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FREE WILL AND LOGIC

by

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A Thesis submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Australian National University.

Canberra  
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PREFACE

This work is limited to a logical or conceptual investigation of some of the principal theses in the Free Will dispute. My aim has been to distinguish between these theses, to exhibit their logical status, and to examine their logical interconnexions. For it seems to me that failure to perform these tasks, and to perform them rigorously, is chiefly responsible for the origins and continued existence of the controversy.

Although the views of many philosophers are here mentioned and criticised, this is due only to my desire to show the prevalence of the mistakes with which I am concerned rather than to any fondness for polemic or erudition. Where I am more positively indebted to the writings of other philosophers I have acknowledged this in the text.

My thanks go to the Australian National University for providing me with the opportunity to begin this work during my three years - 1955 to 1957 - as a Research Scholar in the Department of Social Philosophy. I am deeply grateful to two Canberra philosophers in particular for their guidance and stimulating criticisms during that period: Mr. Bruce Benjamin, who first aroused in me an enthusiasm for the 'new' way of philosophising, and my supervisor, Professor J.A. Passmore, who taught me its proper proportions - and much else besides. That this thesis does not witness more strongly to Professor Passmore's influence is to be attributed partly to the fact that I was unable to recommence work on it until December 1959, and that, in his absence since then, it has largely been rewritten. In its final form, however, it has benefited much from the helpful suggestions of Dr. Robert Brown.

*Raymond D. Bradley.*

RAYMOND BRADLEY

CANBERRA  
March, 1960

ABBREVIATIONS

For aesthetic reasons, I have placed all references inside brackets in the text. The relevant editions, etc., of the works referred to are given in the Bibliography. Where periodicals and collections are concerned, I have adopted the following abbreviations:

- AEPS : Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist, ed. P.A.Schilpp.
- AJP : Australasian Journal of Philosophy (until 1947, Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy).
- BJPS : British Journal for the Philosophy of Science.
- CBP I and II : Contemporary British Philosophy, First and Second Series (1924-5), ed. J.H. Muirhead.
- CBP III : Contemporary British Philosophy, Third Series (1956), ed. H.D. Lewis.
- DF : Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science: a Philosophical Symposium, (1958), ed. S. Hook.
- JP : Journal of Philosophy.
- LL I and II : Logic and Language, Vol.I (1951), Vol.II (1953), ed. A.G.N. Flew.
- PAS : Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.
- PASS : Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume.
- Phil : Philosophy.
- PQ : Philosophical Quarterly.
- PR : Philosophical Review.
- PS : Philosophical Studies.
- PSC : Philosophy of Science.

PRECIS

Chapter One begins with a brief survey of the main participants in the Free Will dispute. It is argued, in general terms, that the dispute between them - whether or not Determinism is inconsistent with moral responsibility - can be settled only by a logical or conceptual enquiry. A contrary view - that we can settle the dispute by appeal to introspection - is examined and refuted.

The question 'Are our wills contra-causally free?' is shown to have three presuppositions: One factual, and two logical. It is an improper question since it presupposes, mistakenly, the existence of a Will or Self; that the Will is the sort of thing of which 'freedom' can significantly be predicated; and that Determinism is the kind of thing that it makes logical sense to talk of being free from.

In Chapter Three, I distinguish between the various members of the two families of theses that we call 'Determinism' and 'Libertarianism' and show that the failure to make these distinctions, or the neglect of them once they have been made, is the source of many confusions and fallacious reasonings.

Following an analysis of some importantly different kinds of use of modal terms in the first part of Chapter Four, I go on to argue that the sense in which it can properly be said of a person who is morally responsible for a given action that he 'need not' have done it and 'could' have done otherwise, is different from any of the senses in which Determinists assert that everything is 'necessarily' what it is and 'could not' have been otherwise.

I argue, in Chapter Five, that the credentials of Logical Determinism are logically impeccable. Logical Libertarianism mistakenly supposes that this form of Determinism entails Fatalism and so must be inconsistent with free will and moral responsibility.

Next I examine some fashionable interpretations of the logical status of 'Every event has a cause.' I claim that it is a genuine

factual, but empirically unfalsifiable, proposition. The contrary view involves an epistemic-ontological confusion. The nature of this confusion is illustrated in the course of a detailed examination of the argument from physical indeterminacy. Finally, Causal Determinism - 'my morrow is determined by what happens today' - is distinguished from Fatalism - 'my morrow is determined no matter what I do today'.

In the last chapter, it is shown that the Libertarian's analysis of the conditions of moral responsibility is erroneous. Determinism is consistent with ethics while the Free Will Theory is not.