

Determinism, free will and compatibilism

by Tim Harding



1. What are determinism and free will?
2. Why is there a problem?
3. A compatibilist solution

What is determinism?



Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

‘the metaphysical thesis that the facts of the past, in conjunction with the laws of nature, entail every truth about the future’

What is free will?



Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

‘To have free will is to have what it takes to act freely. When an agent acts freely—when she exercises her free will—it is up to her whether she does one thing or another on that occasion. A plurality of alternatives is open to her, and she determines which she pursues. When she does, she is an ultimate source or origin of her action’.

Why is this a problem?



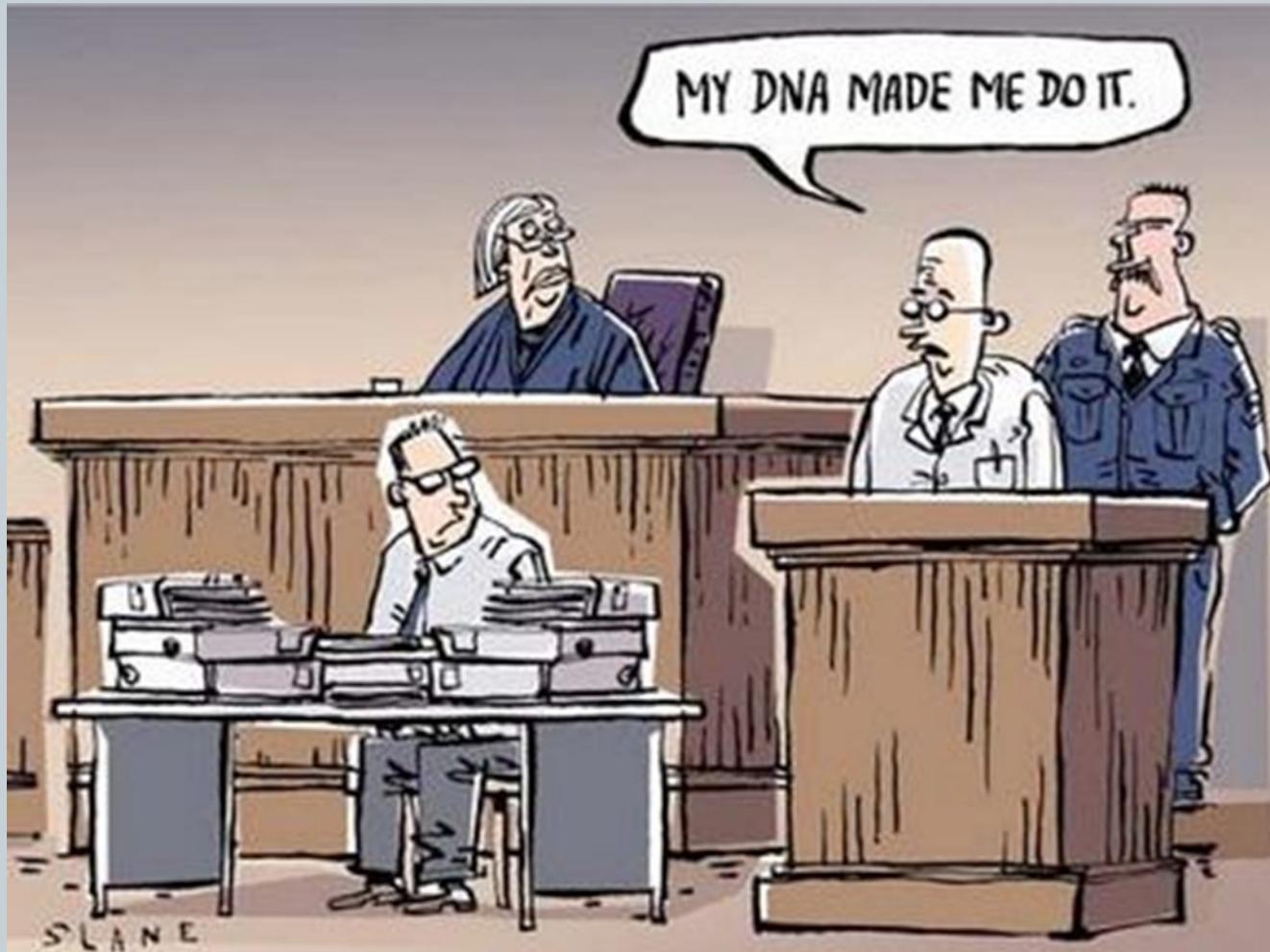
- 1. Incompatibility problem:** how can we make free choices if all our actions are determined by the facts of the past and the laws of nature?
- 2. Justice problem:** how can we be held morally responsible for our actions if we have no free will?

The incompatibility problem



- 1) Some person, at some time, could have acted otherwise than she did.
- 2) Actions are events.
- 3) Every event has a cause.
- 4) If an event is caused, then it is causally determined.
- 5) If an event is an act that is causally determined, then the agent of the act could not have acted otherwise than in the way that she did.

The justice problem



Moral argument for free will



1. The moral judgment that you shouldn't have done X implies that you should have done something else instead.
2. That you should have done something else instead implies that there was something else for you to do.
3. That there was something else for you to do implies that you could have done something else.
4. That you could have done something else implies that you have free will.
5. If you don't have free will to have done other than X we cannot make the moral judgment that you shouldn't have done X (van Inwagen 2009).

Free Will

There is no 'Free Will'

We have 'Free Will'

Determinism

Reality is Determined

Hard Determinism

Compatibilism

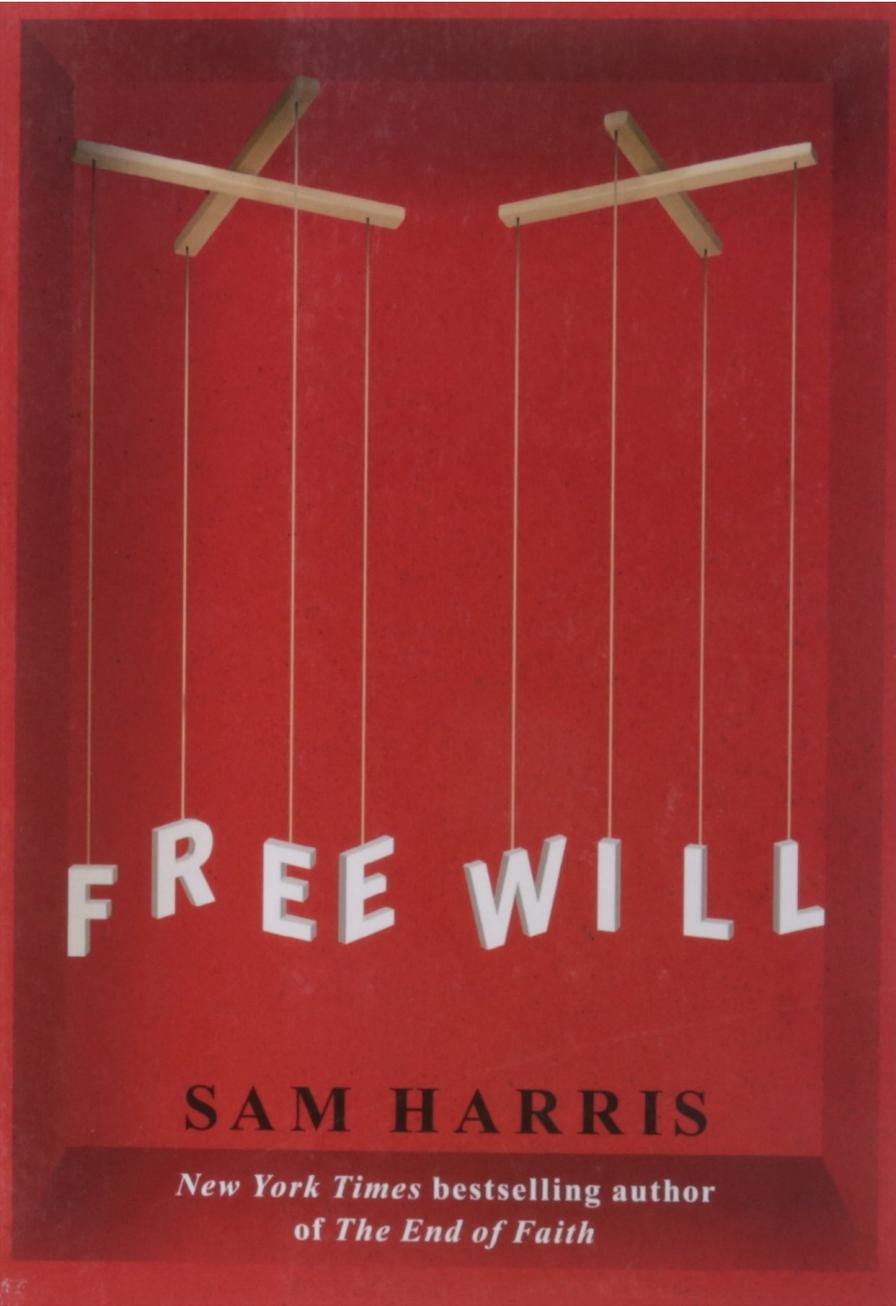
Reality is Indetermined

Hard Indeterminism

Libertarianism

The Problem of Free Will & Determinism

	Libertarian	Determinist	Compatibilist (Soft- Determinist)
1. We act freely.	True	False	True
2. Every event has a cause.	False	True	True
3. (1) & (2) can NOT both be true.	True	True	False

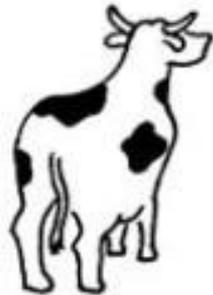
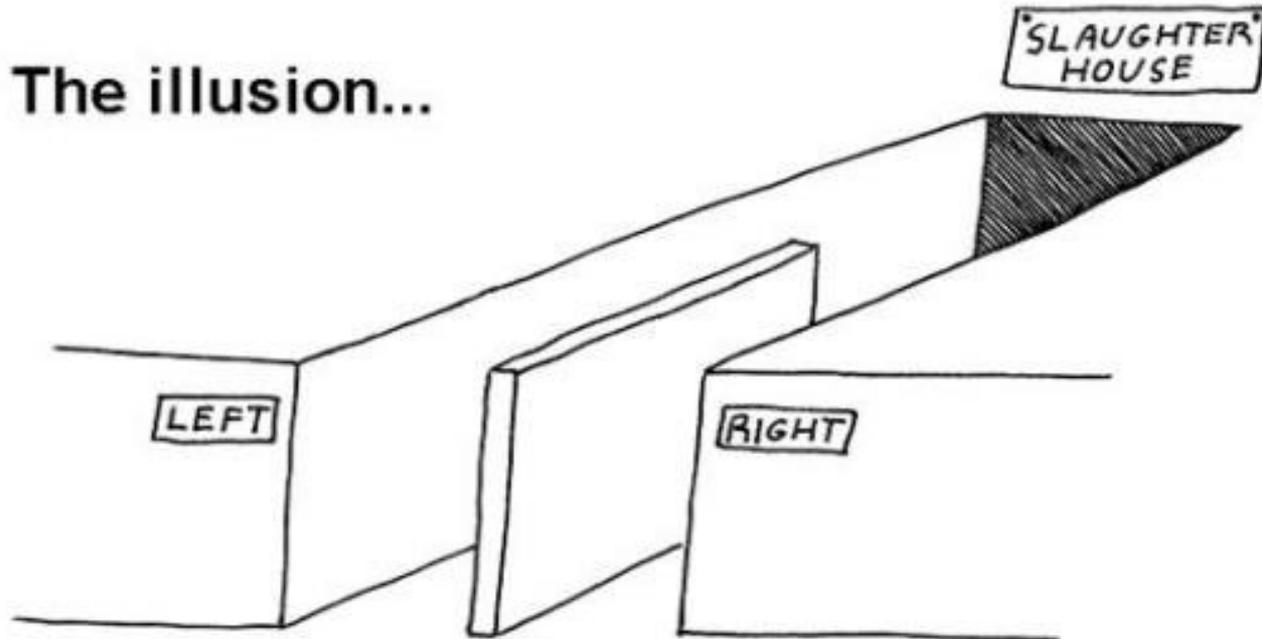


FREE WILL

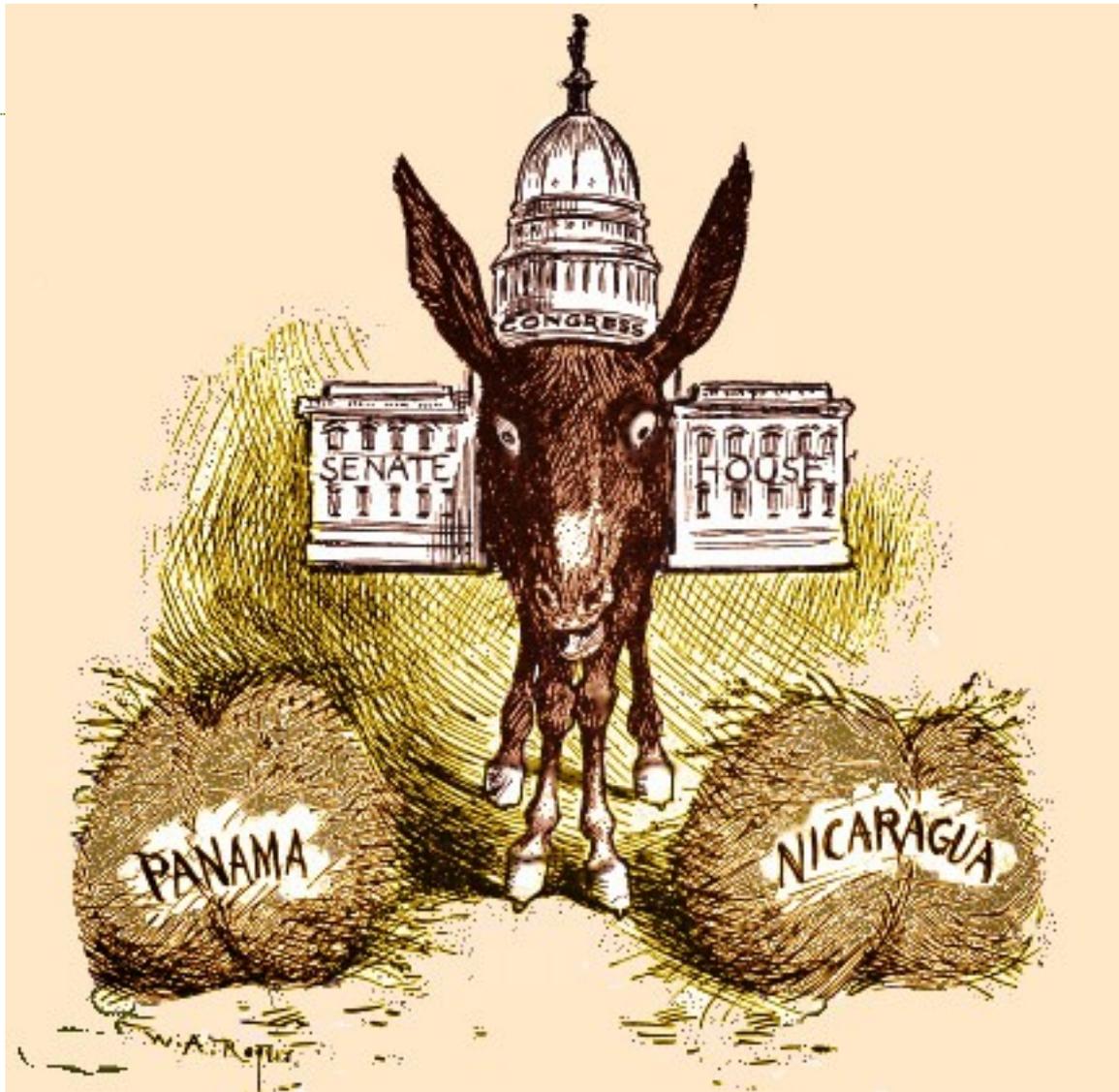
SAM HARRIS

New York Times bestselling author
of *The End of Faith*

The illusion...



...of free choice.



Compatibilist argument



1. Determinism is true.
2. We are free to perform an action A to the extent there are no obstacles that would prevent us from doing A, and we are not externally constrained (not forced by external causes) to do A.
3. The causes of free actions are certain states, events, or conditions within the agent himself, e.g., an agent's own acts of will or volitions, or decisions, or desires, and so on.

A possible explanation



- the certain states or conditions within the agent could include the person's values, ethics, loyalties, priorities, and so on ('values')
- an agent's values could give rise to more than one possible action by the agent, all of which are consistent with the agent's values ('options')
- when faced with a decision to make, a rational agent would be likely to consider the options available to her and choose the best option.
- in this way, the options available to the agent stem from causes but the agent is making a free choice within the range of options available.





**LIFE IS LIKE A GAME OF CARDS.
THE HAND THAT IS DEALT YOU
REPRESENTS DETERMINISM.
THE WAY YOU PLAY IT
IS FREE WILL.**

-Jawaharal Nehru

Any questions?

