

Free will vs. determination (east of eden)

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Freewill vs. Determinism Good vs. Evil What makes a decision evil is when it is made completely with regard to others. What makes a decision good is when the person who made it can look back and feel like what he choose was wholly right. It is completely up to a person whether or not they take others into consideration or even decide to look back long enough to care, just like it is up to that person to choose where they go in life. Whether it's up the " good path" or down the " evil path" isn't predetermined by god, your bloodlines, or anything else.

Kate chooses her life and decided not to care what others thought or felt and just did what she pleased. Caleb at first was convinced that he did bad thing because of what his mother was, that he would be evil because of her. Sam Hamilton was thought of being bad or evil when he came to Salinas due to the fact that he was Irish and he proved to be one of the kindest characters in the book. Sam would most likely be considered good by anyone who became acquainted with him. Even though he didn't do things they same way as those around him, he did what he looked back on as being right or good in his mind.

He made choices and didn't let his circumstances rule his life. Even though he was poor and lived on infertile land he worked and tried to change things. He tried to make them the best that he could. When at that time most people believed that the Irish were belligerent drunks that were only good at stealing American jobs and wives. Sam Hamilton changed their views, as Louis told Adam when he brought him up to meet Sam, " he's a fine worker, and a good blacksmith. " Not only was he a fine worker when it came to inventing things and blacksmithing but he worked at helping others.

As Adam "drew into himself" Sam tried his hardest to help him, "go through the motions," and finally he ended up having to punch him and insult him to get the man out of his stupor. This violence, which was against his character, should show how much he cared for others and Adam. Now if he follows the stereotype set for him he wouldn't have been the great person that we had read about in the book, he had the free will to make himself what he was. Now Kate would have to be the nearly the exact opposite of Sam. She is one of the best characters to illustrate the concept of good and evil. For most of her life Cathy did things that were evil because she thought that, "in the whole world there's only evil and folly," so she had no problems embracing it. But just because she did embrace it and did so many bad things doesn't mean she was purely evil. She did towards the end of the book care about what someone thought about her, "she knew that she didn't want Aron to know." And in that little time where he dreamed of Aron meeting her as a respectable lady in New York shows that at least one person's opinion mattered to her.

Kate just wasn't extremely pressured by what was expected of her in her circumstances. She in fact thought it better to defy others' expectations, like when her parents wanted her to be a teacher, or when Adam tried to make her into the perfect wife. There were many times where she could have settled into a comfortable spot that others determined she fit into but she liked using her free will and choosing where she was going to go. Caleb is something slightly different than his mother, which I'm sure he and everyone else who read the book was happy to find out.

He wanted to be able to look back on his actions and not be ashamed of what he had done. He hated doing the evil things so much when he was young that he prayed for the lord to help him " not be mean. " If determinism was solely true than he probably would have ended up being just as wicked as Kate, like Adam had worried when Cal was a baby. Lee helped a lot in keeping Caleb from following his worst expectations and seeing that he did have a choice in the matter. That just because he had his mothers blood in him didn't mean he was filled with evil, as Lee said, " Whatever you do, it will be you who do it---not your mother. And I think that is exactly right. Kate wouldn't have felt the guilt like Cal did when his brother had died, nor would she have asked Adam for forgiveness. Nothing Caleb did was because of who his mom was. As Steinbeck says, there is only one story in the world; I have to say that I see his point. While good and evil are still a little abstract to from my point of view, it does seem that every story we hear has to do with it. It deals with the characters struggle to determine which side is evil and which side is good and than choosing between the two.

With Cathy it seems she could only see the evil and therefore the choice was an easy one for her because she saw no other. Cal was luckier, or I guess some could say unluckier, because he could see both choices rather clearly and in the end it seemed he was breaking away from the dark side. Now saying that I agree with Steinbeck's point of view pretty much answers the question on what I think when it comes to free will versus determinism. To have to choice whether you lean towards a certain side you have to exert some version of your own free will either a little or a lot, either way you do.