

Are we free, or are our actions determined

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Are We Free, or Are Our Actions Determined? Due Why mankind behaves the way that they do, what motivates their actions, and guides their choices and lives are questions tackled by academics, historians, religious scholars, and philosophers. There are a number of theories have been developed, using differing approaches and concepts, to determine one of the most intrinsic and essential arguments. Does man have free will? Does true freedom exist? Determinists would tell you no. There is no such thing as freedom and free will; it is an illusion of our perception. Existentialist, on the other hand, would tell you that all that there is for mankind is what he makes of himself; there is no ideal because there is no “ God” figure to oversee such judgments. There are strong supporters and opponents on both sides of the issue. However, after reviewing the arguments it strikes me most sensible that neither is really right. Existentialism, again, primarily, relies on the atheistic perspective of existence. Without a God figure reality becomes solely a product of nature and humanity is a child of its own devices (Sarte 1-2). This perspective is disagreeable because it offers that since no “ ideal standard” of good or evil truly exist, fears of afterlife punishments are negated, and people are entirely free and entitled to achieve their own happiness. This creates, what would amount to, chaos, which would only lead to outright anarchy. Everyone would be, literally, “ out for themselves,” regardless of consequences or consideration of others. Ideals of good and bad, right or wrong would become ethically relative and dependent on whom you are speaking. This might sound refreshing to the individual, but for a united society it is hardly productive or communal. Determinism is ripe with issues that many people would find entirely disagreeable for a number of reasons. Determinism eliminates entirely the existence of free will and freedom of

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individual choice (D'Holbach 1). This means that human beings are living amidst predetermined and mathematically calculable reactions, responses, and behaviors. They have no option; almost like being programmed with a limited number of responses. Every action, good or bad, is not the responsibility of the person; it is outside their control (James 1-2). If no one is responsible for their own actions then how can any form of societal order ever hope to be kept? The instances in life that people perceive as choice or free will are illusions. Similar to people floating down a flowing river. They can cling to rocks and temporarily slow their movements, but, eventually, they will, sooner or later, continue in the direction the river takes them (D'Holbach 4). Not unlike the concept of destiny. Regardless of your acts, the outcome will inevitably be the same. This thinking breeds laziness. Why bother to achieve, striving for our hopes, working hard for a goal, or planning ahead for the future if it is going to end up in the exact same place either way? It is these kinds of questions that make Determinism such a disagreeable philosophy. That said, it is likely that human behavior is guided by a mixture of things, biological imperatives, unconscious instincts, and the choices that they make. For example, if a poor man robbed a market for products and money Determinists would say that he is not responsible. The negative experiences and his status in society forced him to this inevitable action; statistically that is calculable. His want and need in his life for food and income drove him to this act. . Existentialists might see his actions as a total personal choice, but he still cannot be held accountable because he is taking the initiative to improve his life, chances, and income regardless of consequences to anyone else. However, what does it mean when a wealthy man does it. A wealthy man has no need to rob the store, he knows that it is

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a serious crime, and if he is caught he will be severely punished, he knows that his actions are morally and ethically wrong, and yet he does it anyway. This is proof that free will and personal choice do exist; it was solely placed on his desire not his need. Both ideologies do breed a certain amount of selfishness, which does not seem healthy in communal societies. One teaches freedom without restraint or regard and the other offers a world where you are little more than a biological robot acting out an unending program that you cannot change or effect in any significant way. They make existence seem more empty and pointless. It is true that human beings are biological animals and a product of nature, which means that we are often encouraged and motivated by instincts and biological imperatives that act on our decisions unconsciously. Scientifically speaking, there are proven medical conditions that can effect behavior and influence abhorrent actions. However, examples of human choice exist all of the time. Human beings wished they could fly. They did not need to fly; it was not an issue of necessity. They, obviously, could not will themselves wings, but instead devised hang-gliders, parachutes, helicopters, and airplanes in order to make this non-essential desire a reality. This represents more than the Determinists necessity driven, optionally limited, potential actions. However, it did require the unified planning, inventing, and continuous research and development, by 1000s of contributors, working together, with a single shared idea. This could not really exist or last for long in an existential world. In the end, we must all live in the way and style that is right for us, however, given the circumstance neither Existentialism nor Determinism are desirable.

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