



Nature's Challenge to Free Will

Bernard Berofsky

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Hardly any attempt to come to grips with the classical problem of free will and determinism directly addresses the metaphysical vision driving the concerns of those who believe that a significant sort of free will cannot exist in a deterministic world or context (incompatibilism). According to this vision, the world is governed, as its history unfolds, by certain sorts of necessary truths. Most philosophers who believe that free will is possible in a deterministic world ignore this root position, often regarding it as sufficient in establishing free will to cite considerations about morality or human agency.

Bernard Berofsky addresses that metaphysical picture directly. *Nature's Challenge to Free Will* offers an original defense of Humean Compatibilism. A Humean Compatibilist bases her belief in the compatibility of free will and determinism on the regularity theory of laws, that is, Hume's denial of necessary connections in nature. Berofsky offers a new version of the regularity theory, given that, until now, there has been no acceptable version. He presents a conception of compatibilism which is based upon the existence of psychological laws that are autonomous relative to physical laws, and rejects the incompatibilist's consequence argument on the grounds that the premise which affirms the unalterability of all laws is shown to fail for psychological laws. Berofsky goes on to demonstrate the failure of efforts to bypass this result either through a defense of the reducibility of all laws to physical laws or a defense of the supervenience of psychological states on physical states. A conception of free will as self-determination plus the power of genuine choice is possible in a deterministic world.

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