

Freedom Resides in Determinism

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For philosophers who are hard determinists (reducing all higher level processes to lower ones), autonomy of individuals appears problematic. They question free will because people are physical, biological or unconscious cognitive beings and all their conscious decision-making is as a result determined by physical, biological and/or cognitive laws. This analysis attempts to surpass the principle of reduction of hard determinism by supplementing it with the concept of emergence (new qualities emerge from contingent interactions of collectivities of component particles). In this fashion, the world appears as dual: as determined and contingent. The author is convinced that it only makes sense to observe human autonomy from the perspective of semi-autonomous individuals interacting with social background. Two ideal type social situations are relevant for our reflection of autonomy: when background excessively structures individual activity and when individual activity is excessively emancipated from background.