

DETERMINISTIC PRESUPPOSITION OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

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ONE of the difficulties, in the way of an intelligent reading of psycho-analytic hypotheses, is that the reader does not coordinate that which is being read with the various presuppositions which, in some form and with some considerable degree of consciousness, of clarity and of consistency, are sure to be held by the psycho-analytic author. These presuppositions and their experiential background, are the subjective context, without an approximate duplication of which the words that are used cannot be properly interpreted. Without such contextual coordination, it is impossible to read psycho-analytic literature empathically. Without its empathic reading,¹ psycho-analytic literature is not being understood. Therefore it seems to be important that there should be published some formulation of these presuppositions. Here I limit myself to making, a brief formulation of one of these, namely: a psycho-analysts attitude toward the hypothesis of a complete and rigid psychologic determinism. Those who attach any affect-value and its moralistic rationalization, to the free-will dogma, cannot be expected to adequately coordinate a deterministic theory with their reading, even if they intellectually grasp that theory as an abstraction.

In one sense there is nothing wholly new in the attitude which I will formulate. And yet this attitude will not be adequately empathized, unless it is also coordinated with an organismic view of man as such, and as in organic unity with the whole of the universe. This organismic view carries with it the hypothesis of an ontogenetic recapitulation of the psychologic evolution of the race. It is also necessary to coordinate my statement with other related modern

¹"Psycho-analytic method of observation," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis*. Vol.6, (No. 2) pp. 155-170, 1925.

concepts of some philosophers.² Such ideas are a part of the subjective context of my formulation. The only novelty to be found herein, is that some of these attitudes are here formulated with special reference to the psycho-analyst's use of the deterministic approach to psycho-genetic problems. Usually the word "determinants" is referred only to the objective physical aspect of the sum total of our psychologic determinants. Psycho-analysts emphasize the subjective contribution to the sum total of our psychologic determinants, as these were developed in the course of our racial and personal psychologic past. Again, this description will differ from some other descriptions in that for logical argument I will substitute deterministic explanations. I am not arguing in support of a deterministic concept of psychology. I am merely describing one such concept in mechanistic and psycho-analytic terms.

ORIGIN OF "FREE-WILL" CONCEPT

As our unconscious automatic impulses evolve to conscious desires, the foundation is being laid for the conflict of theory as between explanations that involve respectively freedom of the will and psychologic determinism. We knowingly distinguish anything only by contrast with its opposite. Either the free-will or the deterministic hypothesis could come to a conscious expression, only in contrast with a more or less latent, and perhaps a less conscious and a less imperative urge, toward the contrary hypothesis. A more or less temporary accretion, of more or less of unconsciously determined preponderance of affect value, will force one or the other of the conflicting urges to find conscious expression and rationalization.

In these earlier stages of development, man is still unaware of his dependence upon nature's processes as a whole. With such very large ignorance, he would be compelled to unconsciously abstract from the rest of the universe, the first seeming causal relationship between his desires, his conscious planning and the later approximate realization of his preconceived ends. By ignoring all the rest of the universe, and remaining unconscious of the present influence of even his own psychologic past, man must see his few abstractions as if being in the relationship of cause and effect. Again because of

²Here I have in mind hypotheses *some:what* like the following: Vaihinger H. *The Philosophy of As If*, 1924 (translated from the 6th German Edition. Also: G. K. Ogden, and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*; Alfred Latka, *Elements of Physical Biology*.)

ignorance, and the subjective dissociation of interest and the resultant abstraction, many are impelled to formulate their experience as if their own "uncaused" desire and "uncaused" planning had been the *sole* cause of the seeming effect.

Thus the concept of a "free-will," as being the chief or only determinant for some few subsequent objective events, had its natural understandable origin, in the psychologic imperatives of our ignorance, and immaturity. In time there came an enlargement of the human contemplation of nature, far beyond that which could be thought of as bearing any possible relation as an effect from the self-determined, relatively omnipotent "free-will" of the human animal. In order to explain the behavior of such more remote parts of the environment as were obviously beyond human control, man made an animistic projection. By thus projecting into objective nature, a delusionally magnified and exalted "designing" self, with the limited potency of his human free-will universalized, man created his absolutely free-willed, omnipotent, designing Gods.³

The occasional man's obsession with unconventional human behavior found its earlier explanation in harmony with the projected ideas of theology. Accordingly eccentric compulsions would induce an explanation, in terms of either demonic possession or spiritual regeneration. Again there was conflict, as to whether or not either of such conditions were in some sense the product of an unconditioned human choice, or were they predetermined by some super-human power, for weal or woe. The peculiarly personal need of self-exaltation, or for an excuse for delinquency, sometimes determined the choice of theory. Out of such subjective conflicts came the elaboration of theories of predestination, fore-ordination, fatalism, demonic possession, oneness with God, determinism and freedom of the will, each with many variations of details, conditions and subjective context.

When the unknown determinants of our psychologic imperatives expressed themselves in conventionally approved form, there was little temptation to think of, or look for any but flattering super-human controls, such as an intimate guidance by or unity with the divine, all accepted as being achieved through a self-glorifying free choice of the personal "free-will". The contrast between the obviously very different behavior of those alleged to be "demonically possessed", and the "spiritually regenerated," and just average

³Fauerbach, Ludwig., *Essence of Christianity*.

healthy minded persons, found a comforting, self-glorifying explanation for the super-righteous ones, in the doctrine of divinely approved conduct, initiated and achieved by their own unaided, inherent morally superior freedom of will. These self-righteousness ones, working under the illusion of being spiritually reborn, with a close approximation to divine perfection, had need for a free-will theory of explanation, probably because of some discredited past. Without some free-will theory the delusionally achieved exaltation would lose its glory, and its power to neutralize a guilty feeling of inadequacy. A feeling of inadequacy, or of inferiority, could get no compensatory or neutralizing, glorified exaltation from a naturalistic, rigidly determined state, such as is contracted with and delusionally characterized as "spiritual perfection". Because of this, the feeling of inadequacy quite inevitably expresses itself in emotionally determined resistance to a deterministic hypothesis. All such deluded, even though unconscious pietists, must have a "free-will", since without that none of the much needed comforting delusion of moral superiority could be maintained. Likewise they must project a "free-will" choice into those other unconventional persons, who are accused of being the children or emissaries of the devil. It would minimize the relative value of the moralistic self-glorification of the "spiritually reborn," if the others had not out of their own inherent wickedness, deliberately and freely rejected "the only true god."

TOWARD THE DETERMINISTIC HYPOTHESIS

Some persons fail to achieve conventional delusions of grandeur, adequate for neutralizing their feeling of guilt. However, these persons still need some superhuman excuse, which will so explain their condition and conduct as to minimize the self-reproaches. Under this impulse some who were accused of witchcraft actually admitted a satanic control. Others, less abnormal perhaps, can be content with a more naturalistic excuse. These will be predisposed to emotionally accept a theory that their "deplorable" compulsions are determined by the immediate environmental factor, or by heredity. In modern times, insanity may be added among the permissible determinants of disapproved behavior. Out of such need and such material many come to be obsessed by emotionally determined one hundred percent absolutistic concept of psychologic determinism. This however must be distinguished from the more objective, and inductively derived and more tentatively held concept of psychologic

determinism.

In recent times there has come to consciousness, from an ever widening range in time and space, increasing data of regularly recurring sequences, all suggestive of ever widening range in the uniformity of "law" in causal relationships. With the increasing use of tools, and the quite-conscious human manipulation (by conscious reconditioning) of nature's forces, there has also come the larger understanding of the potency of natural conditions, as determining influences in nature's yield to human comfort. The more conscious investigations of scientists, over an ever widening field in time and space, tends to promote the generalization of the observed repetitions in sequence as if existing in all of the unknown as well as known parts of nature. At least within the known parts of the material aspects of the universe, this induced the mental constructs of "natural law," and "cause and effect." This modern, more scientific concept of determinism is being ever more objectively conditioned.

With a growing consciousness of the limitations of our thinking faculties, a new element became coordinated with this previously limited concept of causation, under natural law. After some development of these concepts, some humans became aware that the natural limitations of our thinking faculties are such that we can no longer imagine any limitations beyond which "causation" and "natural law" are not supreme. So came a new formulation and valuation of the deterministic hypotheses as a conscious intellectual construct, rather than an unconsciously generalized projection.

By means of such verbal symbols as the word "infinite," we enlarge our concepts into elaborate philosophic (and theologic?) speculations without knowing anything about, or being able to conceive, that which is supposedly being represented by the verbal symbols which we are using.

This practice was at first limited to the whole of the *material* aspects of the universe. But, because we cannot *conceive* of spacial or temporal limitlessness of "causation" any more than the limitedness thereof, we simply substitute a fictive mental (logical?) construct and its verbal symbolization, in lieu of any actual concept of universal infinite determinism.

This fictive assumption, of a rigid and universal determinism, is *logically* (not experientially or conceptually) warranted by the fact that, given a certain temperament and a considerable amount of scientific training some of us can no longer postulate a time or place

beyond which the "Natural Law" and "causation" do not work. This limitation of our thinking faculties compels us to logically construct a formula of universal "causation," and of "universal natural law." All psychologic investigation not only presupposes but confirms the undemonstratable hypothesis of such a complete and absolutely rigid determinism. The "cause of causation" we ignore, together with all other alleged experiential ultimates and absolutes, as being something beyond the limited capacity of humans. So long as any thought of universal "causation" is recognized as being a pure construction of our mind, made necessary by the mind's own limitations, the quest for an ultimate cause of such fictive absolute "causation" begins to look silly.

However, some of us find ourselves in a stage of development which is such that we must abide by, and act in harmony with such a deterministic presupposition, even about psychology, and in spite of the fact that an absolute determinism can never be proven to be absolutely true.

Now the dynamics behind our logical necessity compelled, in many persons, a reconstruction of the older "absolutely true" concept, concerning the theologic and demonic determinants of thought and conduct. The revision has brought many of us to the generalized hypothesis of an undesigned, undesigning, natural, mechanistic, rigidly determined, unconscious universe. However, the divided interests of most psychologic personalities still compels an adherence to the dissociation of the physical universe and the human psyche. Thus many are compelled to project and rationalize their internal conflict of impulse by affirming both the freedom of the human will and the complete determinism in all non-psychologic relations.

CONCERNING EVOLUTION IN INTELLECTUAL METHODS

If however, the psyche is quite thoroughly unified, and if with this is integrated the more inclusive view of natural causation, coupled with, or perhaps inducing an organismic view of man in an organic unity with the whole of the universe, there will result a more rigorous and all inclusive generalization of the deterministic hypothesis. Thus, sooner or later, will come the organismic view of the whole of man, in an indissoluble organic unity with the whole of a rigidly determined universe. Now, for such persons, a rigorously determined, logical necessity, will impel toward the inclusion of the human psyche, as a mere unimportant aspect of a small part of the force-aspect a rigidly

determined universe. So comes a more mature and a more tentatively held hypothesis of universal, rigidly determined, psychologic imperatives, which now takes the place of the older notions of fatalism, predestination, fore-ordination, demonic possession, identification with God, etc., etc. Likewise, at this stage of development, of a thoroughly unified personality, the old moral valuations and judgments approximate to being wholly outgrown. In their stead we make a more objective classification of thought and conduct, according to an evolutionary concept of psychologic maturing, in our intellectual methods.

I believe such objective standards exist, for roughly measuring several degrees of relative approaches to an unascertainable absolute truth of one's convictions. In general I would say that this should be decided by the relative maturity of our intellectual methods. But this again resolves itself into a number of different factors. Among these we may name: (1) the relative maturity of our impulses, both before and after becoming conscious as desires; (2) the relative maturity of the mental mechanism by which our impulses make themselves effective in thought and action; (3) the relative degrees to which we are conscious of the determinants (especially the usually unconscious and other subjective determinants coming from out of our psychologic past) for the precise quality of our impulses or desires; (4) the relative quantity, variety, and complexity of experiential and cultural material and scientific data available, and which is actually and consciously coordinated into any particular judgment; (5) the relative degrees of thoroughness with which the available data are all coordinated into a single judgment; (6) the manner of their use, as to whether or not they are selectively grouped so as to rationalize and confirm, or to check and correct our probably, subconsciously determined and less mature predispositions; (7) the relative degrees of thoroughness to which we are conscious of all these processes, especially as they eventuate in the rationalizations of the determining and usually unconscious impulses, in combination with the usually more conscious desires.

DETERMINISM INDISPENSIBLE TO PSYCHOLOGISTS

Any scientific investigation, of nature's processes, can have meaning or value, only on the more or less conscious assumption of approximate uniformity in the behavior of nature's force aspect, so long as the conditions remain substantially the same. All scientific research

has among its main objects, the discovery of even more of the innumerable conditioning factors of change, in the manifestations of nature's habitual behaviour-processes. All this is but another way of saying that all physical scientists work upon the more or less conscious assumption of a rigid and universal determinism. The psychoanalyst believes that all scientists in the field of psychology must do the same, if their investigations are to have any meaning. This deterministic hypothesis has been measurably confirmed by all psychological observation.

As I see psycho-analytic investigation, it is an attempt to more rigorously apply this scientific spirit and approach to problems of psycho-genetics, mental mechanisms, psychologic evolution, and mental hygiene. This means that, as in all the rest of nature, we must even though it will ever remain undemonstrable, act as if presupposing the human psyche, to be operating according to some discoverable "laws" and discoverable conditioning factors of its own, quite beyond or different from the more known bio-chemical factors. In other words, the psychoanalyst's fundamental hypothesis must be deterministic, and not moralistic, if his research is to have meaning or value for him. In so far this scientific spirit dominates our psychologic research, it will help humanity to outgrow its emotional conflicts, and so to outgrow the resultant moralistic values and dogmas. In so far as moralistic presuppositions influence our research, even though the moral values and the effect both remain unconscious, our research-work will be relatively unreliable. Like the other scientists, psychoanalysts are coming to investigate the actual subjective aspect of the psychologic processes of human nature, as distinguished from its symptomatic objectivization or its abstracted social products. Accordingly they are quite heedless of what will be the effect of their researches upon their own or other people's preconceptions and valuations, either telic, theologic or moralistic. Instead of being dominated by the hysterical fears, or the subjectively determined valuation of moral dogmas, labelled conscience, we study its genesis and growth, through all its varied manifestations, with the hope of outgrowing every factor of a subjectively and unconsciously determined conscience.

INCONSISTENCY OF THEORY AND CONDUCT

Those who were dominated by an unconsciously determined need for a "free-will" easily found abundant material for a special plea in

justification of their unconsciously pre-determined conclusion. Some were induced to make the larger coordinations, into a more inclusive concept of cause and effect. Even now avowed determinists very often fail to act consistently with our deterministic hypothesis. When this inconsistency becomes obvious or somehow conscious, we are sure that even that inconsistency can be explained on a psychogenetic and deterministic basis. On the surface, it seems to imply that the inconsistency manifests two aspects of a divided interest ("double personality"). In searching for the determining causes of our inconsistency, we naturally expect to find two factors; the one environmental, and the other subjective.

The most obvious ignoring of the deterministic hypothesis is to be found in our relative quiescence in the presence of punishment for "criminals". The great crowd is too ignorant, too impatient, too much the victim of irreconcilable impulses (especially unconscious sado-masochism) within its individual members, to deal intelligently with "delinquents". As a vent to its own suppressed anti-social and sadistic impulses, the crowd must enact legalized and moralized hate toward the offender. To justify punishment it must also rationalize its underlying unconscious (perhaps sadistic) impulses by the other fellows "free-will" and "moral duty." Accordingly those who have the conscious attitude of a deterministic psychologist, and can approximately live it, as yet find themselves in such a hopeless minority, that for a long time to come it will be useless to insist that our jails be converted into hospital-schools. Here the environment compels the small minority of scientific determinists to act inconsistent with their deterministic hypothesis. In this we see the environmental contribution to the determinants of such inconsistency.

But a differently troublesome situation arises when those who profess adherence to a deterministic hypothesis are so often impelled even quite unconsciously impelled, toward the expression of moral values, and moral judgments, which are in many ways inconsistent with their professed determinism. Often this inconsistency is quite obviously the product of a subjective conflict of impulses. Those who are still the victims of a "divided personality," may at times find it convenient to excuse their own mal-adjustment in terms of determinism. Not having outgrown the subjective moral conflict and its affect-values, and yet being compelled to violate their own morbid conscience, such persons often find solace and defense in the zealous advocacy of an excusing deterministic hypothesis. But precisely be-

cause it is a mere rationalization of one among divided interests, such determinists cannot limit their more overt acts even to an approximate harmony with it. Sometimes this conflict is unconsciously revealed by a subconsciously determined gesture, a moralistic vocabulary, or by intonations of the voice which imply moral values and judgments. So then, although perhaps at times vociferously proclaiming a psychologic determinism, yet in their social activities, such persons will quite as persistently act upon the hypothesis of freedom of will, and its accompanying moral judgments.⁴

Only those who have reached a high degree of psychologic (as distinguished from social) sublimation, and its high maturity of intellectual methods, have approximately outgrown the subjective conflict. Only such can act in conscious, comfortable approximate harmony with a clear vision of the organic and mechanistic unity of man and his universe. These few have almost accomplished within themselves the transference of the whole of their libido to the psycho-evolutionary process and to its implied deterministic hypothesis. Those who can thus harmonize their interest and their conduct, let us say to the extent of 90% thereof, on the deterministic, psycho-evolutionary hypothesis, will seldom betray, even by unconsciously determined gesture, vocabulary, or intonations of voice, any evidence of even the unconscious influences of a moral values or judgments.

The advocates of a free-will hypothesis also find themselves unable to live in complete harmony with that theory. If the human will is wholly free, in the sense of being wholly dissociated from any psychologic chain of "cause and effect," then in human relations nothing would be predictable, everything would be chaos. And yet, even free-willites must act as if psychologic functioning was a matter of "cause and effect" and human impulses could be consciously and effectively reconditioned. To some persons our human relations and institutions really seem chaotic, or insane. Under a complete freedom of the will, training, discipline, education would all be useless. Even criminal punishment ceases to have any sense in it, if the human will or desire is wholly immune from disciplinary influence, which is deterministic. So one may prolong indefinitely a useless logical discussion.

⁴See: Jennings, Prof. H. S. in *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology & Scientific Method*, 16:180-3; Mch. 17, 1919; and my comment in "Determinism Conduct and Fear Psychology." *Psychoanalytic Review* 6 (No. 4): 379-390; Oct. 1919, Reviewed in: *Psyche & Eros* 1 (No. 2) 126; Sept.-Oct. 1920.

The determinist's objection to the punishment of crime is based on the view that judicial punishment takes no *intelligent* account of psychologic determinism, nor of any causation for the anti-social behavior, except extreme insanity. Therefore our whole system of criminology is a most crassly ignorant method of reconditioning the anti-social impulses. Accordingly it is inadequate and often promotes the very conduct which it pretends to improve, if not cure.

Out of the impossibility for either free-willites or determinists to live *wholly* consistent with their respective theories, has come a sort of compromise. Some (conventional) conduct is self-determined and other (unconventional) conduct is not. In every such judgment I am sure a genetic psychologist would have little trouble in finding the compromise to be conditioned, by the unconscious experiential factor, which determine the fear-psychology, or by the need for rationalizing a subjective conflict of impulse.

Our psyche is so unconsciously fluid and so variously multifariously and complexly conditioned, as not to leave conduct easily predictable, except in cases of morbid compulsions which are limited to a relative few simple and obsessing reaction-patterns, which are marked deviations from the conventional normal. Accordingly all those who must have moral value, and have any affective need for a free-will hypothesis, can find much to confirm their predisposition. Likewise those who concentrate their attention sufficiently upon unusual psychologic compulsions can find equally cogent evidence for a universal psychologic determinism. If either of these feel the need of making logical special pleas in support of their temperamental need, we are quite certain that they are still the victims of a subjective conflict, and have not yet arrived at the calm acceptance of mature intellectual methods.

The chaos, of a complete absence of deterministic control, would mean a condition in which freedom of action for the attainment of preconceived ends would be impossible. Under complete psychologic determinism, if accompanied by a very large understanding of it, there can be achieved a maximum of freedom from the more painful social maladjustments.

IN CONCLUSION

In the material sciences this change, from free-will-moralistic concept to a deterministic one, was achieved only when we had completely abandoned all metaphysical preconceptions, all teliologic

interpretations, and all moralistic valuations of every part or theory of the physical universe. Now the material scientists, as such, concern themselves not at all with such matters. In all branches of research involving the material aspects of the universe, scientists concern themselves quite exclusively with the study of nature's *processes*. They wish to know *how* things behave and of the determining *conditions* of their varied behavioristic manifestations. So the material scientists tend to ignore all the former moralistic preconceptions and valuations, for those parts of nature's processes which were formerly viewed and rated morally because of their being deemed of personal, social or religious importance. In the physicist's laboratory method conscience has been wholly dethroned or outgrown. Also, scientists have come to ignore divine design and teliology. They are always ambitious to learn how more consciously to rearrange (recondition) parts of the cosmic stuff, for greater certainty of human welfare—that is for the better human adjustments to the physical environment. That is only another way of saying that the best of scientists are concerned only with understanding nature's processes. Such conspicuous exceptions as Sir Oliver Lodge, are so rare as to suggest a morbidly determined compulsion behind their pronounced spiritistic predisposition. In the domain of psychologic research, those who aspire to the rank of scientists must show their capacity to pursue the scientific method, free from interference by emotion and conscience.

When seemingly undetermined experiences or psychologic events come to us, all of our very limited understanding impels us, as under like conditions it impels the physicist, to search for new, and hitherto undiscovered natural determinants rather than to assume unconditioned, undetermined psychologic occurrences, or a supernatural causation. All scientists do this, although probably most of them understand quite well that the concept of a hypothetical universal determinism under "natural law", (especially as that may be applied to the psyche) is largely, perhaps wholly, a fictive construction of the human intellect. We realize that other persons have their psychologic imperatives differently conditioned than we do, and that therefore they will be differently predisposed toward a new problem. We remind such that they will have special difficulty in reading psychoanalytic literature empathically. Psychanalysts go so far as to try to discover and explain all of these differences, even in the psychologic imperative and the resultant difference in psychologic theory, in terms of a different psychologic preparedness (predisposition), to

be once more explained by the varying antecedent experiential factors that conditioned our separate and different development, during our respective psychologic pasts. Thus we sooner or later arrive at a place where such differences of presupposition are seen in relation to the quality of the underlying impulses, and their resultant, or associated mental mechanisms, and all this classified according to a psycho-evolutionary concept. However tentatively the deterministic hypothesis is held, we treat it as the best working fiction that our experience permits and our psychologic imperatives compel us to construct, and therefore we hope to be able to work in close and quite rigid harmony with it. We succeed to the same degree that our emotional trends are united, and our other limitations permit.

Neither are we temperamentally predisposed to find in this hypothetical rigid and universal psychologic determinism, any explanatory justification for a despondency which often accompanies fatalism. Water is still composed of oxygen and hydrogen, but in the special form of combination known as water, it has new properties and exerts a new and different influence upon many substances, with which it may come in contact. So, in mind, illuminated by the larger and more penetrating psycho-analytic understanding of psychologic behavior has, by the very fact, a larger capacity for measurably and consciously reconditioning the human energy (the desires and mental mechanisms) of some other persons. Also some of us are thereby being impelled to discipline ourselves, so as to develop different automatic reaction toward the human stimuli of the environment, and thereby insure more comfortable social adjustment.

In such efforts we will be efficient, just to the degree of perfection to which we are able to live consistently with our deterministic hypothesis. In this new and increasingly efficient compulsion to manipulate the human psyche, we find an abundant compensation for relinquishing the delusional joys of our former free-will hypothesis.