

John Earman

A Primer on Determinism

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John Earman

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The title of this work is to be taken seriously: it is a small book for teaching students to read the language of determinism. Some prior knowledge of college-level mathematics and physics is presupposed, but otherwise the book is suitable for use in an advanced undergraduate or beginning graduate course in the philosophy of science. While writing I had in mind primarily a philosophical audience, but I hope that students and colleagues from the sciences will also find the treatment of scientific issues of interest. Though modest in not trying to reach beyond an introductory level of analysis, the work is decidedly immodest in trying to change a number of misimpressions that pervade the philosophical literature. For example, when told that classical physics is not the place to look for clean and unproblematic examples of determinism, most philosophers react with a mixture of disbelief and incomprehension. The misconceptions on which that reaction is based can and must be changed.

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