Van Inwagen's Consequence Argument

Ted Sider
Intro Metaphysics

> An [unalterable] proposition is a true proposition that is such that nothing that anyone is or ever has been able to do *might* have the consequence that it was false. (van Inwagen, p. 452)

Necessity rule Any necessary truth is unalterable

Conditional rule If p is unalterable and "if p then q" is also unalterable, then q is unalterable as well

F: any proposition that describes a free action—or anyway, an action we'd normally think of as a free action—say, that I raised my right hand

L: a proposition describing all the laws of nature

P_0: a proposition completely describing reality at some time in the distant past—in the time of the dinosaurs, perhaps

The argument:

1. If determinism is true, then "If L, then: if P_0, then F" is a necessary truth
2. If "If L, then: if P_0, then F" is a necessary truth then it's unalterable
3. L is unalterable
4. If L and "If L, then: if P_0, then F" are both unalterable, then "if P_0, then F" is unalterable
5. P_0 is unalterable
6. If P_0 and "if P_0, then F" are both unalterable, then F is unalterable
7. Therefore, if determinism is true then F is unalterable

van Inwagen's definition of determinism *The laws plus the past necessarily imply the future*. That is, if P_0 is a proposition that completely describes the entire universe at some time, L is a proposition describing the laws of nature, and q is any proposition about the world after the time of P_0, then "if L, then: if P_0 then q" is a necessary truth