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Date: 8/17/94 6:23 AM

Priority: Normal

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Subject: Re: A Determinists' Platform (fwd)

----- Message Contents -----

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Mon, 15 Aug 1994 14:01:34 -0500 (CDT)
From: Tibor R Machan <machatr@mail.auburn.edu>
To: Heinz Sternberg <74656.3332@compuserve.com>
Subject: Re: A Determinists' Platform

I do not believe that one can fully appreciate the case for free will these days without familiarity with the work of Roger W. Sperry. His book SCIENCE AND MORAL PRIORITY (Columbia UP, 1983) is a nontechnical statement of his position, backed by a number of more technical arguments, supposedly based on psychophysical research and certain criticisms of reductive materialist conceptions of causality.

My own naturalist version of free will has several components, none of which by themselves establish the existence of free will but which together make what seems to me a good case for it.

- A. Causal relationships must consider the nature of the entities involved.
- B. No all entities are alike, nor do this act in similar ways. The

billiard ball causes another to move in one way, while Mozart causes an opera to come about another. (Exactly how is not a philosophical question but a scientific one within the field that studies the kinds of beings involved.)

C. Nature is diverse enough to make it quite plausible that some entities in it are capable of rather extraordinary behavior and human life suggests ample reason to seek an extraordinary account of what occurs in it.

D. Determinism makes knowledge very difficult to understand - every belief, including about this issue, would be forced upon us by factors outside our control, allowing no clear distinction between prejudiced and objective conclusion, between independent judgment and bias (in science, in the courts, in grading performances, in assessing whether other persons are decent or merely likable, jerks or merely unappealing).

E. When the determinist argues for determinism, he or she implicitly states: You ought to believe in the truth of determinism, not of free will. But "ought implies can," so the determinism uses something from free will in advocating the rejection of free will - the determinist's dilemma.

F. Human beings are often relied upon for first person testimony (e.g., based on introspection). Even science requires this trust. People often report that they make basic choices, that they act independently, that their decisions are unbiased, etc. While not all such reports need be accurate or honest, neither is it plausible that they are all wrong.

G. Sperry's argument in favor of causation in the brain that is non-mechanistic is persuasive - "downward causation" is one alternative to mechanistic causation. His account of how the brain is structured so that parts of it monitor others and can produce adjustments, self-determination, self-government, etc., seems to accord a good deal with our common sense idea that we have some measure of control over our desires, inclinations, prejudices, biases, etc.

Put all this together and consider the rather curious results of determinism - what will be, will be (especially as we consider what we are doing right now) - and we have what looks like at least a circumstantial naturalistic case for free will.

Best, Tibor R. Machan