

Free Will and Determinism

Soft determinism – you are free to a certain extent, therefore you are still responsible for your choices.

Hard determinism – humans are controlled by external forces and have no free will.

Libertarianism – humans are able to exercise free will when they make decisions.

Predestination – some people are selected for salvation and others damned – how they act will not affect this.

- Kant considered – soft determinist.
- Karl Marx – anti religious hard determinist – human beings are determined by their place in history.

Libertarianism

David Hume

- We have a limited form of free will and nature is in control of human destiny.

Thomas Reid

- 1710-1796.
- Common-sense philosophy: the idea that human beings have free will. We are limited by nature, but this does not affect our free will.
- Free will is subject based – you are free to make a choice and have the freedom to follow through with that choice.
- You may be limited by nature in how you go about achieving your goal, but you still have the freedom to act.
- Giving to charity but nature has limited your ability to help – you might not have money but you are still able to help by going to your nearest charity shop and asking how you can support them.
- This allows humans to develop and be morally responsible for their own actions.

Adam Smith

- 1723-1790.
- Developed capitalist economy theory.
- Based on the view that human beings have the power to choose one commodity, one product, over another – human progress involves the maximisation of choice.
- Free will beings with it responsibility – Smith's economic philosophy had a moral basis.

- When people make choices they are morally responsible for them – when human beings are directed to buy a particular commodity they have no responsibility for their actions.
- Smith's views lead to libertarianism – Economic libertarianism.
- Moral basis –human beings are free to reach their full potential, they must be set free from social and governmental controls.
- When people exercise free will they will learn to become responsible – morality is created by freedom.

Friedrich Hayek

- 1899-1992
- Human beings should be set free from social conditioning.
- Communist rulers during his time in Eastern Europe.
- Believed that libertarianism and capitalism was the only hope – people need to be set free from the constraints of state control and political ideologies.
- People must be free to choose their actions – they must forget moral absolutism.
- He believed moral relativism would be the bases of the modern age.
- This would be a pick and mix society – humans have absolute freedom to choose whatever lifestyle they wish, as long as they do not harm others.

Criticisms

- Rejects the idea that human beings are free moral agents – humans do not choose something of their own desire, they are hard-wired (by DNA or evolution) to behave a certain way – therefore free will is an illusion.
- Free will does not create moral responsibility – human beings become irresponsible.
- Smith spoke of an 'invisible hand' which regulated the market place – when people have free will there is no invisible hand to control humans.

Religious Determinism and Free Will

Desiderius Erasmus

- 1469-1536.
- Liberal minded catholic – libertarian.
- Believed that God made human beings with free will – despite the fall people still have freedom.

Martin Luther

- Argued that human beings are controlled by the power of sin – they know what is morally right but fail to do it.
- When people give up trying to do good and recognise that they cannot help themselves – they will then realise that salvation is possible.
- Humans are fallen children of Adam and Eve.
- People think that giving to good causes will guarantee them a place in heaven – this is not the case.
- The more good a person does, the more they are destined for hell.
- Those who give to charity believe that their work will buy them a place in heaven – their good work condemns them because their intentions are not pure.
- Salvation only comes from the acceptance of God and realisation that the individual cannot do anything to be saved.

Predestination

John Calvin

- Forced to leave France because of his protestant views.
- Developed the idea of predestination.
- Noticed that there were few in the Bible who faithfully followed and loved God:
 - Noah built the ark and saved his family from the flood.
 - Moses and the Israelites were saved from the Red Sea.
- ‘For many are called, but few are chosen’ – Matthew 22:14
- Believed that God calls the few and damns the many – must remain faithful or be destroyed.
- Calvin believed that God is omnipotent – but how could he allow the faithful to be damned?
 - Calvin argued that God created the vast majority of people to be predestined to damnation – whilst the few are chosen to be saved by God
 - God has pre-selected them before birth – majority are destined for hell.
- This means that human beings have no moral responsibility for being good or bad – if a person is predetermined to be saved, it means they will be saved regardless of their actions.
- Calvin states that good work will come naturally to those predestined to be saved.

Arminians – followers of Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch theologian.

- Disagree with predestination – contradicts God’s gift of free will.
- Predetermination means that those destined for salvation are not obliged to follow any moral laws.

William Laud

- Argued that we cannot know good without God’s assistance – whether you choose good or evil is a matter for the individual alone.

Soft Determinism

- Humans have limited free will.

Locke

- Human beings develop morality during their lives.
- Tabula rasa – their mind is a blank slate, which is filled by life experiences.
 - Sensory reactions to the external world fill the blank slate.
 - The sensory data is determined – you cannot experience the life of an Olympic sportsperson if you are born disabled.
- What fills your blank slate is determined by nature.

Hume

- It is not God who determines the limits of humans' free will – nature is in ultimate control of human destiny.
- Events are determined because of a causal link between objects.
- Constant union objects – the inter-relationship of things; the causal link.
- Causal links are predetermined – lead on to human free will.
 - When a volcano erupts in Iceland and the ash cloud prevents aircrafts from flying, you end up stuck in Rome – how you resolve the problem is your choice – take a train to Paris and go by Eurostar or stay in Rome a bit longer.
- Predetermined events, which you cannot control, create free choice – without predetermined events you cannot have free will.
 - Inference of the mind – the way the mind infers related ideas from empirical data.
- Liberty of spontaneity – freedom to decide how to act in response to a determined event.
- By linking predetermined events with free will, Hume rejects:
 - Libertarianism
 - Hard determinism
 - Chance and moral luck
- He believes that events are determined, not random – the decision is yours, whatever you decide is not by chance, it is a calculated decision.
- Human beings are not able to control events – these are determined.
 - However, predetermined events create human free will – responses to determined events.
 - Nothing comes about by chance or luck – we have limited free will to choose how to act.

Criticisms of Soft Determinism

- If human actions are determined by events – human free will is an illusion: stuck in Rome, running out of money, no choice but to get back to the UK – cannot fight a thief that is stronger than you.
 - This is not free will – it is determined by the situation.
- You cannot separate causal connections and ultimate actions – once you are part of the chain you cannot break free – you have no choice.

Hard Determinism

Darrow

- 1957-1938.
- Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold – on trial for murder in Chicago in 1924.
 - Both were believed to be disciples of Nietzsche.
 - Kidnapped a 14 year old boy Robert and killed him.
 - Arrested and confessed their guilt.
- Darrow didn't argue with evidence – argued that it was not their fault.
- Presented a case of 2 young men who were predetermined by their upbringing and interests to commit a crime of murder.
- Darrow blamed their parents, wealthy upbringing, lifestyle, education, detective novels and Nietzsche.
- Argued that they did not kill the boy out of spite – they killed him 'for the experience. They killed him because they were made that way.
- This led to the belief of hard determinism – human beings are not responsible for their own actions – 'he did not make himself. And yet he is compelled to pay'.

Criticisms

- This raises issues about whether humans are predetermined by nature or nurture to act in a certain way.
- Presents the problem of whether morality can exist if human beings are predetermined.

Ted Honderich

- Not concerned with the way in which individuals are affected by particular circumstances.
- Starts with physics and causality – nothing happens without a reason – Aristotle.
- The reason for everything is out of our control as human beings.
- Events are determined – anything a human being does is a result of what has already happened.
- Therefore, humans cannot be responsible for their own actions – they are part of a chain, which has already been set into motion.
- He realised that hard determinism may not be as simple as he thought – quantum physics had an effect on the way the natural world is understood.
- The simple mechanical view of the universe is actually a picture of chaotic minute particles – Honderich thought that the simplistic notion of hard determinism may be just as uncertain as the mechanical view of what the universe has become.
- Things are not as simple as they first seemed – some cultural values do not change as time goes by – people migrate to other places, but even though they might conform to social changes, some people do not change their cultural values.

- Raises questions about whether determined events cause changes in behaviour.

Criticisms of Hard Determinism

- Hard determinism means that humans are not held responsible for their actions – actions are predetermined by forces outside of our control.
- Norman Swartz:
 - Premise 1 – every action is caused or uncaused (random occurrence).
 - Premise 2 – if the action was caused, then it was not chosen freely – the person who performed the action is not morally responsible for what they have done.
 - Premise 3 – if an action is uncaused (random occurrence) – then the person who performed the action is not morally responsible for what they have done.
 - Thus – we are not morally responsible for what we do.

The Sciences, Free Will and Determinism

- Debates between free will and determinism – psychology, genetics, environmental factors and social engineering or conditioning.
- Nature nurture debate.
- Psychology is influenced by neuroscience – brain functions.
 - Chemicals and electric charges play a part in determining what people are going to do and what their attitudes are.
 - Experiments reveal that when one half of the brain is starved of oxygen, a person becomes more aggressive. When the other half is starved, a person becomes more logical and rational.
 - Neuroscientists argue that the hardwiring of the brain does not lead to moral determinism – cultural influences on decision-making.
- Genetics suggests that morality is determined by the genetic structure of a person.
- Most are unwilling to support the idea hard determinism based on genetic make up – the environment plays a part in the way that humans develop.
- Most argue that genes and the environment predetermine attitudes and behaviour.
- Genetic structure of a human being is combined with the environment to determine a person's thoughts, development and actions.
- Alcohol and drugs can alter chemicals in the brain – however some argue that people have rational mind regardless of whether or not they are under the influence.

Bryan Caplan

- Free will has consequences on behavioural patterns.
- Behavioural geneticists argue in favour of hard determinism based on 3 specific things (geneticists would suggest the percentages):
 - The genetic make up of the individual – 40%
 - The shared family environment – 10%
 - The non-shared family environment – 50%
- Caplan rejects the assertions made by geneticists about the causes of determinism – argues that a non-shared environment is a meaningless term because it means everything but family ties.
- Addictions do not stop people from having free will.
- Some scientists argue that social conditioning creates moral attitudes – we learn social behaviour from our surroundings – family, education and culture.
- Zimbardo's study shows that behaviour is learned from social factors.

Free Will, Determinism and Moral Responsibility

- Caplan (soft determinist) argues that the denial of free will leads to the rejection of 'virtue and vice, individual responsibility and value for political freedom'.
- He also argues that there must be a cause and effect in nature for humans to have free will – without causality, whatever choice you make will be an uncertain outcome.
- Mark Ravizza – determinism leads to passivity.
 - People would not be responsible for their own actions.
- Ravizza and Caplan argue that people make their own choices in life – free will.
- Acted on and acted upon.
 - If you are acted upon – no free will and cannot be responsible for your actions – value free actions and they have no moral basis. This removes a sense of blame because the moral agent is not responsible for their actions.
- Caplan accepts the idea of moral responsibility – soft determinist.
- The moral agent may be determined by their genes, environment, or neuroscience – this does not mean that the individual will conform to these traits.
 - Hume – the liberty of spontaneity.

Criticisms

- Hard determinists argue that there is no such thing as spontaneity – what appears to be spontaneous is actually predetermined.
- Lack of moral responsibility leads to problems:
- Is it possible to convict some people for their actions, but not others because they are not considered to be morally responsible?
 - Nigel Eastman and Colin Campbell – science does not provide evidence to say that people are not morally responsible for their actions.
 - Neuroscience is an inexact science – therefore it is wrong to argue that one person is not morally responsible for a murder, when others are held responsible for murders.
- If human behaviour is determined, on what grounds should a person be imprisoned for an offence?
 - Determinist may argue that a murder should be jailed for life as a protection to the public.
- Lack of moral responsibility – nihilist interpretation of morality.
 - Can anything ever be considered good or bad if the committer of the action has no control over what he or she does?