

Analyze the ethics essay

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



" God will know what ethical decisions we will make". Discuss. Although as humans we behave as if we are free, it is possible that our actions are determined by an external force beyond our control. Although it appears that every event has a cause, some believe that only God knows what we will do and when. There are three main approaches we should consider when answering this question; Hard Determinism, Libertarianism and Soft Determinism. Hard Determinism is the theory that everything in the universe has a cause which precedes it.

This is the basis of science, if it wasn't the case that one event or set of circumstances lead to another, scientific observation, and the conclusions drawn, would be pointless and meaningless. John Locke gave the example of a man who wakes up in a room that, unknown to him, is locked from the outside. He chooses to stay in the room, believing he has chosen freely. In reality, he has no option. However, his ignorance of this gives him an illusion of freedom. Although, with hard determinism there is an issue raised about moral responsibility.

If all of our actions are predetermined then surely we can't be held responsible for them. Kant says that moral responsibility is only possible with free will. He argued for the idea of transcendental freedom, freedom that is as a presupposition of the question " what ought I to do? " Modern hard determinists, such as John Hospers, claim that there is always something within us that urges us to make a choice that we believe was the result of our free will. We may not always be aware of any urging in our choice making, however we have all made choices and not remembered how or why we made them.

Hard determinists would therefore argue that God does know which ethical decisions we will make, as we have no free will, we are unable to control what action we take. Soft determinism accepts that all of our actions are determined. However, it states that there is a difference between Ghandi choosing to fast, and a man being locked in a room without food, for example. In both cases, the actions are determined, and the men could not do otherwise. However, what determines Ghandi's actions is internal, whereas the man locked up has been externally caused to be without food. A compatibilist, who believes that determinism and free will are compatible, would draw a distinction between actions caused or determined by our personalities and actions with external causes. Compatibilism, unlike hard determinism, allows for moral responsibility. If a man does not save a drowning child because he cannot swim, he is not morally responsible. However, if he chooses not to because of his personality, a combination of his conditioning, an event in his childhood etc, then he is to be held responsible.

Libertarians believe that we are completely free and nothing is determined in any way. They believe that cause and effect are irrelevant, as determinists suggest, because moral actions are the result of individual character and values being applied to ethical concerns. All of our actions are based on the assumption that we are free. We can only make decisions about what to do if we do not already know what we are going to do. Although, by giving us free will to make our own decisions we begin to question God's omniscience.

If we have free will can God see our actions before we do them, and if so do we really have free will or are our actions predetermined by God's foreknowledge. Predestination is a belief that God already knew before all

time began who would be 'saved' and go to heaven, therefore there is no choice. Many religions around the world have specific beliefs about how all things are determined by a God or through the actions and events that surround us. Some Christians believe that God already determined all things, including those who will be 'saved' and will live in heaven with God for eternity.

Therefore no matter what we do and how good and committed we are, we can never change the fact that God has already decided whether we will be saved and go to heaven, or be separated from him. God is believed to be omniscient and also omnipresent; that nothing can be hidden from God, as he knows our past, present and future. This theory suggests that perhaps human beings are not free, as if God knows what we will do in a certain situation, then how can we be said to be acting freely?

Therefore it can be argued that free will is just an illusion for religious believers who believe in an omniscient God. Some say however, that we can still make free choices even if God knows what we will choose to do. It is suggested by several church denominations that he had to give humankind free will, even though he knew the choices they would make. In conclusion, different approaches and beliefs take different approaches to whether God knows our actions before we make them.