

Our freedom to make
ethical choices is only
an apparent freedom
essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Agent Smyth: Why, Mr. Anderson? Why do you do it? Why get up? Why keep fighting? Do you believe you're fighting for something? For more than your survival? Can you tell me what it is? Do you even know? Is it freedom? Or truth? Perhaps peace? Yes? No? Could it be for love? Illusions, Mr. Anderson. Vagaries of perception. The temporary constructs of a feeble human intellect trying to desperately to justify an existence that is without meaning or purpose. And all of them as artificial as the Matrix itself, although only a human mind could invent something as insipid as love. You must be able to see it, Mr. Anderson. You must know it by now. You can't win. It's pointless to keep fighting. Why, Mr. Anderson? Why? Why do you persist?!

Neo: Because I choose to.

In every person the most basic desire of all is to be free, being able to act at will, not under compulsion or restraint. As a democratic society, we like to think of ourselves as being 100% free, but we are not. In every choice we make there are compulsions and restraints inflicting on the choices we have ever made from the beginning. The older and more independent we appear to be the more of these constraints we are compelled with. These choices we make can be applied to morality.

There are many ways in which our freedom, in reality, is limited. By law we are restricted to acts that systems of government deem acceptable. Social acceptance means the majority to act within a bracket of normality and within bounds of what is socially acceptable. If I wanted to go to school naked on every Friday I would socially and lawfully be unable to do this.

Therefore I am not free to express myself due to external laws forced upon

me against my free will. However even though these laws are in place I still have the power to break them therefore making me free.

Merovingian: Please Mon Cherie, I have told you, we are all victims of causality. I drank too much wine, I must take a piss. Cause, and effect. Au revoir.

Causality also means that I a person can never truly become free. If I already know the consequences of an action then my choice has already confined. For example I would like to throw microwaves off motorway bridges but I know that this may cause innocent motorists to die therefore I don't. The mind with which we make our decisions has been influenced by a whole range of external factors. These must reduce our moral responsibility and hence be restricting of true freedom. Personal and psychological differences within people will provide them with different abilities and hence different freedoms and limitations. People can only act in the way that their personalities allow them, by causing them to react to situations in a specific way.

But what if free will is non-existent and we are only convinced we have self-control because devices in fact control us beyond our own perception. In this case everything is pre determined and the choices we face are pre decided for us leaving us with the illusion that we have chosen ourselves and decided our own fate; exercised free will.

Morpheus: Everything begins with choice.

Merovingian: No, wrong. Choice is an illusion created between those with power, and those without

Hard determinism, considers everything in the present to be directly caused by events that preceded them. Everything including the actions we take and the choices we make are caused directly by another event. Each human mind is the product of its experiences and in every situation will react according to what it has learnt, in a similar way to a computer that has been programmed. However this links back with responsibility, if a human was already pre destined to perform a certain task they should receive no praise for correctness in taking the action, as what they have done was done not out of free will, but because they were programmed, or already decided. The action says nothing about the moral worth of the person as it had an external cause, and was not done through free will and intention.

The hard determinist view that everything is decided by a constant line of causes, and that humans are not free simply because every thing we supposedly decide is already caused and so determined, ultimately means that human free will is an illusion. Free will is something we feel we experience when making decisions and choosing but is really non-existent, the actions we partake in are already set and what we feel we decide is irrelevant to anything that actually happens. For example if I sat down in a room I would be free to step out of until I realised the door was locked. I am free to make this choice but when but my choice is irrelevant as I unable to do anything about it. Determinism removes this moral responsibility and so removes ethical decisions.

However with freedom comes responsibility. Libertarianism presents the opposite idea that we are completely free therefore giving people total moral responsibility. The existence of human free will are largely based on the defined different between ones personality and ones moral self. While we have a sense of freedom, a sense deliberating over our options. Because of this, they would argue that universal causation is not necessarily relevant to human actions. They do not deny any influence to the human mind that could have an effect on the way in which one might act, but they claim that there is still a large aspect of freedom of choice involved.

Oracle: Bingo! It is a pickle, no doubt about it. Bad news is there's no way if you can know whether I'm really here to help you or not. So it's really up to you. You just have to make up your own dam mind to either accept what I'm going to tell you or reject it. Candy?

Neo: Do you already know if I'm going to take it?

Oracle: Wouldn't be much of an Oracle if I didn't.

Neo: But if you already know, how can I make a choice?

Oracle: Because you didn't come here to make the choice, you've already made it. You're here to understand why you made it. I thought you'd've figured that out by now.

Neo: Why are you here?

Oracle: Same reason. I love candy.

Libertarians views are idealistic they provides to us with the ultimate goal of being totally free. But if take this freedom then we should also be prepared to accept the responsibility that comes hand to hand with. For example if I allow my son to watch pornography involving a 15 year old and he turns out to be a paedophile than I would be totally to blame for these consequences.

As with all workable theories finding the right balance is essential. Soft determinism is the third deterministic view and one where determinism and free will are completely compatible. It describes that we are morally responsible for our action although some are determined. Therefore the decisions we are free and able to make in our own minds count as the causes by which everything is made to occur. The midway position suggests that some of our actions are conditioned while others have a complex number of causes. For example there could be a number of reason why someone does not eat food, whether it be a diet, religious beliefs, famine or lack of money. " Real freedom," in the question seems to suggest the freedom to take these fully conscious, and reasoned ethical decisions without relying a higher power.

To conclude I believe that as human beings we are not free. Our behaviour and morals will always be determined social acceptance, laws, causality, and upbringing. However we have the power in ourselves to break down these constraints and become free, if a door is locked then break it down, if I want to throw microwaves of motorways then I will do so. When we become totally free this leads to anarchy and chaos. When it comes down to it is not a case of whether we are free or not it is whether we choose to be.