

## *A counterexample to the no choice principle?*

The fourth premise of Edwards' argument was this one:

4. If we have no choice about p, and no choice about the fact that if p then q, we have no choice about q. (§3)

This is sometimes called the 'no choice principle.'

Here is a kind of case which might be used to cast doubt on this principle. The example is due to the contemporary philosopher Harry Frankfurt:

“Suppose someone — Black, let us say — wants Jones to perform a certain action. Black is prepared to go to considerable lengths to get his way, but he prefers to avoid showing his hand unnecessarily. So he waits until Jones is about to make up his mind what to do, and does nothing unless it is clear to him (Black is an excellent judge of such things) that Jones is going to decide to do something other than what he wants him to do. If it does become clear that Jones is going to decide to do something else, Black takes effective steps to ensure that Jones decides to do, and that he does do, what he wants him to do....

Now suppose that Black never has to show his hand because Jones, for reasons of his own, decides to perform and does perform the very action Black wants him to perform. In that case, it seems clear, Jones will bear precisely the same moral responsibility for what he does as he would have borne if Black had not been ready to take steps to ensure that he do it. It would be quite unreasonable to excuse Jones for his action ... on the basis of the fact that he could not have done otherwise. This fact played no role at all in leading him to act as he did.... Indeed, everything happened just as it would have happened without Black's presence in the situation and without his readiness to intrude into it.”

Is Jones' action free?

And yet he has no choice about the fact that Black has decided that he will perform the action (p) and the fact that if Black has decided that he will perform the action, then he will (q).