

Preface

This issue of *Organon F* is dedicated to arguments from determinism or similar principles against libertarian free will and against the existence of divine interventions, such as miracles. Such arguments have been very influential especially since the 19th century, but they came up already in the 17th century.

In Thomas Hobbes we find the first clear statement of the argument from determinism against libertarian free will. In his book *Elements of Philosophy* of 1655 in the section *De corpore*, Hobbes reasons about what it is for an event to come to occur and concludes that every event must be necessitated by antecedent events, which is the doctrine that we call ‘determinism’ today. From this he derives that there cannot be libertarian free will: ‘That ordinary definition of a free agent, namely, that a free agent is that, which, when all things are present which are needful to produce the effect, can nevertheless not produce it, implies a contradiction, and is nonsense.’ (*Of Liberty and Necessity*, § 32)

Arguments of this kind, which assume that there is ‘no room’ for libertarian free will or that it is impossible, have been the main objection against libertarian free will especially since the 19th century, and they still are. In German-speaking philosophy, belief in determinism was promoted by Kant’s principle of causality: ‘every event is determined by a cause according to constant laws.’ (*Prolegomena*, § 15) A different version of the argument, inspired by David Hume, gives up necessitation but refers only to laws that entail regularities of succession of the type ‘All events of type x are followed by events of type y.’ Many philosophers find the idea charming that the laws of nature and the description of the state of the universe at one time together entail descriptions of the state of the universe at all other times. Today the most widespread argument of this kind against libertarian free will refers to the principle of the causal closure of the physical, which is investigated by several contributions to this issue. Hobbes and Kant held that



the truth of determinism is known a priori, others claim that it is known a posteriori, for example through conservation laws.

These arguments against libertarian free will are very similar to the arguments that German theologians put forward against the existence of divine interventions. The German theologian Ernst Troeltsch formulated this in 1898 in the following principle: ‘No change can occur at one point without changes occurring before and after at other points, so that all events stand in a continuous, correlative interconnection and must necessarily constitute a single flow in which each and all hang together, and every event stands in relation to others.’ The US American theologian Langdon Gilkey wrote in 1961: ‘Contemporary theology does not expect, nor does it speak of, wondrous divine events on the surface of natural and historical life. The causal nexus in space and time which the Enlightenment science and philosophy introduced into the Western mind is also assumed by modern theologians and scholars.’ By ‘causal nexus’ apparently he means determinism.

If such arguments against libertarian free will or against divine interventions are successful, then they are an effective and quick way of knowing something as important as whether we have libertarian free will

and whether there are divine interventions. We can then know the truth about these issues without having to investigate specific evidence such as evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, evidence about brain events that have no event cause, or evidence from introspection. However, the question is whether determinism or some other principle from which we can derive that there is no libertarian free will is true and whether we can know it.

Robert Larmer investigates in his contribution ‘methodological naturalism’, i.e. the claim that scientists should always posit a natural cause for any event that takes place in the natural world. Richard Swinburne argues that the principle of causal closure is self-defeating: no one could ever be justified in believing it. Daniel von Wachter defends a ‘principle of causal openness of the physical’ that is contrary to the principle of causal closure. In a discussion note Michael Esfeld objects to Wachter that the principle of causal closure is best understood as a non-modal principle and that it can be known through the laws of nature. Wachter responds by distinguishing laws of nature from the differential equations that can be derived from laws. In his article Esfeld explains why physical theories with deterministic dynamical equations are to be preferred, but

then argues that the parameters in the equations do not refer to properties of the physical systems and that therefore there is no conflict between determinism in physics and free will. Ralf Bergmann investigates causal networks from the point of view of physics and argues that divine interventions would not violate the laws of nature. Uwe Meixner relates free will to quantum physics and develops the idea of a nonphysical organ of higher organisms. Ansgar Beckermann discusses arguments for dualism based on introspection and raises objections against agent causation.

And Thomas Pink investigates whether freedom can exist as a form of power.

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