Chapter 20

Two Arguments that Free Will Does Not Exist

1. Sally in the coffee shop

Sally is sitting at her favourite table in her favourite coffee shop, sipping cappuccino while reading *The New Yorker*. It's a pleasant afternoon, and Sally is happy to take a break.

Sally wants to sit by herself and read in peace. To discourage others from sitting with her, Sally has cluttered up the table and the spare chairs around it with her things. To her left is a pile of books and to her right is a large pad of writing paper. On one of the spare chairs rests her knapsack, while on the back of the other is draped her jacket. When Sally first sat down, most of the other tables were empty and there were plenty of free seats, but now the coffee shop is filling up and seats are becoming scarce. Soon newcomers will have either to take their coffee elsewhere or to ask Sally to move her stuff.

Sally is aware that the coffee shop is now crowded and that soon patrons will have no place to sit. She understands that to leave her table cluttered is to deny people places to sit down, or to require them to undertake the unpleasant task of getting her to clear them a space. Sally has no desire that someone's day be ruined because they can't find a place to sit. As well, Sally is sensitive to the fact that she will be behaving selfishly if she leaves the clutter as it is. So Sally has, from her own perspective, a couple of good reasons to remove the clutter and let others join her. On the other hand, if people sit down with her they might talk or otherwise distract her from her reading. Sally wants very much to remain alone at her table. Thus, Sally also has a strong reason to leave the clutter as it is.

Sally contemplates the two options before her. The first option is to leave the clutter as it is, in the hope that others will be discouraged from sitting with her. If the tactic of leaving the clutter as it is works, Sally will be left alone to read and sip her cappuccino in peace, just as she would like. The second option is to clear the clutter from the table, thereby making it likely that someone will disturb her by sitting at her table. To take this option would be to do the kind and unselfish thing, and Sally doesn't want to be cruel or selfish. Both options Sally contemplates, then, are attractive to her in certain ways, though both also are unattractive to her in other ways.

Sally must make a decision. She must choose between the two options. She must either leave the clutter as it is or clear it away. Which option does she decide to choose? Does she choose to leave the table cluttered? Or does she choose to clear away the clutter to make room for others?

Sally chooses to leave the clutter as it is. She takes a sip of cappuccino and returns to her article.

Let us pause to make explicit what went on in Sally's mind between the time she noticed that the coffee shop was filling up and the time she returned to her article. First, she envisioned two courses of action, each of which she believed she could follow. Sally thought for a while about these two options, considering the pros and cons of each from the point of view of her values, of what she likes and doesn't like, of what she wants and doesn't want. She found she could say something for and against each option. She then weighed each

option against the other, and determined that, for now at least, it matters more to her that she be able to enjoy her afternoon in peace than that others be comfortable and she not be selfish. Given this determination, she chose to leave the clutter as it is. Having made this choice, she then intentionally left the clutter as it is, and intentionally went back to reading.

Did Sally leave the clutter as it is of her own free will? Was her choice not to clear the table a choice she made freely? These are the philosophical questions we will ask and attempt to answer in this chapter.

2. Two arguments that Sally did not choose freely

At first it might well seem that nothing could be more plain than that Sally made her choice freely and did what she did freely. After all, nobody forced her to leave the clutter as it was, no one was ready to restrain her had she tried to clear the table. Moreover, she was not in the grip of any compulsion to be alone, and there was nothing obsessive about her behaviour. Indeed, she was entirely clearheaded about her options, and she chose the option she did because it represented what she most wanted to do. So, it seems, nothing outside her made her choose as she did, and her choice expressed her desire and her will at the moment of choice. Finally, Sally could very well, one might think, have chosen the option other than the one she did choose, and had she chosen the other option she would have performed an action different than the one she did perform.

Let us summarize why we might be inclined to think that Sally chose of her own free will to leave the clutter as it is. First, she did not act under external force or internal compulsion. Second, she was clear about the options she envisioned and about her values regarding them. Third, she chose the one course of action over the other on the basis of those values. All this means that nothing that we would ordinarily think renders a choice or an action unfree, or even less than totally free, was operating in Sally's case. Thus, Sally's choice to leave the clutter as it is was made freely, and her action of leaving the clutter as it is was performed freely. Or, again, so one might think.

There are, however, at least two powerful arguments that appear to show that Sally did not choose freely and did not act freely. These arguments have as their conclusion that nothing any person ever does is something that that person has freely chosen to do. If it is true that no one ever chooses freely, then it must also be true that Sally did not freely choose to leave the clutter as it is. Let us turn our attention to these two arguments. To ease our presentation of them, we will formulate each in terms only of choosing an option for action, and consider why no choice of an option can be made freely. Right now, that is, we won't speak of performing actions, only of making choices. In later sections, though, when we consider the relation between choosing among options freely and performing an action freely, we will again speak of actions as well as choices.

The two arguments we will examine have exactly the same conclusion. The conclusion of each is that no choice anyone makes to do one thing rather than to do something else is ever a choice made freely. Though the two arguments come to the same conclusion, they are very different arguments. They take different routes to that one conclusion, and they employ different ideas. If we are to understand them, we must not confuse them with each other.

No choice anyone makes to do one thing rather than to do something else is ever a choice made freely. We will begin our examination of each of the arguments to this conclusion with a quick overview of the whole argument, so that we might become acquainted with its central idea. Then we will present the argument in detail, so that we might appreciate it fully as a rigorous chain of thought.

3. The could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument

The central idea in the first argument that no one ever chooses among options freely is that no one ever possesses the power to choose differently than they do. This idea is effective in the argument, though, only because a central assumption in that argument is that a necessary condition for a choice among options to be a choice made freely is that the person making the choice can, at the moment of choice, choose otherwise than he does choose. Thus, if no one has the power to choose otherwise than they do, while a necessary part of a free choice is that at the moment of choice the agent could have chosen otherwise, then it follows that no one ever chooses one option over another freely.

Let us see how this central idea, that no one is ever able to choose otherwise than they do choose, applies to the case of Sally's choice to leave the clutter as it is. According to the idea that a choice is made freely only if at the moment of choice the agent can choose an option other than the one he does choose, it would have been true of Sally, if she chose freely, that at the moment of choice she could have chosen to clear away the clutter instead of choosing, as she did, to leave the clutter as it is. So, if Sally could not have chosen otherwise than to leave the clutter as it is, then Sally's choice to leave the clutter as it is was not after all a choice Sally made freely. Since, according to this argument, Sally could not have chosen otherwise than she did choose, Sally's choice to leave the clutter was not a choice she made freely.

We can call this first argument that no one ever chooses freely the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument, in reference to its central idea. Here is the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument, in full detail:

Each choice of one course of action over another that a person makes is a choice made by that person on the basis of the reasons she has at the moment of choice. A person's reasons for choosing one option over another are made up of that person's beliefs about what will happen should she pursue that course of action and her desires and values, that is, what she wants most to accomplish. What this means is that when an agent chooses to follow one course of action over another, that agent does so because she believes that the course of action she has chosen to follow will more efficiently lead her to more of what she wants than will following the other course of action. (The point here is really just common sense: That Sally chose to order cappuccino rather than café au lait, when both were available to her, indicates that Sally wanted a cappuccino more than she wanted a café au lait. Her reason for choosing cappuccino over café au lait involved the fact that she wanted a cappuccino more than a café au lait. Another way of putting it is that her desire for cappuccino was stronger than her desire for café au lait.)

The reasons present in the agent at the moment of choice for choosing one option rather than another determine which option the agent will choose. Sally, at the moment of choice, wanted to be left alone more than she cared to be kind to others, and the fact that she wanted to

be left alone more than she cared to be kind to others determined that she chose the option she did choose. Had she wanted more to be kind than to remain alone, she would have chosen the option of removing the clutter from her table. But because she wanted more to remain alone than to be kind, she left the clutter as it was.

A person chooses the option he chooses because of his reasons—his beliefs, his desires, his values—at the moment of choice. Those reasons determine which option among the options for action that he envisions he will choose, and they determine which options he will forgo. Now here comes the crucial step in this argument: But since those reasons *determine* which option he will choose, it cannot be true of him at the moment of choice that he could have chosen otherwise than he does. He *must* choose the option that his reasons for choice favour. His reasons for choosing the one option rather than the other are the determining cause of his choosing the one option rather than the other. So, given that specific determining cause, just that effect, his particular choice, will follow. It turns out, then, that the agent at the moment of choice cannot choose otherwise than he does choose. If at the moment you choose between cappuccino and café au lait you want cappuccino more than you want café au lait, then you will choose cappuccino. In Sally's case, her strongest desire at the moment of choice is her desire to read her *New Yorker* undisturbed. Thus, given Sally's belief that by leaving the table cluttered she will increase the chance that she will remain undisturbed, Sally cannot do otherwise than to choose to leave the table cluttered.

It makes no sense to suppose that a person has reasons that overall support her going one way rather than another and yet then chooses to go that other way rather than the first. If the reasons to go the one way are stronger than the reasons to go the other way, then she will go the one way. But, since a person will invariably go in the direction her reasons point, it follows that no person could ever chose otherwise than she does.

Therefore, since it is a requirement of a free choice that at the moment of choice the agent could have chosen otherwise than he did, and this requirement cannot be satisfied so long as the reasons a person has at the moment of choice are the determining cause of his choosing as he does, no choice anyone makes to do one thing rather than to do something else is ever a choice made freely.

That, then, is the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument, presented in full detail. The central idea is that a choice is not a freely made choice unless the person making that choice can, at the moment of choice, choose otherwise than he does. The key step in the argument is that which takes us from the fact that we choose what we choose because of the reasons we have at the time of choice to the contention that no matter what we choose, we could not have chosen otherwise than we did choose.

Again, let us see how this argument applies to Sally's choice. At the moment she made her choice, Sally wanted most to be left alone. Given that at the moment of choice Sally wanted most to be left alone, Sally will choose the course of action she believes will lead to her being left alone. What Sally wanted was, then, the determining cause of what Sally chose to do. Thus, Sally could not have chosen otherwise but to leave the table cluttered. But any choice of an option such that the person making the choice could not have chosen otherwise than she did is not a choice of an option made freely. Therefore, Sally's choice to leave the table cluttered, determined as it was by Sally's strongest desire, was not a choice made freely.

4. First comments on the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument

The could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument is a profound and persuasive argument. Many philosophers have been convinced by it. Others, however, have not. We will examine criticisms of this argument later. Right now, let us simply recall and make explicit three claims or ideas that are assumed in it. If any of these assumptions turns out to be unwarranted or false, then we have reason for rejecting this argument. (That an assumption of this argument turns out to be false would not, though, give us reason for thinking that its conclusion is false. That an argument to a conclusion is faulty doesn't imply that that conclusion is false; it only implies that that argument gives no solid reason to believe that that conclusion is true.)

One assumption is that the reasons an agent has for choosing a specific course of action determine him to choose that course of action. As we will see, some philosophers reject this assumption as false. They hold instead that people choose for their reasons *without* those reasons determining what they will choose. We will investigate this issue in the next chapter when we discuss the position called libertarianism.

Another assumption made in the could-not-have-done-otherwise argument is that a necessary condition for a choice to be a free choice is that the agent of that choice could, at the moment of choice, have chosen differently than he did. This assumption might well seem obviously true. Nonetheless, perhaps there are reasons for rejecting it as false. Maybe the concept of being able to choose otherwise is really no part of the concept of a free choice. We will explore in detail in Chapter Three the idea that we can choose freely even though we can't choose otherwise than we do.

A third assumption is that the meaning of the phrase "he could have chosen otherwise than he did" is entirely clear to us, that we don't have to analyse that phrase further. This assumption lies in back of a key transition in the argument. One claim in the argument is that an agent's reasons for choosing one option over others determine that he chooses that option over the others. From that claim we are invited to infer that in any choice, the agent of the choice couldn't have chosen otherwise than he did. Perhaps, though, after we analyse what it would mean to say of someone that she could have chosen otherwise than she did, we will come to the understanding that, in many cases, even though one's reasons determined one's choice, still, one could have chosen otherwise than one did. We will explore the idea that once we see what it means to say someone could have chosen otherwise than they did, we will find no incompatibility between the claim that our reasons determine our choices and the idea that at least sometimes we could have chosen otherwise than we did.

5. Free choice and moral responsibility

Why is the question whether any choice is ever made freely or any action is ever performed freely of interest to us? Is the question of free will simply a puzzle it would be intellectually satisfying to solve, or do answers to this question have implications for other issues or problems, issues or problems connected with either our self-conception or how we should live?

Let's pause to think about these questions before turning to the second argument that no one ever chooses freely.

Does it matter to *you* whether you possess free will? Does it matter to you whether you can ever choose between options freely or perform an action freely? If it does matter to you whether you possess free will, then *why* does it matter to you whether you possess it? What concerning yourself or your life do you think depends on your having free will? What concerning you or your life, as you conceive them to be, would be different were you to come to believe that you lack free will?

Does it matter to you whether *other people* possess free will? If it does matter to you that your friends and family and classmates and the people you meet on the street are free agents, then *why* does this matter to you? What in your attitudes towards others would be different were you to think them without free will? If you think the people you meet do possess free will, would you treat them differently than you now do were you to think they lack free will? In what ways would you treat them differently? (Take a few minutes to write down your answers to the questions posed in the above two paragraphs.)

Perhaps the question whether persons possess free will is simply an intellectual puzzle that some people find intriguing, a puzzle more or less isolated from other philosophical and practical questions, so that whatever answer is the right answer to it, nothing we believe about other matters would be much affected. Most people who find the question whether persons possess free will interesting and challenging, though, do so not simply because they enjoy puzzles, but because they think the correct answer would matter greatly to many other of their intellectual concerns, and even to such general practical problems they face as how best to live their life.

What seems to tie the question whether we possess free will to other personally significant questions and issues is the relation between having free will and being morally responsible for one's actions. To be morally responsible for one's actions is to be the agent of one's actions, to be actively in control of them, and not to be merely a conduit or channel through which forces apart from one work their ways. The concept of being morally responsible for what you do is different from the concept of being merely causally responsible for it, though being morally responsible for something presupposes being causally responsible for it. We are causally responsible for whatever consequences our behaviour brings about, just in the same way that turtles, robots, computers, and the weather are causally responsible for whatever consequences their behaviour brings about. Turtles, robots, computers, and the weather are not agents of their actions, though; they are not in control of what they do. Instead they are merely conduits through which various forces, the forces of nature and electronics, work their ways, and so they do not possess moral responsibility for their behaviour.

People, on the other hand, or so we like to think, are not simply causally responsible for their behaviour. People (sometimes) do what they do for their own reasons, they (sometimes) are in control of what happens next. The results of their actions, of those actions for which they are morally responsible, are rightly called accomplishments or failures, and thus people are fit objects of praise for the good their actions bring and of blame for the bad. It is appropriate for a person to feel pride or shame for a result of which he is morally responsible. Moreover, when a person is morally responsible for an action, we can refer to that action when determining what treatment that person deserves or warrants or has earned from our hands.

Being morally responsible for our actions seems to many of us to be important to our self image and self esteem. We like to think of ourselves as actively shaping our lives and the world around us. We would not like to have to think of ourselves as turtles or robots, responding to events as we do merely according to our biological nature or our programme. No turtle or robot or computer or weather system is morally responsible for whatever it causes, for none is the agent of what it does. Of course, not everything we do is something for which we are morally responsible. When we excuse ourselves for an action or its consequences, we are denying we are morally responsible for it. (We might excuse ourselves by claiming we didn't intend our action to cause what it did, or that we were in the grip of a compulsion or obsession that we would have liked to be rid of, or that we were under the influence of alcohol or drugs or our emotions, or under pressure from others to do what we didn't entirely want to do.) Of course, the idea that sometimes an action we performed can be legitimately excused speaks to the idea that we are also sometimes or even typically morally responsible for our actions and their consequences. No turtle or computer is to be blamed for whatever harm its behaviour causes, but neither does it make sense to think that a turtle or computer can be excused for its behaviour.

Sally, we would think, merits our disapproval for what she did in the coffee shop. Maybe we hope that she herself sometime soon finds herself denied a seat in a coffee shop through another patron's selfishness, so that she will get what she deserves. We judge that Sally should have cleared the clutter and opened a space for others, and we would hold her accountable for her action. None of these thoughts about what Sally did or our attitudes toward Sally would apply, though, had Sally lacked moral responsibility for her actions.

The connection between free will and moral responsibility seems to be this: An agent is morally responsible for a choice or an action only if that agent made that choice freely or performed that action freely. The connection seems to be that possessing free will is a necessary condition for being morally responsible for one's behaviour. A being needs to be free to choose or free to act if it is to be morally responsible for its choice or action. This is to say that a being without free will is also a being not morally responsible for what it does. If turtles and computers lack free will, then that would explain why they are not morally responsible for what they do. (The connection seems at least to be that free will is necessary for moral responsibility. Maybe in fact free will is both necessary and sufficient for moral responsibility.)

Sally left the clutter on her table as it was and returned to reading her *New Yorker*. Perhaps we would like to think that she is morally responsible for what she did. Only then would she be a fit subject of our disapproval. If we are to think that she is morally responsible for her action, we need to suppose that what she did she did freely. But if the conclusion of the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument is true, then Sally was not morally responsible for leaving the table cluttered. Here is how the argument to the conclusion that Sally was not morally responsible for her action would go: Making a choice freely is a necessary condition for being morally responsible for that choice. We can apply this claim about the relation between freedom and moral responsibility to Sally through the following conditional: If Sally is morally responsible for leaving the table cluttered, then Sally freely chose to leave the table cluttered. But, according to the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument, Sally did not freely choose to leave the table

cluttered. Together these claims imply that Sally is not morally responsible for choosing to leave the table cluttered. And that means that Sally is no more accountable for leaving the table cluttered than a turtle is for burying its eggs in the sand or a robot arm is for soldering a weld.

(Turn now to look at your answers to the questions about the significance of possessing free will, the questions posed in the second and third paragraphs of this section. If you said it matters to you whether you and others do in fact possess free will, did you say it matters to you in virtue of your hope that you and others are morally responsible for your and their choices and actions? –You needn't have used the term "moral responsibility," of course, to have had the idea of it.)

6. The distant causation argument

In section 3 above, we looked at one argument to the conclusion that no choice anyone makes to do one thing rather than to do something else is ever a choice made freely. Now we will look at a second argument to the same conclusion. This second argument has at its centre the idea that to choose freely is to be in control of one's choosing. The key step in this argument is from the idea that we were caused to have the beliefs and desires from which our choices flow by events that occurred long ago, ultimately by events that occurred even before we were born, to the conclusion that in fact we have no control over our choosing. We will want to look closely at that step. Together with the central idea that to choose freely is to be in control of one's choosing, the conclusion that we have no control over our choosing implies that no choice is ever made freely.

This argument is similar to the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument in many respects, not just in that it has the same conclusion. For one, both arguments suppose that our choices are no less the mechanical products of prior events than are the actions of turtles, robots, or weather systems. Still, it is a different argument, for it appeals to the idea that behind each choice lies a long chain of cause and effect. The idea of a long chain of cause and effect does not appear in the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument. (The could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument focuses just on the link between the reasons the agent has at the moment of choice and the choice itself.) Because it makes essential reference to chains of cause and effect that stretch far back into the past, we can call this second argument the distant causation argument.

The distant causation argument begins with a general description of why people have the desires and reasons for acting that they do. People desire what they do, and they have the reasons for acting that they do, as a result of their physiological makeup and the environment in which they live and act. In turn, people have the physiology they do, and occupy the environments they do, as a result of chains of causes and effects that stretch back to the day they were born, to the day they were conceived, to days before any humans at all were on this planet. Perhaps it's easier to make this point by going forward from the past than by going back into it from the present. Imagine the world two hundred years ago. Things happened then, and those things caused other things to happen, and those other things caused still other things to happen, all in a mechanistic chain of cause and effect. This chain brought about the event happening just now, and that event is the cause of what happens in the next moment.

That people desire what they do, that they have the personalities that they do, as a result of their physiological nature and what has happened to them through their lives seems to be an entirely uncontroversial proposition. Disciplines that study individuals and their choices and actions seem to assume that people make their choices and perform their actions for reasons, and that they have these reasons (and not other ones) because of their personalities, and their personalities are formed through their past experiences given their genetic inheritance, all the way back.

Along with this general description of why people have the personalities and desires that they do, the distant causation argument contains the claim that no one can exercise or could have exercised any degree of control over any event that occurred before he or she was born. This claim also seems entirely uncontroversial. We cannot be in control, or have been in control, of something that happened before we were around to exercise control.

The third premise in the distant causation argument is a principle meant to be applied to specific cases. It says that if an event occurs entirely as a result of some other event over which a particular person exercised no control, then that subsequent event is also an event over which that person exercised no control. In other words, if event A occurred because of nothing that you did, and event B occurred entirely because event A occurred, then event B also occurred because of nothing you did. A series of solar flares occurred in early 2001, and nothing you did had any influence over the timing or strength of these flares. This series of flares caused minor disruptions to electronic communications between ground stations and satellites. According to the principle in question, since you had nothing to do with the series of flares that caused those minor disruptions, you had nothing to do with those minor disruptions. This principle, the third premise in the first part of the distant causation argument, seems as agreeable to reason as each of the uncontroversial first two premises. So far, each point raised in the distant causation argument seems perfectly acceptable. Now let us bring these points together to see what conclusions we can draw from them.

Consider that some course of events occurred before you were born, some course of events that you thereby did not influence in any way at all, and indeed could not have influenced in any way at all. Think, perhaps, of the course of events that culminated in your biological parents meeting each other. Nothing in these events occurred as it did as a result of anything you did, for you had not yet come into existence. That course of events was the entire cause of certain subsequent courses of events. One subsequent event was your conception. By the principle we encountered above, you had no control over your conception, for it occurred entirely as a result of events over which you had no control. That event led to your birth, which was, again, by the principle above, an event over which you had no control. Your birth led to your nurturing and training and schooling, courses of events, again by the principle above, over which you had no control. All these events led to your having the personality you have, which, according to the general description given above of why people have the desires and reasons for choosing that they have, is the cause of your having the reasons you had for choosing this morning to wear what you are wearing. That means, applying the principle once more, that you had no control over the reasons you had for choosing one way rather than another. Since you had no control over having the reasons you had for choosing to dress as you did, and your reasons resulted in your choosing as you did, you had no control over your choice to dress as you are dressed. Since you had no control

over your choice to dress as you are dressed, and your choice to dress as you are dressed resulted in your being dressed as you are, you had no control over your dressing as you did this morning.

Everything you do is entirely a result of prior occurrences, occurrences that stretch back to a time before you were born, occurrences over which clearly you exercised no control. But if you exercised no control over these prior events, and they are the cause of what you do now, then you exercise no control over what you do now. Therefore, nothing you do, nothing you ever will do, is something over which you exercise any control.

That is not the end of the argument, though, for so far it makes no reference to freedom. What is needed is a connection between the idea of exercising control and the idea of being free in one's choices or actions. The connection proposed in the distant causation argument is this: If an agent makes a choice between options freely, then that agent's choice between options is under that agent's control. That seems right. It would seem that a necessary condition for choosing between options freely is being in control of one's activity of choosing. The central idea of the distant causation argument, that a choice is made freely only if the person making the choice is in control of her choice, appears to be as acceptable as the first three premises of the argument.

The first three premises of the distant causation argument generate the conclusion that no choice anyone ever makes is a choice under their control. The fourth premise in the argument expresses a link between being in control and being free. It says, if one is free in making a choice, then one is in control of one's choosing. These two claims together imply that no choice anyone makes is ever a choice made freely. And that is the final conclusion of the distant causation argument.

7. Concluding remarks

We began this chapter with Sally in a coffee shop, deliberating whether to clear away the clutter on her table so that others might have a place to sit or to leave the clutter as it is so that she might remain alone and undisturbed. The example was meant to be an example of a choice that was made freely, if any choice is ever made freely. That is, it was a choice in which the agent of that choice, Sally, was clear about the options in front of her and the likely consequences of each, who evaluated each option against her desires and her likes and dislikes, who was not obsessed with anything when making her choice, who was under no internal compulsion to choose one way rather than another, and who was faced with no external pressure to choose as she did. If Sally did not choose freely to leave the table cluttered, then, we might well agree, no choice anyone ever makes is a choice made freely.

It matters to us, we said, that at least sometimes we make our choices or perform our actions freely, for it matters to us that we see ourselves as morally responsible for our choices and actions, and having chosen or acted freely appears to be a necessary condition for being morally responsible for that choice or action. It matters to us that we are morally responsible for our choices and actions, for an important part of our self image is that we are in control of ourselves and active participants in what goes on around us. Since freedom is a necessary condition for moral responsibility, if we do not make our choices or perform our actions freely, we are not morally responsible for our choices or actions. Thus, if we are not free, we are deluded in thinking of ourselves as agents in the world. If we are not free, we are no more the

active sources of our behaviour than are turtles, robots, or weather systems the active sources of theirs.

We looked at two arguments, each of which has as its conclusion that no choice anyone makes to do one thing rather than to do something else is ever a choice made freely. The first argument, the could-not-have-chosen-otherwise argument, reached this conclusion by proposing that the choices we make are determined to be the choices they are by the beliefs and values, that is, the reasons, we have at the moment of choosing. If the reasons we have at the moment of choice favour option A over option B, then we will choose option A. Given those reasons, according to this argument, we could not have chosen otherwise. But a crucial ingredient in the idea of a free choice is that at the moment of choice the person choosing can choose otherwise than she does. Since this ingredient is lacking in all choices, no choices whatsoever are free choices. Therefore, no choice anyone makes to do one thing rather than to do something else is ever a choice made freely.

The second argument, the distant causation argument, reached the same conclusion by proposing, first, that the reasons for which we choose option A are reasons we have because of our personality and, second, that we have the personality we do because of the combined effects of our physiology and our environment and training. But our physiology, environment and training are things over which we had no control. Now, according to this argument, if something is entirely a product of another thing over which a person had no control, then that something is also a thing over which that person had no control. If, then, Sally's reasons for leaving the table cluttered rather than clearing the clutter are entirely a product of Sally's personality, and Sally had no control over her personality, then Sally's reasons likewise are things over which Sally had no control. And thus if Sally's choice to leave the table cluttered was entirely a product of her reasons for leaving the table cluttered, then Sally's choice also was something over which Sally had no control. A crucial ingredient in the idea of free choice is that free choices are choices under our control. Since Sally's choice, according to this argument, was not a choice under Sally's control, it follows that Sally did not choose freely to leave the table cluttered. Now Sally's choice was as likely to be a free choice as any choice could be, for it followed on no external force or internal compulsion and it expressed Sally's values. Therefore, no choice anyone makes to do one thing rather than to do something else is ever a choice made freely.

If we still think that Sally chose to leave the table cluttered of her own free will, we will need, for one, to explain how her choice to leave it cluttered was indeed a choice she made freely. But we will also need to explain what goes wrong in each of the two arguments presented in this chapter.