

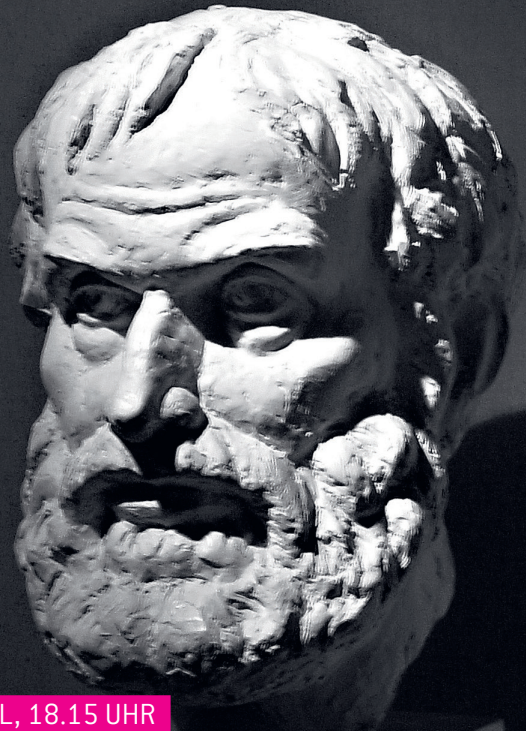


Theologische Fakultät  
Professur für Philosophie

VALEDICTORY LECTURE

# Determinism, Freedom and Liberty

Prof. Dr. Sir Anthony Kenny (University of Oxford)



MITTWOCH 26. APRIL, 18.15 UHR

UNIVERSITÄT LUZERN, FROHBURGSTRASSE 3, HÖRSAAL 5

АРИСТОТЕЛЬ

# Determinism, Freedom and Liberty

Mittwoch 26. April, 18.15 Uhr  
Universität Luzern, Hörsaal 5.

For more than fifty years, since the publication in 1963 of my first book *Action, Emotion and Will*, I have been reflecting on the relationship between determinism and human freedom. In *Will, Freedom and Power* (1975) I argued that free will was compatible with determinism at the level of physics. In *The God of the Philosophers* (1976) I argued that human moral autonomy was incompatible with theological determinism: if God has infallible knowledge of future free actions, then he cannot avoid being the author of sin. I next turned from the realm of physics and theology to consider the relation between randomness and choice in the area of the humanities. *The Aristotelian Ethics* (1978) addressed an ancient problem: to which of Aristotle's ethical treatises, the *Eudemian* or the *Nicomachean*, do those books belong that appear in the manuscripts of both texts? I offered a solution based on a statistical study of the style of the disputed books. This was relevant to my ongoing interest in determinism, because the choice of words by the writer of a book is a free human action if there is any such thing; yet, as my study showed, firm statistical regularities can be detected in a literary text.

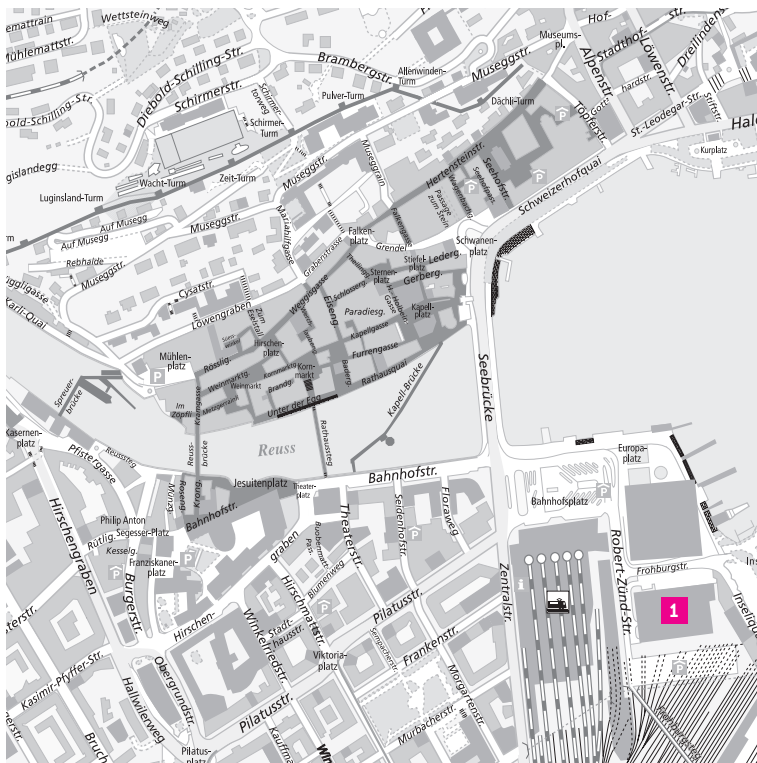
In this lecture I intend to return to the topic one last time, in the light of recent developments in evolutionary biology. My colleague Denis Noble in *A Dance to the Tune of Life* (2016) shows how, in the world of biology, systems at a higher level harness stochasticity (randomness) at a lower level. This is done in a manner parallel to the way in which an author harnesses the stochasticity of the alphabet to express original intellectual ideas. Noble shows how causal constraints operate downwards as well as upwards, and in the light of this reciprocity of causal influences I wish to revisit my earlier discussions of the psychological and theological problems concerning freedom. Finally I will inquire how far these issues are relevant to problems of political liberty.



**Sir Anthony John Patrick Kenny FBA** (born 16 March 1931) is an English philosopher whose interests lie in the philosophy of mind, ancient and scholastic philosophy, the philosophy of Wittgenstein and the philosophy of religion. With Peter Geach, he has made a significant contribution to Analytical Thomism, a movement whose aim is to present the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas in the style of modern philosophy by clearing away the trappings and obscurities of traditional Thomism. He is one of the executors of Wittgenstein's literary estate. He is a former President of the British Academy and the Royal Institute of Philosophy.

During 1963–64, Kenny was Lecturer in Philosophy at Exeter and Trinity Colleges, Oxford and he served as University Lecturer 1965–78. From 1964 until 1978, he was a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford and Senior Tutor during the periods 1971–72 and 1976–78. He was Master of Balliol from 1978 to 1989 and subsequently an Honorary Fellow. During the period 1989–99, he was both Warden of Rhodes House (manager of the Rhodes Scholarship program) and Professorial Fellow of St John's College and thereafter Fellow Emeritus. He was Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford from 1984 to 2001 (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Development, 1999–2001). He retired in 2001.

He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1974 and served as a member of the Council of the Academy 1985–88, as Vice President 1986–88 and President 1989–93, Kenny was Gifford Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh 1972–73 and at the University of Glasgow in 1988, Stanton Lecturer at the University of Cambridge 1980–83, and Bampton Lecturer at Columbia University in 1983. He was a Visiting Professor at Chicago, Washington, Michigan, Minnesota, Cornell, Stanford and Rockefeller Universities. Kenny was made a Knight Bachelor by Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom in 1992 and has been an Honorary Bencher of Lincoln's Inn since 1999. In October 2006, Kenny was awarded the American Catholic Philosophical Association's Aquinas Medal for his significant contributions to philosophy. Portraits of Kenny hang in the British Academy, London, and at Balliol College and Rhodes House, Oxford.



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