

Aristotle and the Discovery of Determinism

There are three versions of determinist conceptions that Aristotle was the first to address and work out in detail: (1) logical/semantical determinism of ‘future truth’ concerning propositions about contingent events in the future in *De interpretatione* 9 (‘The Sea Battle’). (2) physical determinism in the sense that there are no uncaused events, a point that he addresses in his *Physics*. (3) ethical determinism in the sense that the actions of human beings are determined by psychological preconditions that Aristotle addresses in his ethical works, most of all concerning the questions whether human actions are determined by their character – and in what sense our actions are ‘up to us’. Despite the fact that Aristotle discovered these different versions of determinism he clearly did not regard them as reasons for denying that there are contingent events in the world or that humans are responsible for their own actions.

After a brief introduction of these three different forms of deterministic assumption and their background in Aristotle’s philosophy it will be shown why and in what sense Aristotle is to be regarded as the father of a ‘benign’ form of determinism.