choice is one we could not have avoided making, then it is one for which we are not morally responsible.
2. If we make a choice under conditions such that, given those conditions, it is causally impossible for the choice not to be made, then the choice is one we could not have avoided making.
3. Every event occurs under conditions such that, given those conditions, it is causally impossible for that event not to occur.
4. The making of a choice is the occurrence of an event.
5. We are not morally responsible for any of our choices.

(If I am *morally responsible* for a choice I make, I am accountable for the choice, in the sense that I am legitimately liable to moral praise or blame depending on its quality. I am blameworthy if I am morally responsible for a bad choice and praiseworthy if I am morally responsible for a good choice.)

*Determinism* is the idea that every event that occurs is determined to be just what it is by prior conditions according to physical laws.

The argument advances a position known as hard determinism: (a) determinism is true, and (b) determinism is incompatible with moral responsibility. In contrast, soft determinism is the position that (a) determinism is true and (c) determinism is compatible with moral responsibility.

The compatibilist holds (c) determinism is compatible with moral responsibility. The incompatibilist holds that determinism is incompatible with moral responsibility.

The free-will libertarian holds that we have free will in the sense that when we choose, we sometimes have genuine options, such that our choice is not determined by prior conditions (so determinism is false).

Kant's position in section 3 is complex and hard to pigeon-hole in the terms of the positions defined above. One aspect of his view is the two-standpoints idea. He holds that insofar as we seek to observe and explain events in the natural world, we must presuppose that all events including our own choices and thoughts are determined by prior sufficient causes, but insofar as we deliberate and choose what to do, we must presuppose that we are free to choose and have free will. In one role (observer) we must presuppose determinism, in another role (agent) we must presuppose free will.