



HF086-A – TÓPICOS ESPECIAIS DE FILOSOFIA DA CIÊNCIA II

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FREE WILL AND LAWS OF NATURE

This course will be an investigation of how various metaphysical theories of laws of nature affect debates about the possibility of free will. In particular, we will investigate how one's theory of laws and counterfactuals affects the soundness of the Consequence Argument (which argues for the incompatibility of determinism and free will) and the Mind and Luck Arguments (which argue for the incompatibility of indeterminism and free will). It would be bad news if these arguments are both sound, because it would then be difficult to see how free will is metaphysically possible. Here, we will see that, if we make certain assumptions about laws and counterfactuals, all of these arguments can be resisted.

We will first look at the Humean conception of laws and, in particular, the best system account of lawhood (BSA for short). If a certain formulation of the BSA is correct, then various responses to the Consequence Argument will be available. But there are two main compatibilist theories about the connection between Humean laws and free will: Local Miracle Compatibilism and Humean Compatibilism. We will situate these views in the current debate among libertarians and traditional compatibilists about free will. After that, we will look at the (currently not very well advanced) debate about the implications of dispositional essentialism about laws of nature. We will bring together Toby Handfield's notion of space-invasion with O'Connor's notion of agent causation in order to develop a novel libertarian view.

We will not study any radically new theories of laws of nature, and our discussion will focus on arguments that are already known in the literature. Nonetheless, some useful (and novel) clarifications will be made about how the dominant theories of laws of nature do not in themselves create any puzzles about free will. If successful, the course will show that we can be optimistic about the possibility of alternative courses of action, which is arguably necessary for free will (along with a suitable notion of control). Not an easy task, but one that will allow us to explore lots of interesting issues in metaphysics and philosophy of science.

REQUIREMENTS:

Either two short (roughly 3–4 thousand words) papers, or one term paper (roughly 6–8 thousand words).



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