Types of Determinism

J. R. LUCAS

in The Freedom of the Will

Four sorts of determinism have at various times been put forward, and have been felt to threaten the freedom of the will and human responsibility. They are: logical determinism, theological determinism, psychological determinism, and physical determinism. Logical determinism maintains that the future is already fixed as unalterably as the past. Theological determinism argues that since God is omniscient, He knows everything, the future included. Psychological determinism maintains that there are certain psychological laws which we are beginning to discover, enabling us to predict, usually on the basis of his experiences in early infancy, how a man will respond to different situations throughout his later life. Physical determinism is based on there being physical laws of nature, many of which have actually been discovered, and of whose truth we can reasonably hope to be quite certain, together with the claim that all other features of the world are dependent on physical factors.

Kant's Theory of Action

Richard McCarty

The theory of action underlying Immanuel Kant's moral theory is the subject of this book. What “maxims” are, and how we act on maxims, are explained here in light of both the historical context of Kant's thought, and his classroom lectures on psychology and ethics. Arguing against the current of much recent scholarship, a strong case is made for interpreting Kant as having embraced psychological determinism,
a version of the “belief-desire model” of human motivation, and a literal, “two-worlds” metaphysics. On this interpretation, actions in the familiar, sensible world are always effects of prior psychological causes. Their explaining causal laws are the maxims of agents’ characters. And agents act freely if, acting in an intelligible world, what they do there results in their having the characters they have here, in the sensible world. In this way Kant's theory of action coordinates thoroughgoing causal determinism in the natural world with human freedom and moral responsibility. This line of interpretation is fruitful also for addressing some familiar problems in Kant's moral psychology. It allows explaining actions caused by admirable inclinations as “virtuous”, without requiring the motive of duty behind every morally praiseworthy action.

Free Choice
Richard McCarty

in Kant's Theory of Action

The assumption that actions are explained by motive forces implies the doctrine of psychological determinism; and many doubt that Kant accepted that doctrine. This chapter argues that he did, and disputes textual evidence usually cited to prove otherwise, such as the so-called “incorporation thesis”. It argues further that the problem of justification and explanation cannot be solved without the assumption of psychological determinism. The so-called “power of free choice” (Willkür) is neither capable of explaining action, nor is it the way Kant assumed that our actions are explained.

Psychological Determinism
J. R. Lucas

in The Freedom of the Will

Psychological determinism is an aspiration rather than a threat. It needs exposing rather than arguing against. There are no psychological laws which enable us to make anything more than very tentative predictions of extreme vagueness. Psychological determinism has drawn popular
support from the fact that some disturbances in adult life have been explained more or less convincingly as the result of experiences in early infancy. But the explanations offered by the psychoanalysts are seldom of the Hempelian regularity kind. Non-Hempelian explanations do not convert into predictions in the easy way that Hempelian ones do. In so far as we can construct a prediction from an explanation in human terms, it will be a guarded or fallible prediction like all other human predictions.